Impossibility Aside:
Clowning and the Scholarly Context

by

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Abstract

This dissertation presents snapshots of the author's ongoing living, embodied inquiry, which seeks to blur boundaries between her identities as a clown and as a scholar. Rather than documenting finalized "data," this dissertation accompanied the author as she spiraled through the possibilities of bringing clown and scholarly practices together. The dissertation was written in, through, and as an element of the process of engaging scholarly and clown practices in ways that deepen, extend, challenge, and inform one another.

By bringing clown and scholarly practices together, the author has identified four foundational principles that make up a particular "clown epistemology," which may be used as an approach in educational contexts, including the context of scholarship: 1. Vulnerability, 2. Engagement in the "magic space of co-creation," 3. Multiplicity, and 4. Transgression toward transformation. The dissertation explores ways that these foundational principles might enrich clown and scholarly practices and create the unique approach of a "clown scholar."

At the heart of both clown and scholarly practices lays the possibility of transformation. The author suggests that the foundational principles of clowning support us to put "impossibility aside" and to delve into "the moment of immanence," thereby revealing and engaging with a widened range of possibilities. While she began by considering how clowning practice could be applied to work done in the academy, the author concludes by seeing the ways that clown and scholarly practices can become mutually informing and reinforcing in order to facilitate unique approaches to teaching, learning, growing, and transforming ourselves, our communities, our societies, and our cultures.

Keywords: Clowning; Scholarly Practice; Education; Vulnerability; Co-Creation; Multiplicity; Transgression; Transformation; Immanence

Dedication

For my parents who, as so many parents do, told me I could be whatever I wanted to be and who proved themselves genuine when they wholeheartedly supported me in becoming a clown.

For all the clown teachers who nurtured, challenged, cajoled, and birthed me. May this work prove to be of interest and of use for you, and, especially, may it offer you a few possibilities.

Finally, for Felix, my baby clown – may you be inspired to teach, learn, grow, and change. May you be whatever you want to be and do all that you want to do.

Acknowledgements

As with all dissertations, this one took many years of work and I would not have been able to make it through those years or complete that work if it weren't for the people in my life who offered me support, kindness, insights, love, balance, and encouragement. The list of people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude is certainly unwieldy and includes both close friends and relative strangers, including the scholars and students I met in passing at conferences who heard about my work and thought it was interesting and worthwhile. While I cannot possibly thank everyone adequately here, I will put that impossibility aside and do my best to acknowledge those who have had the greatest impact on this piece of work. Firstly, I would like to thank my family for always being my most important "educational context" – for showing me how to grow creatively and prodding me to be ever considerate of new possibilities.

Secondly, I offer my gratitude to my teachers, and especially my clown teachers, for inspiring and challenging me. Numbered amongst these teachers are several worthy of especial note: John Turner, David MacMurray Smith, Karen Hines, and Ian A. Wallace are all clown visionaries to whom I want to extend my deepest appreciation, not only for the ways that they have taught and encouraged me directly, but also for the artistry and the commitment that they have devoted to the practice of clowning. Dr. Deborah Berrill, my master's thesis supervisor, has remained a significant source of strength, insight and wisdom for me. I wish now to thank her for her love, her support for my work, and her commitment to teaching me the pragmatics that have helped and will help to sustain me – in short, I thank her for being my academic mom. Dr. Vicki Kelly, senior supervisor for this project, must be acknowledged for her wisdom and, perhaps even more importantly, her patience. I humbly offer her my sincere appreciation for her willingness and ability to work with me through the challenges (academic, emotional, etc.) of this project and for her commitment to remaining loyal to the possibilities of my work (even when I didn't want to hear it!). Finally, I extend my hand in thanks to Dr. Lynn Fels and Dr. Celeste Snowber, members of my dissertation committee, and to Dr. Monica Prendergast and Dr. Stephen Smith, external reviewers at my dissertation defense, for their courageous work in the academy, which has provided the

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The index of a text then is not only an instrument of reference; it is itself a text, a second text which is the relief (remainder and asperity) of the first: what is wandering (interrupted) in the rationality of the sentences. (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 105)

An Invitation

Welcome. It's nice to have you here. I'm so glad you could come. This is going to be such an exciting day. I hope you enjoy it. I think you will [….] Now: hats, coats, galoshes, over there. But hurry please, we have so much time and so little to see. Wait a minute! Strike that. Reverse it. (Willy Wonka's welcome monologue in the 1971 film directed by Mel Stuart, screenplay by Roald Dahl and David Seltzer)[1]

I originally planned to write this dissertation as a "choose-your-own-adventure." In fact, after a few months of feeling unsure of how to "start," my writing practice began when I wrote a rationale describing why the choose-your-own-adventure format was a productive way of bringing the performative practice of clowning into written form. The resonance between clown performance and the adapted choose-your-own-adventure genre that I sought to propose was, indeed, evocative. However, as I continued to work on this dissertation I made two further discoveries: firstly, I recognized that my attention and my writing were both becoming bogged down by the choose-your-own-adventure mechanism and my attempts to make it "work" within the existing form of the academic dissertation; secondly, and more importantly, while I would never dissuade anyone from incorporating clown performance into their educational contexts, my interest in this dissertation is more specifically to look at the practice of clowning that undergirds clown performance: the principles, the ethos, and the epistemology of clowning that make clown performance possible.

All of that being said, the self-awareness and choice-making elements that I sought to highlight through the choose-your-own-adventure mechanism remain important themes of this dissertation. Rather than discuss these elements of clowning in a linearly progressive fashion, this dissertation will spiral around these conceptual frameworks, with understandings morphing and deepening with each new turn of the spiral. The concept of "spiral inquiry" has been taken up across arts-based, educational, and Indigenous scholarships, particularly where there is a focus on "action-research." For an in-depth discussion of spiral inquiry, and how it can be applied in the educational context specifically, see Halbert and Kaser's *Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* (2013). Such spiraling is also

in keeping with Ezra Pound's (1952) understanding of history, which I suggest applies beyond history to all forms of knowing: "we do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anaesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us" (p. 60). I am interested in deepening my connection with and understanding of clown, processes which, for me, rely on spirals of inquiry and the exploration of many facets of thinking, being, and doing. I have no interest in "anaesthetizing" the clown so that I can study and label it with convenience. Instead, I wish to dwell with(in) the practice of clowning and to repeatedly let this practice surprise me. A focus on rippling and spiraling and eddying alongside the clown (and my understanding of clown) is therefore most appealing to me: it is a process that commits me to practice and to a willingness to change and transform as I spiral ever-deeper into my inquiry. This practice of spiraling not only informs my approach to inquiry, but it has also become the only way that I could write this dissertation: this is writing that has written itself into being; it is writing that continually asks the question "what if," even as the words are being laid down upon the page. It is therefore writing that is, at times, repetitive and out of sequence. It is writing in – and out of – the midst of transformation. This way of writing not only mirrors the way that I am continuing to learn about and learn to practice clowning, but it also reflects my intention to write in ways that continue to move, shift, and change, even after the words have been written down. Please allow this writing to transform: Read it and ask "what if"? Read it again. Read it backwards. Read the sections out of order. Transform it as you will… You are welcome here.

As this writing shifts with you, welcome it in.

Perhaps it will shift something in you, too.

I invite you to get involved with this dissertation: to actively bring your awareness to the directions/facets/masks of yourself that are activated as you engage with this work and, particularly, as you make choices regarding your engagement with the work. While the choices that you make during your reading of this dissertation may seem relatively inconsequential, learning to pay attention to yourself – your proclivities, possibilities, preferences, etc. – is at the heart of clowning, just as it is at the heart of many other forms of

inquiry, artistry, and creativity. This self-exploration is what Parker J. Palmer (2004) refers to beautifully as "having a conversation with our own souls" and, as Palmer further observes, such inquiries have the power to transform us, to "change our lives" (p. 123). In reading this dissertation, I invite you into a conversation not only with me and my ideas about the scholar and the clown, but also with your own soul: your own truths that arise in response and in relation to what I have written here. In this way, I hope to invite the possibility of transformation into this process of engagement. Recognizing the "usual" way of reading, the clown pops up to remind us that we are more than either our habits or our learned understanding of the "correct" or "normal" way to do things. This invitation serves to remind us of all the choices we, indeed, make (even where it feels like conscious choice is impossible or irrelevant) and through this reminder, the clown may inspire us to make new choices that both surprise and change us.

Although the format of a bound book implies linear progress through a singularly defined pathway indicated by progressive pagination, the clown has arrived to help us unbind this book. As with other instances of clowning, this does not imply that the clown will remove the conditions that produce the binding. In this case, the clown will not dissolve the glue that holds these pages together. Nor will the clown develop an algorithm that randomly reorganizes the content in the electronic file. Rather, the clown pops up throughout these pages, just as the practice of clowning popped up throughout my inquiry: arriving just in time to reveal the many possibilities that continue to exist alongside and run through any condition that seeks to bind us. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to such a revelation of possibilities as "putting impossibility aside," a phrase that may seem somewhat contradictory to my suggestion that clowning allows us to uncover the possibilities that exist *within* any impossibility. I use the phrase not to suggest that we should ignore, remove, or disregard impossibility (for within impossibility, possibility is found!). Instead, I use the phrase for its potential to evoke a powerful sensation of the movement that is possible within what may appear to be static, impenetrable, and immovable impossibility. What I intend when I say "put impossibility aside" is therefore symbolic rather than literal; it is a suggestion that we can "put aside" the conventional, everyday associations that we hold to

when we think of an "impossibility" and, in their place, we can find the transgressive, transcendent possibilities that dwell within.

Clowning is a practice of possibility. In *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks (1994) presents the classroom as "the most radical space of possibility in the academy" (p. 12). My interest here is to engage with the resonance between clowning and the practices of teaching, writing, researching, and being as a scholar, so as to see each as their own "spaces of possibility" or practice of possibility within the academy.

Let us start in this moment.

Let us dwell in the possibilities of this moment.

Just awhile longer…

This is a dissertation about clowns.

This dissertation is about clowning.

This dissertation is by a clown.

This dissertation is clowning.

This clown is dissertating.

So, yes, right. You are reading a dissertation. Welcome. Yes, you are very welcome here. So, you are reading and I am writing. I am writing these words as a way of creating connection between us…as a way of gaining entrance to your world for a time. I am writing *these* words, now, to encourage you to come into my world – to play in it, consider it, and let yourself loose in it for awhile.

We, together, are in charge of what happens in this story – the responsibility rests somewhere between your reading and my writing. If you are reading these words (and I wouldn't be here right now if you weren't), then this dissertation is as much yours as it is mine. Maurice Blanchot famously studied literature, including the experiences of both writing and reading it. Through his studies he realized that writing a book only produces a book. The creation of a *work* requires a reader. In his words,

> The writer writes a book, but the book is not yet the work [….] This event occurs when the work becomes the intimacy between someone who writes it and someone who reads it […] The writer belongs to the work, but what belongs to him is only a book, a mute collection of sterile words, the most insignificant thing in the world. (Blanchot, 1982, p. 23)

So while I may be the writer of these words, I only get to go on an adventure because you do. It is in our play and interplay, in our co-adventuring, that the meaning of this work will be created (Pollack, 1998, p. 80). I am excited for the adventures that we can create together, you and I. These adventures will happen in the magic space that exists between us – between your reading and my writing, in the place where I am invited to play in your world and you are invited to play in mine.

I invite you, now, to play.
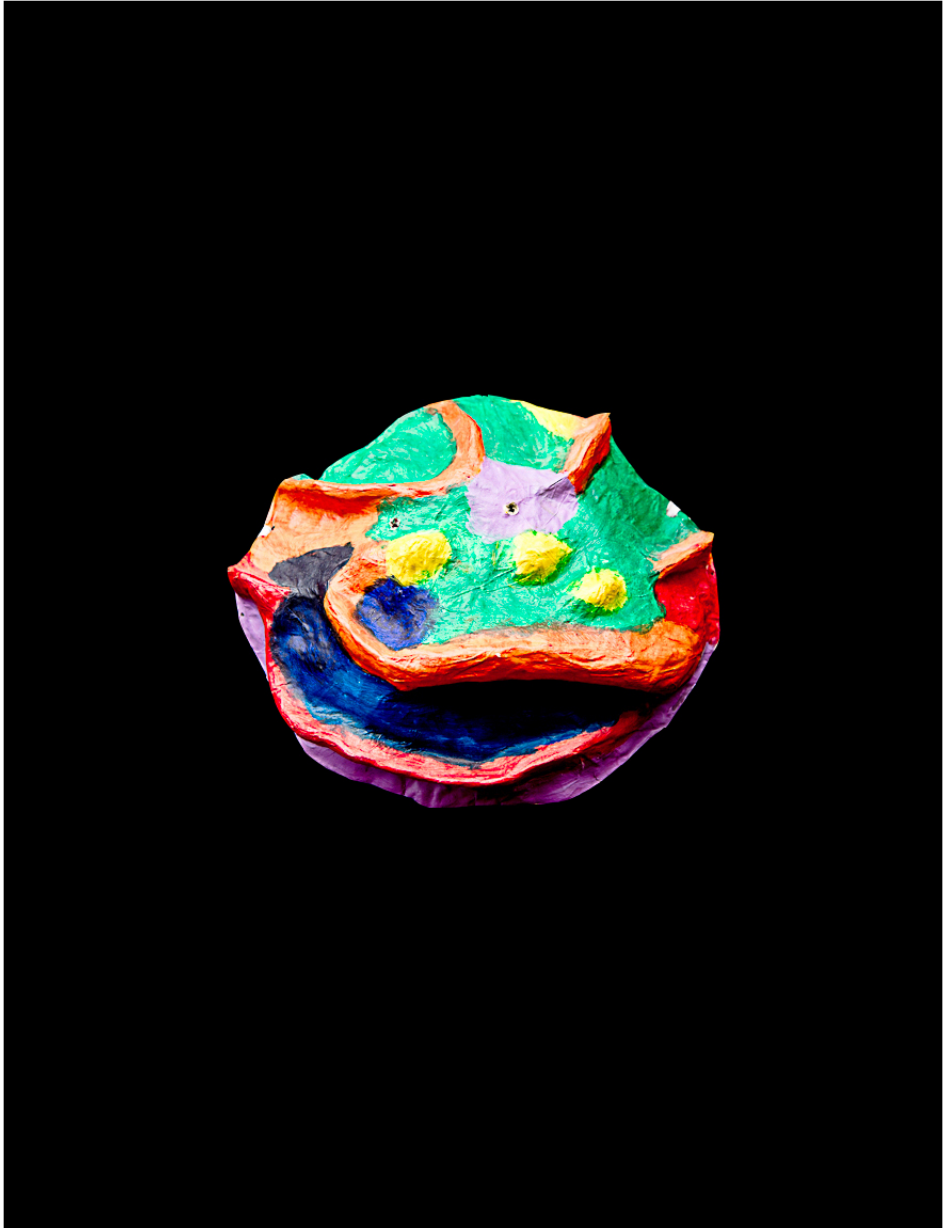
Mask 1 North

Chapter 1.

An Introduction

About halfway through my Master's degree I was at lunch with two doctoral candidates and proclaimed, too loudly: "there's no way that I am going to do a PhD!" Studying environmental education had me feeling that I needed to do something more active, or at least something that would afford me more time outside (and, importantly, away from the computer). That feeling was a familiar one; it closely resembled my sense, at the culmination of my undergraduate studies, that all I really wanted to do was run away and live in a tree. Shortly after I made my lunchtime pronouncement, my copy of John Towsen's (1976) book *Clowns* arrived in the mail. I found myself reading it with conflicting impulses: part of me wanted to devour it quickly and ravenously – filling myself with the history of clown, the art form that had taken hold of me – while another part of me wanted to sip and savour it slowly, the way that I might drink a glass of wine that was a bit more expensive than I could actually afford. As I finished reading *Clowns*, I discovered that Louise Peacock, a scholar based out of the University of Hull, had just published a book about contemporary clown performance and its shifting performance frames. I ordered her book, *Serious Play* (2009), right away and couldn't wait to dive into it. By the time I was halfway through my reading, I realized that I was doing research for a PhD that there was "no way I was going to do" …

1.1. My Questions and Their Context

I just got off the phone with my mom. During our conversation she said, "You may have taken the high level in, but you did become a teacher. Well, actually, you've always been a teacher, even if you didn't think of it that way." To this comment I responded, "I've always thought of myself as a teacher. Just not as a *teacher*." I have made this distinction – between myself, as one who teaches, and *teachers* – partially out of respect for those, like my mom, who are teachers by both career and vocation. Before my stint as a Sessional Instructor during this doctoral program, I had never taught a formal *course*. Furthermore, I never went to teacher's college or otherwise sought specific training as a teacher. Instead, I facilitated workshops, wrangled groups at summer camps, offered "special programming," directed plays, and led youth groups. I was a teacher, just not a *teacher*.

I also drew this distinction to attempt to clarify my educational interests. Although I am situated in an Arts Education program, words like curriculum, pedagogy, and even "classroom" leave me cold. I know I am not alone in this feeling. Indeed, much of the work of educational scholars, theorists, and practitioners over the past several decades has focused on how we can move beyond these words and the conventional educational precepts that accompany them. Take, for example, William Pinar's (2011) work in which he reimagines curriculum as *currere*, a concept deeply informed by Ted Aoki's distinction between curricular landscapes as *plan(ned)* and as *live(d)* (1986/2005) and Maxine Greene's body of work articulating a vision of and an approach to aesthetic education (for example, her books published in 1978 & 1995 and cited in this dissertation). For Pinar (2011), *currere* is intended to invoke "the individual's *experience* [emphasis added] of the school curriculum, whatever the course content or its alignment with society or the economy" (p. xii). When I have told some of my peers and mentors about my interest in bringing clowning into the educational context they have responded with questions like "yes, how can we better work with the class clown?" Or "I have often wondered how I might be able to strategically use humour when I am teaching my students." While definitely worthwhile in their own ways, these are not the questions that fire me up. Instead, I am curious, alongside Pinar, about the *experiences* of teaching and learning, writ large, and about how an approach to education informed by

clowning might impact these experiences. Therefore, the specific questions that have persisted throughout the writing of this dissertation are: how do people/communities/societies/cultures teach, learn, grow, [2] and change? And how is clowning as an art form and a broadly applicable approach/practice connected with this teaching, learning, growth, and change? I frame these questions in these specific ways in order to highlight the relationship that clowning has with forms of teaching and learning that are readily aligned with "education" in the broadest sense, if not with the now conventional associations between "education" and teachers, students, and classrooms. Such clowning is educative and the transformative, if not necessarily formally "educational." It is this educative capacity of the clown – a capacity to be perpetually both "teacher" and "learner" – that has captured my curiosity.

These are big questions especially given that both "clown" and "education" are concepts that actively resist singular definition. In order to find a way into these subjects that avoids overly abstracting them, I have been guided by the clown rule "be specific" and the frequently repeated wisdom that strong writers "write what they know." In this dissertation, I have therefore chosen to focus on the application of elements of my own embodied experience with clowning – including clown training, performance, and my living clown practice – to the educational, scholarly practices within postsecondary institutions. Even more specifically, I will articulate what I see as several of the foundational principles of clowning, namely the clown's unique form of vulnerability and relationship with co-creation, multiplicity, and transgression toward transformation. Each, I suggest is related to clowning as a practice of possibilities, a practice that can be fruitfully applied in the educational context broadly and in the realm of the scholar more specifically.

Believe it or not, lots of scholars are clowns. While scholars are familiar with many of the principles that inform clowning, they do not necessarily recognize that they are aware of these things. Certainly, most do not think of their experiences with these principles as having anything to do with clowns or clowning. In many cases these principles are so intrinsic and habitual as to have become unconscious. It is not only scholars who unwittingly tap into the art of clowning, but also people from all walks of life, engaged in all manner of pursuits.

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Consciously turning our attention to the resonance between clown and scholarly practices allows us to bolster the benefits that each can derive from the other. As will become clear throughout this dissertation, clown training does not *teach* the principles of clowning; however, it does draw our conscious attention to them. It is this conscious attention paid to the principles of clowning that is capable of creating new spaces of possibility in the educational context. Indeed, this quality of awareness is one of the elements that clowning shares with other practices aimed towards attunement and self-reflection, such as the practice of mindfulness, which is increasingly finding application in many avenues of education and scholarly practice (see, for examples, Bai, 2001; Inoue, 2012; MacDonald & Shirley, 2009; Rechtschaffen, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; and Walsh, Bickel & Leggo, 2015). Paying attention to these otherwise unconscious principles in scholarly practice is, itself, an act of clowning as it flips the world upside down – pulling us from the realm of knowledge and expertise in order to return us to the most basic and foundational considerations. Bringing our awareness to these "fundamentals" can, perhaps counterintuitively, open up whole worlds of complexity and intricacy. It can also thoroughly shift our previously held understandings, assumptions, and habits.

This dissertation explores both the existing connections between the clown and the scholar and the untapped possibilities for applying clowning in the scholarly context.[3] Significantly, the dissertation is not a recounting or a representation of data concerning the clown and the scholar. Instead, it is an enactment of both. A number of scholars have researched, written, and taught *about* clowns; these scholars have covered an impressive amount of territory, ranging from the role of clown (and Trickster) figures across cultural contexts (for example, Adir, 1988; Christen, 1998; Hyde, 2008; Jenkins, 1988; McManus, 2003; Otto, 2001; Schechter, 1985; Swortzell, 1978; Towsen, 1976; Welsford, 1935) to the significance of clowning in particular cultural contexts and in rituals (for example, Babcock-Abrahams, 1984;[4] Bakhtin, 1984; Hereniko, 1995; Mitchell, 1992); and from the impact of performative frames on the clown's play (for example, Davison, 2013; Peacock, 2009) to an in-depth description of one approach to clown training and practice (Coburn & Morrison, 2013). Many scholars have also articulated ways for arts based practices to form and inform an approach to scholarship (for example, Barone & Eisner, 2012; Barrett & Bolt, 2007;

Butler, 2012; Fels, 1998, 2012b, 2014; Fels & Belliveau, 2008; Goldstein, 2012; Greene, 1978, 1995; Kelly, 2010, 2012; Knowles & Cole, 2008; Leavy, 2009; Meyer, 2010; Norris, 2009; Prendergast 2009, 2014, 2015; Smith, 2014; Snowber, 2011, 2012; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo, & Gouzouasis, 2008; Taylor, 1996 – just to name a few!). These two broadly defined areas of research inspire my work as I seek to articulate clowning as a practice that can be applied in the scholarly context.

In this work I turn a somersault off of the shoulders of those scholars who have come before me. They have carved out ample scholarly space in which I am now able to play. Their work enables me to approach this dissertation both as a discussion of the possible application of clowning as a practice, and as, itself, an act of clowning. As discussion and as performative practice, this work is simultaneously an act of clowning and an act of scholarship. The oscillation and confluence of myself as clown and as scholar that I experienced as I researched/wrote/taught/practiced/enacted/played/lived this dissertation are themselves the case studies for the application of clowning that I suggest in these pages. I enact a form of scholarly clowning that cannot merely be described as scholarship *about* clown. I shift from writing about clowns and clowning to writing from the disposition of my own clowning practice. In this way, I shift from being a scholar of clown to being a clown scholar – one who clowns all elements of her scholarly practice, through her researching, writing, teaching, and being. Through the process of creating this dissertation, it has become clear to me that my focus is neither clown nor scholar, but rather the possibilities for play that exist in the encounter between them. For me, being a clown scholar means living into these playful possibilities.

1.2.   Moving Forward: An Outline of this Work

In the following two chapters I will establish the background context for my work by introducing you to my clown teachers and to the particular form of clown training in which I have been engaged for the past eight years. As you likely noticed, this chapter began with a photograph subtitled "Mask 1 North." Photographs of each of the six directional masks that I made in the *Clown Through Mask* workshop open the following five chapters. In chapter 3, I

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provide a visceral description of the process that I underwent to make these masks – a process which forms the core of the *Clown Through Mask* training. Chapters 7 & 8 begin with photographs of two masks that I made after my clown training. These masks ("ethics" and "transgression") were made as an element of my preparation for my comprehensive exam performance (which is also described in more detail in Chapter 3). The clown masks are a core training tool that help participants source creativity within themselves. The finished products of the masks are unique to each individual participant; as such, the images of my masks are included here to help you gain further access into my experience as a clown, rather than to provide a general depiction of what a "clown mask" looks like. The masks are made out of papier mâché, after being initially sculpted in clay, and are painted using acrylic-based paints.[5]

Once the overall context of my clown training has been established, Chapter 4 unpacks each of the foundational principles of clowning mentioned above. Chapter 5 explores the specifics of the "clown approach," which I articulate as a "practice of possibilities," while Chapters 6 & 7 present two distinct ways of discussing the conceptual relationship between these foundational principles of clowning and education/scholarly practice. Chapter 6 is focused on the connections between clowning and existing scholarly literature and, especially, the calls for transformation that have arisen across educational, arts-based, clowning, and other literatures. After consideration of this literature, in Chapter 7, I discuss how I have engaged clowning as an approach to my own inquiry, including in the reading/research, writing, teaching, and being that have informed the creation of this dissertation. A/r/tography – as envisioned and enacted by Rita Irwin, Peter Gouzouasis, Carl Leggo, Slyvia Kind, and Stephanie Springgay (among others) – inspired me to approach my research, writing, teaching, and clowning as intertwined practices.[6] This understanding became a springboard for me as I wove my clowning and scholarly practices together and thereby established my own particular way of being and inquiring within the academy, which I explore and explain throughout this dissertation. Finally, Chapter 8, the concluding chapter of this piece, elaborates the "who, what, where, when, why, and how" of clowning as an approach in the scholarly context, as I understand it at this point. It also allows me to envision the future possibilities for clowning as an approach within educational contexts.

In my explorations of this literature I have realized that a completed dissertation will, by necessity, exclude a tremendous number of potential connections; indeed, the process of writing a dissertation, at least for me, seems to be equally about selecting what to *exclude* as what to *include*. Given this reality, I have chosen to focus my inquiry in this dissertation on existing educational scholarship related to the goal of re-imaging teaching and learning contexts and relationships. This scholarship occurs under a number of disciplinary umbrellas, including, but not limited to: arts-based/arts-informed research, spirituality in education research, and Indigenous education research and decolonizing methodologies. Collectively, I understand all of these areas of research as representing forms of "transformative educational scholarship." As will become clear through the following pages, transformation is a recurring theme that defines the relationship that I envision between the clown and the scholar.

While my emphasis in this dissertation is on connecting the clown and the scholar, it is my contention that clowning can also be applied as an approach in other educational contexts. As I will demonstrate, the approach of clowning draws on foundational principles that are relevant to the broadest conceivable spectrum of human experience. I therefore encourage those who have experience and expertise within educational contexts that differ from my own to consider what this approach may have to offer them.

Given both a dearth of information and a wealth of misconceptions about clowning, my first tasks are to establish both what, from my perspective and experience, clowning *is* and why it is worthwhile to consider it in connection with educational pursuits. Establishing this foundation allows us to consider how educators and students might be encouraged to approach clowning. What better way to introduce you to clowning than to introduce you to the teachers and practitioners who have sparked my own passion for it? In the next chapter we will do a brief swing through the recent history of clowning in Canada, with an emphasis on the clowns who have directly informed my own clowning practice.
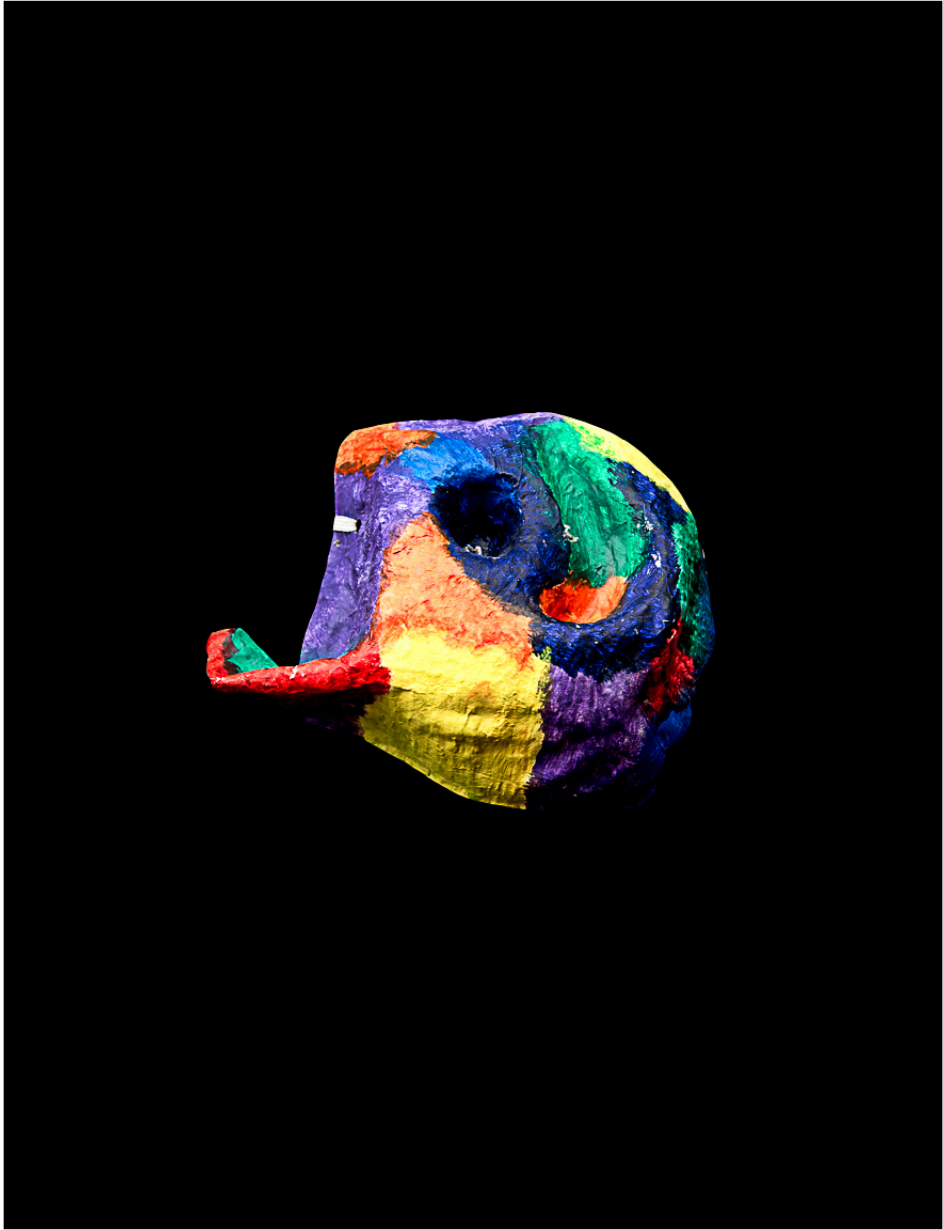
Mask 2 South

Chapter 2.

My Clown Lineage

Becoming a clown scholar has been a journey with many teachers (some of them people, many of them moments or ideas or encounters). Throughout this dissertation I will speak about the ways that I have grown (and continue to grow) into myself as a clown scholar through my reading, writing, teaching, researching, inquiring, and being in the academy *as a clown*. In order to begin, however, I want to honour those who first brought clowning to me and brought me into the world of the clown. There are several traditions of and approaches to clowning that I will mention frequently throughout this dissertation. Additionally, there are a number of clown practitioners and teachers who engage with these traditions and approaches who have had a significant influence on both the development of my clowning practice and my understanding of both clowning and "the clown." The following provides a brief description of these traditions and these practitioners and how they are connected together within the clown community. Some familiarity with these clown practitioners and their approaches to the art form of clowning is crucial because, while clown training itself is not the focus of my inquiry, my own experiences with this training (and with clown performance) deeply inform both my clown and scholarly practices.

My first teacher and closest clown mentor is **John Turner**.[7] He is the practitioner who is most frequently mentioned throughout these pages because of the tremendous interest he has shown in my work and the support he has provided me to complete it. He has also proven always willing to wax poetic, or prosaic or even crass, about clown. In addition to being my clown "papa," John[8] is one half of the "clowns of horror" duo *Mump & Smoot*.[9] John (Smoot) and Michael (Mike) Kennard (Mump) are directed by a third clown, **Karen Hines**. Although I have met Mike on a number of occasions, I haven't had the

chance to study clowning with him. However, I did get the opportunity to do a workshop with Karen in the summer of 2011.

Karen is a writer, performer, teacher, director, and the innovator of a performance/training style that she refers to as "Neo-Bouffon."[10] The Neo-Bouffon training that I did with Karen played an important role in my conceptualization of clowning as a critical practice that could be applied in the academic context. Karen's Neo-Bouffon training is focused on establishing a delicate balance between charm, affliction, and parody/imitation, which she describes as the "unholy trinity" of the Bouffon. By charmingly performing their parodies "to the best of their ability," despite their afflictions, the Bouffon seek to "tear down that which is not for the greater good" (K. Hines, personal communication, August 2011). The "Neo" in Karen's "Neo-Bouffon" signals that this is her take on **Philippe Gaulier**'s style of Bouffon training (discussed below). In particular, Karen is concerned with making Gaulier's training, and its implied performance methodology, more suited to the "contemporary Canadian context" (K. Hines, personal communication, August 2011). A significant aspect of this adaptation is Karen's approach to the notion of affliction, which fuses her training with Gaulier and **Richard Pochinko**:

> Just as one has a 'personal clown,' [a cornerstone of Pochinko's teachings] I figured, one might also have a 'personal *bouffon*' – not simply a character based on random choice of physical deformity, but rather one inspired from within, based on the aspects of oneself that one is repelled by, or on more external horrors. Thus, I settled on a character inspired by a more universal dis-ease, on societal and cultural afflictions (spiritual, psychological, physical) from which no one is immune. (Hines, 2004, p. 13)

The character to whom Karen refers is Pochsy. Pochsy is Karen's "personal bouffon" and she has provided the performance crucible through which Karen's ideas concerning "Neo-Bouffon" have melded and formed.

John describes himself as being veritably dragged into clowning by Mike and Karen. The three of them met through their improvisation work with The Second City in Toronto, Ontario. Together they then embarked on a *Clown Through Mask*[11] workshop taught by Richard Pochinko. John, Mike, and Karen have all continued to infuse their own unique

approaches to clowning and teaching clown with improvisatory knowledge garnered at Second City.

Pochinko, alongside his creative partner **Ian A. Wallace** ("Nion"), created the *Clown Through Mask* workshop that continues to be taught, in variation, by many clown teachers today. *Clown through Mask* was originally named "The Canadian Clowning Technique" and is now frequently referred to as "Baby Clown" or "Pochinko Clown" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 25).[12] The tribute website that Ian created for Pochinko (who passed away in 1989) describes Pochinko's work as "helping people to release themselves from the ego armour of fear. He freed us to face our essential uniqueness and encouraged us to love and celebrate it. He called it the clown" (Wallace, n.d.).

According to all of my teachers, Pochinko was constantly experimenting with his approach to clown training – it was very much a living methodology, one that needed to be responsive to all of the same clown rules (or "things to remember," which is how Pochinko and Ian originally referred to the "rules") that the students were encouraged to apply in performance. As John explained to me during our inter-view:

> Richard was an amazing teacher. He was an experimenter [and] we were basically his lab rats. Ian Wallace was his main lab rat through the years. He loved his lab rats! He treated every day as a brand new experiment [.…] But he did borrow from a lot of different traditions and largely he borrowed from dreams and visions that he had […] I'd say he was a researcher as much as he was a teacher […] there's record of him saying things ten years before we worked with him that are in exactly 100% opposite direction by the time we got there. So, he was always learning stuff. He died at 42. The National Film Board did a thing on him at 27 as Canada's big time clown teacher. He had been to Lecoq but hadn't finished. He only lasted about four or five months. And the word is either he was kicked out [laughs] or Lecoq said he had learned everything he was going to learn there and he was already so far ahead on his own journey as a teacher and as a theoretician in clown that there was nothing more he could really learn there. He, in other words, was beyond the work. And I would imagine it was a little bit of a combination of both. At any rate [.…] by the time we got him, which was a couple of years before he died, he had largely formulated it ["Clown Through Mask"] [.…] Mike [Kennard] and I and Karen [Hines] [and] anybody who teaches any of this stuff is encouraged to be an experimenter and make it their own; that's what Richard would have wanted, and that's how the work got there in the first place. (J. Turner, personal communication, July 9, 2012)[13]

Richard Pochinko, photo taken by Ian A. Wallace (n.d.), used with permission.

I have quoted from John at length because his first-hand account of Pochinko as a teacher/researcher is core to understanding this clowning workshop – both its inception and its continued life. It also gets to the heart of what I feel this clowning methodology can offer to the scholar in the realms of research, writing, teaching, and being. Namely, Pochinko's commitment to constant experimentation is an embodiment of the scholar's imperative to

continually ask "what if…?" And it is through these practices that we can identify "what is" and dream about "what (else) might be."

Ian A. Wallace also played a crucial role in the development of the *Clown Through Mask* workshop. Not only was he Pochinko's most eager and readily available "lab rat" for artistic exercises, but he also acted as Pochinko's scribe when visions and ideas would appear to him in dreams and be spoken out loud in his sleep. Ian currently lives part-time in Vancouver and part-time in Sicily. When in Vancouver, he has always been generous enough to share his time, as well as his passion for and ideas about clowning, with me. Ian has also taught clown workshops based in the Pochinko pedagogy, and continues to teach these from time to time. Like all teachers steeped in Pochinko's teaching, Ian continues to innovate the work through his own unique perspectives and approaches.

Veronica Coburn and Sue Morrison (the latter another clown teacher and practitioner, albeit one whom I have never met) have recently published a book titled *Clown Through Mask: The Pioneering Work of Richard Pochinko as Practised by Sue Morrison* (2013). There are divisions in the clowning community as to the accuracy of some of Coburn and Morrison's depictions and interpretations. However, theirs is one of the few published texts that describe Pochinko's pedagogy in any detail. I therefore draw from their work as a useful starting point, which, paired with additional research, allows me to come to my own conclusions concerning this work. In the book, Coburn and Morrison (2013) refer to Pochinko's training methodology as "The Canadian Clowning Technique" (p. 25). Both John Turner and Ian A. Wallace have explained to me that Pochinko was indeed working to create a "uniquely Canadian" approach to clowning. Pochinko's clown training methodology was the product of what his creative genius made of the combination of European theatrical traditions, his studies in the American circus clown traditions, and his respect and reverence for Indigenous mask work and spirituality. As he understood it, the combination of these European, American, and Indigenous traditions would result in something "uniquely Canadian" that could be contributed to the world of clowning. In Pochinko's words,

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Combining the best of the American and European techniques of clowning, and filtering them through the profundity of the Amerindian [14] ways of clowning, we [Richard Pochinko and Ian Wallace] feel we're heading in the right direction to finding and developing clowns that will express the heart and soul of the rhythms of our people, of our generation; and if the gods are blessing us, maybe just be able to leap a little ahead of ourselves, for a future generation. (as cited in Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 18)

During my master's work in Canadian Studies and Indigenous studies, I was particularly fascinated by Pochinko's understanding of the synthesis at the heart of what makes Canada unique. Although the applications that I posit for clowning in this dissertation are not, themselves, uniquely Canadian, I continue to be compelled by the cross-cultural aspects of this training methodology.

According to *Clown Through Mask*, the central principle of Pochinko's methodology ("if we ever faced all directions of ourselves at once we could only laugh at the beauty of our own ridiculousness" (as cited in Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 27)) is connected with an Indigenous principle of "wholeness." [15] Coburn and Morrison cite Beck, Walters and Francisco (1992) to frame this concept of wholeness as encapsulating "All that is possible. All that is available. All our humanity, the light and the dark, the Native concept of wholeness is simple. It is inclusive. It is non-judgemental. It accepts all that we are and all that there is" (p. 303). It is this concept of wholeness that Coburn and Morrison suggest is at the core of Pochinko's training methodology. Furthermore, they explain that it is a central thesis of their book that "the modern theatre clown serves the same function as the Native sacred clown" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 18). They suggest that this thesis is "derived from Pochinko's pedagogy," but it is unclear if this is something that Pochinko himself believed or taught.

Coburn and Morrison (2013) describe Pochinko's curriculum as being "a system of exercises inspired by the Native vision quest" (p. 29). [16] They further explain that transformation is the heart of the vision quest, with initiation rites focused on the transformation from "boy to man, from girl to woman, from man to medicine man, from woman to shaman, from man/woman to clown" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 29). The transformation that occurs in the *Clown Through Mask* training, they suggest, is from

ignorance to wisdom in response to the core question "Who am I?" (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 29). The masks in *Clown Through Mask* act as catalysts and entry points into a sacred space wherein this question can be explored (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 29). In addition to the structure and exercises that define Pochinko's pedagogy, there are also certain galvanizing principles that distinguish the training that he developed. As I understand it, primarily through John Turner and Ian Wallace, these principles are: a focus on the uniqueness of the individual (which includes an emphasis on each participant finding their own access to clowning that does not remain dependent on or subservient to the workshop instructor); an emphasis on the suspension of judgment, particularly on the part of the instructor, allowing participants to make their own assessments of "success" or "failure" (or better yet, to try to suspend judgments of success and failure altogether); the development of a "non-technique technique" (a phrase which comes from Mike Kennard), meaning that the structure of the workshop is intended to allow for freedom,[17] rather than suggesting strict adherence to a set "technique"; and a prioritization on the sourcing of creativity within ourselves, which Pochinko also described as "facing (or seeing) all directions of ourselves," a process which is embodied through the specific mask making methodology introduced in the workshop.

David MacMurray Smith is a Vancouver-based clown teacher who also studied with Pochinko. Before coming to the world of clowning, David's artistic career was focused on dance. David now describes himself as a dancer (ballet), clown, mime, performer (including in opera), choreographer, teacher, director, and counsellor. Apparently, Pochinko endorsed him as "the best [clown teacher] in the west" (J. Turner & I. Wallace, personal communication, 2012). When I moved from Ontario to British Columbia for my doctoral studies, I took clown courses with David in order to approach the work from a different, though connected, perspective. I have had many wonderful conversations – both in class and out – with David about the significance and resonance of clowning.

David considers himself to be a "movement specialist" and his teaching is therefore especially body-centered, emphasizing the relationship between memory, movement, and the body and how this deep relationship "affects our perceptions, behaviour, and

communication."[18] His interest in clown training is also focused on "self-liberation and self-realization through creative expression."[19] He brings each of these focal points not only into his clown teaching, but also into his classes on a "humanist" approach to creative arts therapy.[20] My personal experience of David has been one of a deeply shared passion for the possibilities of applying clown principles to the broad arena of socio-cultural teaching, learning, and connection. Indeed, one of the foundational principles of the inaugural *Injest: A Festival of Clown and Play*, which David and I both helped to conceive and produce, was to consider how clowning might provide an antidote to the Vancouver Foundation's finding that loneliness and social isolation are rampant within our city.[21] Serving as the moderator for a panel discussion about clowning at the *Injest Festival* provided me with a unique opportunity to hear insights from diverse clown practitioners, including David.[22]

Two things in particular struck me about the panel discussion at the *Injest Festival*: Firstly, I was amazed at the diversity of ways that the panellists had made use of the practice of clowning in their own lives and contexts; secondly, I appreciated how *hungry* everyone present (panellists and "audience" alike) was to talk about clowning. I frequently find myself frustrated and discouraged by dialogue that isn't truly dialogue, but instead remains only an opportunity for each person to present a monologue about a topic or issue. One stumbling block that seems to maintain the monologue and impeded the dialogue is a lack of willingness to be changed. I, myself, have experienced circumstances in which I feel tremendous pressure to prove all that I already know, rather than being encouraged to engage with, and even be changed by, that which I do not know. What I felt overwhelmingly during the panel discussion was an appetite for the opinions, perspectives, and experiences of others. And what impressed me most deeply were the moments where I saw a new consideration transform someone. This willingness to be transformed was, I believe, an enactment of clowning. As I will discuss in more depth later, the clown believes deeply and yet, this depth of belief does not in any way hinder the clown from being able to transform herself, her perspectives, and her opinions, on a dime. Monologic discourse often seems to mistake a deeply formed or held opinion for a depth of experience, insisting that passion and commitment should be marked by a certain form of resistance to change. In clowning we learn that only resistance takes time, and we release ourselves from it by saying yes to the

unknown, if only to see where it will take us when we play with it. This practice of saying yes, of playing with ideas, and of being transformed was alive and electrical within the panel discussion, and it created the kind of atmosphere where people were perching on the edge of their seats and stretching their arms to their maximum capacity in order to get involved.

2.1. Clown Training: Two Distinct Approaches

There has been a fairly significant divide between the clown training offered in Canada, primarily focused on the methodologies initially developed by Pochinko, and that offered in Europe. Of course, this is a broad generalization, especially given that clowning forms such as *Commedia dell'arte* continue to be taught throughout the world and are completely outside the scope of my own training experiences, and therefore of my study. Continuing to speak broadly, however, the clown training style represented by Jacques Lecoq and Philippe Gaulier has a strong foundation in physical theatre and mime, neither of which has been significant in the clown training stemming from Pochinko's methodologies.[23]

Although Lecoq passed away in 1999, his school[24] remains an important training facility for students interested in studying physical theatre, mime, and clown. Philippe Gaulier was a teacher at *L'École Jacques Lecoq* before he left to found his own school, specifically focused on teaching the form of clowning that he refers to as Bouffon.[25] The teaching style associated with both Lecoq and Gaulier is often referred to as "*via negativa.*"

Via negativa can be understood in a number of ways. The first, and perhaps the most readily accessible, is that the teacher plays high status ("Joey") clown to the students' low status ("Auguste") clowns. In acting as a high status clown, the teacher attempts to provoke the students into compelling performance. As Coburn and Morrison (2013) explain,[26]

> All learning is achieved in performance; clown on the floor with class as a spectator, the teacher as auteur manipulating the student towards success with offers and provocation. The student, on the floor, knows that s/he is succeeding if they avoid a negative response. 'That is shit.' The teaching of clown is notoriously brutal, admittedly, it is brutal for the purposes of provocation but it is brutal nonetheless. (p. 29)

The "*negativa*" here is readily understood as the student striving to avoid the high status clown (aka the instructor)'s brutal, negative feedback (Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 29-30). In some stories that I have heard, the instructor will actually leave the room in the middle of a student's performance, if they feel that the student is not being funny enough. More brutal still, some instructors will apparently – though for me, this is based only on hearsay – throw objects (for example, tennis balls) at students when they are not "being funny." This punishment is, apparently, intended to mimic the situation of clown performers in the legends of Europe being stoned to death onstage for not being satisfactorily entertaining. *Via negativa* indeed.

The other explanation of *via negativa* is related to the goal of accepting our failures as their own forms of success within clown training. As Jon Davison (2013) describes, "The clown is our failure to be what we think we are, including when we think we are funny" (p. 210). Davison goes on to provide an example from Gaulier's teaching where a student provokes laughter in the audience every time he is asked a question, in preparation for an exercise, to which he does not know the answer. Then, when he launches into his prepared performance, the audience sits in stony silence. Gaulier eventually stops the performance and asks the audience whether or not they like the clown performing for them. He tells the student that, "no one likes him." He then asks the audience if they liked him when he didn't understand what was happening and they express that they loved him. Gaulier (2008) explains, "when he doesn't understand, people laugh at his vulnerability and his foolishness and that his clown must be found somewhere around there" (p. 302). The acceptance of failure as a form of success and the appreciation of vulnerability and foolishness as conduits for connection with the audience are through lines that connect the broadly defined "European" and "Canadian" approaches to clowning that I have been describing. However, in the European tradition, this vulnerability and foolishness is often understood to be facilitated through a "tearing down" of the student – their usually performed identities and their attempts to bring these identities into their clown performances. The vulnerability is therefore achieved *via negative*: through negation and tearing down of performance veneers.

Pochinko was adamant that clowning could be experienced through what could be described as *via positiva*: a building up of students' ability to face the directions of themselves and source creativity, vulnerability, and the clown's deeply foolish honesty, from these places within themselves. This understanding is reflected in Pochinko's maxim (now frequently repeated by John) that students' work was, always, "perfect." Even if the audience didn't laugh and the student didn't achieve what they *wanted* or expected out of their performance, their work was "perfect" because it brought them the perfect experience that they needed at that point in time. Perhaps, for example, what that student needed to learn was about dropping their expectations for laughter in a performance. The underlying philosophies of *via negativa* and Pochinko's empowerment of the uniqueness of the individual are crucial elements distinguishing these broadly defined forms of clown teaching.

It is important to note that many (many!) clown students study in both forms of training methodology and find their own teaching styles somewhere in-between these two, seemingly, opposite approaches. For example, John, Mike, and Karen all studied with Gaulier in Paris. Furthermore, there are other approaches to clown training that I have not discussed here, as they are not directly related to my own experiences with clowning. Perhaps the most significant point to be taken away at this juncture of my work is that clown practitioners (whether performers, teachers, or both) are creative synthesizers, rather than "purists." It appears to be a clowning attribute to gather influences and inspiration from many sources and to offer your own, unique, perspective on or application of these influences and inspirations. This emphasis on synthesizing is relevant to my current project not only because it is precisely what I, myself, have done, but also because it is one of the offerings that I believe clowning can make to the broader educational context. Clowning can be understood as a practice of creating, destroying, and otherwise blurring boundaries. Clown practitioners have done this with all manner of approaches to clowning, and other sources of influence. As a clown practitioner and scholar, this kind of boundary blurring is an essential aspect of my approach to academia, in general, and to the academic task of writing a dissertation, in particular.
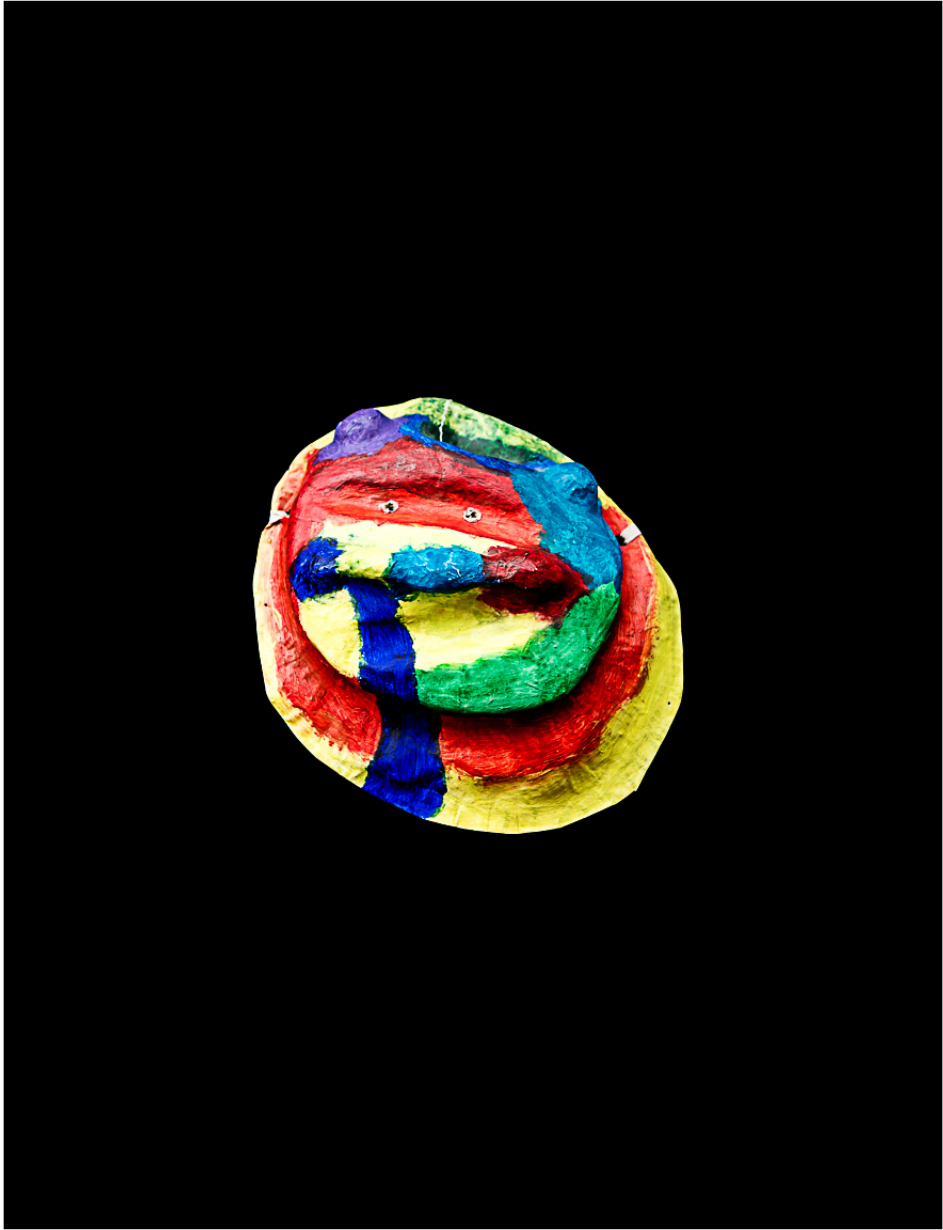
Mask 3 West

Chapter 3.

Clown Training, Clown Rules, and Making Contact

Clown training is experiential and therefore not easily or effectively described outside of a direct encounter with the work. However, I am aware that a basic description of the training will greatly facilitate the conversation that I want to open with this dissertation. If you are interested in a more extensive description of clown training I encourage you to read the following resources: Davison's *Clown* (2013), especially chapter 10 "Clown Training"; Coburn and Morrison's *Clown Through Mask* (2013), by far the most extensive written resource on the Pochinko-style of clown training; Lecoq's *The Moving Body* (2000), especially the section on clowns; and Gaulier's *The tormentor: Le jeu, light, theatre* (2008). It is worthwhile to note that these authors also emphasize the difference between an experience of clown training and an experience reading about clown training. As Coburn (2013) states in the Preface to *Clown Through Mask*,

> In many ways I would encourage you not to read this book until you have encountered the work in workshop form [….] I would encourage you to have patience. Wait. Do the work. Have your experience. Then read the book. (p. xiv)

I will not suggest that you should experience clown training for yourself before you read this dissertation, but I will encourage you to read my description with the recognition that clowning is personal and experiential, and therefore cannot be fully captured or explained in my writing.

While there are a number of approaches to clown training, my discussion will focus on the *Clown Through Mask* training developed by Richard Pochinko and adapted into *The Clown and Mask Intensive* by John Turner. This focus simply reflects the fact that this training was my introduction into the world of clowning and continues to provide the foundation

upon which I understand it. The *Clown and Mask Intensive* is focused on a process of "walking" colours and directions through the body. In this process, we "breath in" the colour or direction and allow the *feeling* of it (as opposed to our pre-existing ideas about it) to inform the way we move our bodies. This embodiment of colours and directions is an exploration in not knowing – in going for the unknown.

*I invite you to choose any colour from the visible light spectrum (***Red***,* **Orange***,* **Yellow***,* **Green***,* **Blue***,* **Indigo***,* **Violet***) and to close your eyes and see that colour.*

See the colour and begin to breathe it into your body: let each breath draw more of the colour into you.

Your focus is not on your ideas about that colour, whether or not you like the colour, or any other external consideration. Instead, your focus is on becoming that colour, allowing your body to be completely infused with that colour.

Say the name of your colour out loud to yourself.

Now, replace the name of your colour with the sound "Fe." Say "Fe" out loud the same way you said the name of your colour earlier. Feel yourself saying the name of your colour but use the sound "Fe" instead.[27] Use "Fe" to send your colour to every part of your body.

Allow your body to move around the room in whatever way feels right for your body as that colour.

Send your colour into your heels…the pits of your knees…in-between your fingers…your hair…

Feel how the feeling shifts and changes as the colour infuses more and more of your body.

Keep breathing.

Go for the unknown.

Let the colour fill up your spine…feel it in your cheeks…your eyelids…your ears. Keep moving your body. Visualize the colour in your body and move your body as that colour until you are so full that the colour is shooting out of your eyes.

Now that you are absolutely filled up with your colour, move quickly through your space.

Take your colour low through your space.

> *Take your colour high through your space.*

Change directions.

> *Jump!!!*

> *Change directions.*

Leap!

Strike a difficult balance.

> *Sing (with no words)! Let your song swell up from your belly.*

> *Feel your rhythm.*

Close your eyes. Know that you are standing on the edge of the world: this world that you live in as this colour.

Open your eyes and see what is in your world. See what's on your head. See what's on your body. If you don't see anything on your head or your body, what would be there if there was something? Make it up![28]

Make a painting. Paint the rhythm of this colour. Paint the world of this colour. Paint what was on your head and your body.[29]

The process that I have asked you to participate in over the last two pages is repeated in the Clown Through Mask Intensive for each of the colours of the visible light spectrum, as well as for the six directions (North, South, West, East, Above, and Below). For the directions, we translate the embodied feelings into clay, which is sculpted with eyes closed, rather than making a painting. These clay mask forms are referred to as 1 North, 2 South, 3 West, 4 East, 5 Below Below, and 6 Above Above (with the last two representing what is "below" the below and "above" the above). The numbers simply indicate the order in which the masks are made and worn. After the masks are created and first worn, we often explore them in the sphere suggested by the cardinal directions and they can be played with, worn, and evoked in any order at any time. However, in their creation, they follow the order North, South, West, East, Above, and Below. According to John, this order allows us to explore polarities while still disrupting the habit of referring to the directions as North, South, East, and West (J. Turner, personal communication, May 2015).

In the process of mask-creation (which includes walking both the colours and the directions) we are looking for a feeling within ourselves.[30] We work with eyes closed in order to facilitate focus on our embodied feelings, rather than allowing our focus to become visually and aesthetically oriented. John refers to this as "egoless creativity." Once dried, the clay forms that we create for each embodied direction become the foundation for layers of papier mâché and, once the paper masks are set, another layer of embodied intuition is added to the process. Eyes closed, again, we feel the contours of our mask form and ask the mask to reveal its colours to us. We do this by re-connecting with the embodied feeling of each of the colours, in turn. With the colour coursing through our veins and musculature, we lay our hands on the mask and feel where that colour belongs. After the final drying process, we put on our masks – allowing them to become our new faces. We feel the shapes of our faces. We look at where the colours fall on our faces. We breathe all of this in. We connect with our centres of impulse. We move through space. We go for the unknown. We feel what it is like to move through the world with this new face. We walk like this being, who is different from us (and yet sourced from inside our own embodied creativity). We move through the expanded world of possibility that comes from being the mask.

According to unpublished workshop materials written by John Turner, mask creation "is an involved process of physicalization and visualization." Throughout his workshops, John repeatedly states that belief is created through the combination of visualization and physicalization: it is neither enough to simply move, nor to simply imagine; however, together, movement and imagination can lead us to belief. Furthermore, John explains that the masks themselves serve as "guideposts to the student's creative playground and as such are also the guideposts to his/her clown" (J. Turner, unpublished workshop materials). The masks externalize aspects of our own embodied creativity that can provide us with guideposts or access points for connection with the practice of clowning.

For each mask, participants create a "turn" intended to "express the essence of the mask without the use of verbal language" (J. Turner, unpublished workshop materials). A turn is a short performance (in John's workshops, two minutes or less). The term turn comes from circus clowns, whose performances were often literally a "turn" around the circus ring. Turns are understood as opportunities to further explore the "world of the mask," including finding out what is fantastic about each mask. Participants come out in each turn with the intention to learn more about their masks and, by extension, about the "beautiful ridiculousness" of themselves.

The intensive culminates with the birth of the clown. The clown is born through a ritual that involves moving quickly between the mask until the boundaries between them blur. This ritual metaphorically represents the clown's existence in-between each of the masks. As John explains it, the creative self can be understood as a sphere with an infinite number of points equidistant from a single, central point – the central point being the self (J. Turner, personal communication, August, 2008). The physical masks that we make during the intensive are six defined points of this sphere, or, six expressions of our creative selves. The self, in the center, can be understood as the "seventh direction," which we learn about and nuance through our experiences with the six other directions.[31] In the *Clown Through Mask* training, "facing the six directions" (i.e., making the masks) is done in order to actually face the "seventh direction" (ourselves) *through* each of the six directions. The clown can

"land on" and inhabit any of the points of the sphere but it can also oscillate between the points of the sphere, inhabiting the spaces between them.

3.1. The Clown "Rules"

The clown "rules" (originally known by Pochinko and Wallace as "things to remember," as I will explain below) form the, primarily unspoken, core of the clown training: all of the exercises in the training are geared towards facilitating an experience of the rules; however, it is significant to note that there are no exercises in the training that specifically or overtly "teach the rules." Furthermore, the clown rules both are and are not specific to the Pochinko tradition of clown teaching. To my knowledge, the "clown rules" are not discussed in other traditions of clown training – at least not using that terminology. However, the rules themselves are relevant to all forms of clowning, just as they are relevant to many other experiences of life. The rules have been articulated through observation of a number of clowning traditions, beginning with Pochinko's in-depth exploration of styles of theatre in Europe, America, and Canada. Thus, though the codification of the rules may be unique to the Pochinko tradition of teaching, it does not follow that the rules themselves are unique to this tradition. One of the most fascinating aspects of these clown rules is that they are enacted in many situations without requiring any conscious attention. What is unique about the Pochinko tradition of teaching is, therefore, simply the awareness that is drawn to the rules.

The following are the approximately thirty-seven rules referenced throughout the *Clown Through Mask* training process. I mention that there are "approximately" thirty-seven rules, because this list itself is always in-flux:

Take us into your world and bring us back Get yourself off The rule of three Make contact Be honest Have fun More more out Follow the rhythm Physicalize Be zany Listen to us Listen to yourself Follow yourself Follow when to leave Keep the audience safe Drop the script you can always go back and surprise up yourself Present yourself six Impulse Be honest Have fun More Believe Be flexible Be visceral Keep the wave Take a risk going back go Think out there Go for the unknown Ride the Clown logic Play with rhythm Take Breathe Know when it Trust Let us affect you Break Specific Gifts from the gods Be spel all the rules

I have presented the rules in a spiral as a visual way of demonstrating their interconnectedness and interdependence. Conversations with Dr. Vicki Kelly and John Turner have helped me to visualize the clown rules (and the practice of clowning more broadly) as akin to a vortex or a Möbius strip (see p. 46-47 of Parker Palmer's *A Hidden Wholeness*, 2004, for a detailed description of the Möbius strip, including how to make one out of paper). The spiral, vortex, and Möbius strip all speak to me as apt visual metaphors for clowning because they embody a process of transformation: with each, one begins by going into the unknown and in the process is transformed, arriving somewhere deeper, or

different, than could have been imagined at the outset. Unlike the traditional format of the list, the image of the spiral, vortex, or Möbius strip helps to indicate that there is no hierarchical order to the rules; instead they are enfolded within one another. These images also mirror my approach to my work in this dissertation, where I see myself as circling and spiraling around my subject matter, rather than approaching it directly or in a simply linear way. It is this method of approach that has allowed me to transform alongside my inquiry. Finally, the image of the spiral evokes a sense of movement, which is fitting because the clown rules are lived and experienced, rather than simply studied or memorized.

These clown "rules" are not specifically *taught* as part of the clown training; instead, they are better understood as *revealed* or *uncovered* through the experiences of the training. I have been deepening my understanding and personal relationship with these rules over the past eight years, through the various clown training courses I have taken (whether the rules are part of the methodology of the course or not), as well as through my discussions with other clown practitioners and teachers. One workshop that was particularly seminal in shaping my connection with the rules was John's *Baby Clown: The Teacher's Perspective*, which I took in 2010. In this workshop, John provides students with a "course pack" of sorts: it includes a number of exercise descriptions, quotations about clowning, and his own personal musings about the art form of clowning and this particular approach to clown training. As John explains in these unpublished workshop materials:

> Through […] the exercises of the entire workshop *the rules of clown emerge giving the student a fundamental understanding of clown* [emphasis added], a structure for continuing creative exploration and story development, and a deeper experience of the elements at play in any performance situation.

The term "rule" has strong implications of order, boundary, control, power and governance. We live in rule-bound worlds. There are rules:

of the road

        in the classroom

              for addressing your elders

on the playground

        of attire

              of attraction

 of decorum

        for worship

              for establishing respect

for highly successful people

        for dating

              in love

for game play

        for radicals

              of engagement

for interacting (i.e., ground rules)

              of civil procedure

of order

        and, perhaps especially, for creating new rules

29

Some of these rules are specifically articulated, taught, and learned. Other rules are silently acknowledged, understood, and abided. These learned rules – whether spoken or unspoken – are what I refer to as "rule rules." They have different levels of legitimacy (depending on who you are talking to), different spheres of influence, and different methodologies of application. However, they are all experienced as external systems to be learned, understood, and abided (or not).

The clown rules are not, like many other structures of rules, an externally imposed system. Think about what it would be like if you had to learn to breathe, or (more accurately) if this took more than the first few moments of life to "learn" and then "know" and "practice." In her work, Snowber (2011) recognizes this form of knowledge as being that which resides in the body, even when it has been consciously forgotten. As she explains, this knowledge may "sound simplistic," (as remembering to breathe likely does), but this is because "deep truths often are" (Snowber, 2011, p. 193). Perhaps this simplicity is precisely because the form of knowledge in question does not need to be learned: "This is all knowledge you once knew and still do deep down. It just needs to be re/membered, re/bodied back to being" (Snowber, 2011, p. 193). The clown "rules" can be challenging to remember and re/member because they have, in many cases, been suppressed or covered over by our socialization. Uncovering the clown rules is like going on an archaeological dig; we sift through layers of dirt (including layer upon layer of "rule rules") until we stumble upon an artifact (a clown rule) that has been waiting for us – something that we already know and that we have, perhaps unconsciously, practiced throughout our lives. This process of "uncovering" the rules within ourselves is echoed in Elizabeth Lange's vision of transformative and restorative learning. In her article "Transformative and Restorative Learning: A Vital Dialectic for Sustainable Societies" (2004) Lange explains that transformation involves disorientation which can only be navigated well in relation to a point of stability. In her work, such stability is facilitated through a restorative process of reconnecting with "personal ethics" that have been "submerged because of competing cultural scripts" (Lange, 2004, p. 122). As I will discuss further below, the uncovering the clown rules is a process of remembering, re/membering, re/bodying, and restoring our own

personal relationships with these rules, which lends grounding to the transformative practice of clowning.

As in Snowber's articulation of knowledge being "re/bodied," movement is a core feature of the clown training as it fosters deep engagement with the body, which carries memories of the clown rules long after they have been forgotten by the conscious mind. Lecoq's approach is particularly influenced by movement work, which is the starting point for all of his creative explorations, as he explains in his book *The Moving Body* (2000). The early clown training at Lecoq's school focuses on the "forbidden gestures" that have become "buried deep in our childhood bodies" (Lecoq, 2000, p. 148). Similarly, in his somatic work, Stephen Smith (2014) refers to the "energies of vital contact" that can be found in children "before they are harnessed and dissipated in insipid forms of schooling" (p. 241). As we learn to dig up or unharness these gestures and energies, we also discover new freedoms in our play, which can help to strip us of the defences (Lecoq, 2000, p. 148) we have built up over the years in response to the many "rule rules" that govern our daily realities. Beginning with physical and bodily explorations therefore opens us up to the world of possibilities that already exists within ourselves, including all of the clown rules. Learning to express these possibilities is the process of learning to clown.

Through clown training we come to recognize that these rules operate beyond the level of our consciousness all the time; bringing them to a conscious level and giving them sustained attention can bring us a new perspective, a new awareness of what we are doing, and, perhaps, a new ability to recognize opportunities to remember and enact the rules. This uncovering of the rules resonates with Laurel Butler's (2012) suggestion that "clown is not something you learn, but is rather a process of unlearning something – namely, a 'mechanistic view of reality'" (p. 63). It is possible that the presence of the clown rules throughout the training does not result so much from *learning* the rules but, instead, from *unlearning* the obstacles that exist to us accessing or remembering the rules within ourselves. In her 1995 article "In Dialogue with Grumet," Fels proposes that Heidegger's conception of knowledge as "knowing, doing, being" should be expanded through the addition of "creating." More recently, Kirsten Frantzich dissertation "Theatre of the Psyche" (2013) has

considered the significance of both "not-knowing and undoing" for our human capacity to be and to create. Butler's vision of clowning as a way of "unlearning" received knowledge about the world, and Frantzich's (2013) theorization of the creative powers of "not-knowing" and "undoing" both connect with the clown's own imperative to "go for the unknown": the clown is forever blurring the boundaries between

knowing and not-knowing,

knowns and unknowns,

doings and undoings.

Indeed, it is by playing at these boundaries of the known, the unknown, the not-known, and the not-yet known that the clown comes into being, comes into knowledge, comes undone, and comes to create.

The purpose of rule rules is to tell us how to do and, frequently, how not to do specific things. Rules of the road, for example, tell us how to drive in order to avoid colliding with other cars, pedestrians, and objects. The clown rules can be remembered and checked in with during a performance, experience, or moment of encounter. This process of checking in with the rules can help us to realize why something is "working" or not working, for instance why we are able or unable to connect with someone in a moment of encounter. Frequently, when something is not "working," we will realize that we have forgotten about one of the clown rules. However, even when we remember to "be honest," for example, this remembering doesn't tell us *how* to be honest. The "how" is discovered in the moment and is unique to the relationship between the performer, their embodiment of the clown, and the audience (whether that be one person or many). Therefore, the how is clowning itself. The rules are like arrows that can point us in a direction. Clowning is what actually propels us in that direction. This quality of the rules makes it hard to discuss them outside of the context of particular, embodied experiences. This quality of the rules is also what makes discussing them in this dissertation challenging: we, as writer and reader, do not necessarily share an embodied framework for approaching and understanding these rules. And these rules are

not best understood as meaning unto themselves, although this is one possible level at which to understand them. Instead, these rules are best understood in relation to experiences and moments of encounter.

While crafting his approach to clown training, Pochinko expressed that it was his intense desire for this work to "help people break out of their creative prisons or 'glass jars'" (J. Turner, unpublished workshop materials). Pochinko felt strongly that *everyone* has "a clown force within them" (J. Turner, unpublished workshop materials) and the training that he developed was intended to awaken this force, as well as encourage participants to embrace its presence and the quality of attention that it afforded them. In this way, Pochinko felt that "the glass jars could be broken, leading toward unfettered creativity and expression" (J. Turner, unpublished workshop materials).

One aspect of breaking out of the creative prisons of which Pochinko spoke is, arguably, a breaking free from the systems of "rule rules" that have shaped and confined our behaviours and ways of being. It is important to note that the clown training does not encourage participants to abandon "rule rules" as many of these rules help to keep us safe and, frankly, alive. Instead, clown training provides a space wherein the primary focus can be on the revelation of the clown rules that exist within us and help us to experience the possibilities that attend a release – even if only temporary – from the dictates of the everyday rule rules. Sustained attention to the clown rules allows us to return to ourselves by devoting less of our attention to the outside rules that usually govern our behaviours. This return to ourselves can allow us to both re-evaluate our own successes and failures from a different perspective and also assess our rule rules anew. In this way clowning encourages a return of our focus to the center of ourselves, thereby allowing us to engage our internal sensations and understandings as pedagogically meaningful for our external decisions and actions.

Crucially, the clown rules function as a structure, meaning that they are not intended to be applied in isolation from one another…and the last "rule" in the list of clown rules is to "break all the rules." This principle can certainly be applied to the clown's relationship with the rule rules of a particular society. Indeed, clowns have often been the figures who have been most empowered to "break the rules" of their particular communities: clowns can

fart audibly during a ceremony or break an egg over the king's head. However, the responsibility to "break all the rules" can also apply to the clown rules themselves. This final rule is therefore a mechanism to ensure that the system of clown rules does not, itself, become a structured paradigm of rule rules, adopted and followed uncritically. When one of the rules that you need to remember is to "break all the rules," then you are perpetually empowered to consider the rules critically. Given that this rule, like all the others, is part of an interconnected structure, it cannot be taken in isolation. Our awareness must extend not only to the rules themselves, but also to the connections between them. Thus, if we are going to break a rule, we have to be aware of what that rule is and be prepared for how our breaking of that rule might impact and influence all of the other rules that make up the structure.

3.1.1.   "Things to Remember"

The ubiquity of our experience with rule rules may explain why clown teachers have been reluctant to use the term "rules" without qualification. The clown rules are all positive. They offer us things to remember and enjoy turning our attention to. This is important because rule rules are often things that we first become aware of when we accidentally break them, and get in trouble for it. The clown rules don't chastise us "not to lie." Instead, they encourage us to find the joy and play in being honest. As John explains, when Pochinko was teaching using the system of clown "rules" that he established, he "never called them rules. He and Ian called them 'things to remember'" (J. Turner, personal communication, July 9, 2012). John himself describes the rules as "colours on the palette" for creation (J. Turner, personal communication, July 9, 2012). When Pochinko and Ian were teaching, there were only about twelve "things to remember" but Michael Kennard and John Turner have been adding to the list through their years of teaching and performance. John explains, "they're all basically playing on the same themes and overlapping, we just got more specific and more structured" (J. Turner, personal communication, July 9, 2012), which seems appropriate, since "be specific" is, itself, a "thing to remember."

As John recalls, the shift in description from "things to remember" to "clown rules" occurred because, both as teachers and as practitioners, Mike and John believe firmly in achieving freedom *through* structure, which is to be differentiated from seeking freedom *from* structure. In their teaching, Mike and John felt that the description "things to remember" sometimes implied freedom without structure, or at least this is how it was interpreted by their students. When students encountered a "thing to remember" that was difficult for them to access, embody, or utilize, they simply disregarded it. John and Mike therefore began referring to the clown *rules* in order to encourage students to discover the freedom that can arise *through* structure, such as the structure of attending to the clown rules. They therefore made use of the power of the term "rules," while at the same time actively encouraging students to understand the differences between rule rules and clown rules. Once students are aware of and practicing the "rules," then they once again become "things to remember."

The remembering that is referenced in the description "things to remember" is multi-directionally oriented to both the past and the future, while being grounded in the present. An awareness of the clown rules is a remembering (uncovering) of ideas/impulses/possibilities that exist within us and predate the moment of the present. It is also a good idea to remember the clown rules in the future – not in the sense of memorizing them in order to recite them by rote (I can usually only list about twenty of them off the top of my head), but rather in an embodied sense of memory where awareness of the rules is carried forward into our performances, our actions, our ways of being. [32]

There is a cyclical relationship between clowning as an approach (a "how") and the ability to remember the rules: as a way of attending, clown practice allows us to recognize the clown rules and their existing function in our lives. Simultaneously, paying attention to (or remembering) the clown rules is a necessary element in establishing the particular quality of attention that is clowning. This quality of attention is, therefore, characterized by the clown rules. It is attention that is filled with pleasure, honesty, fun, rhythm, breath, impulse, surprise, and the tension between safety and risk. It is a quality of attention in which all of the rules operate at all times, even when we are not conscious of them. However, the

practice of clowning specifically involves heightening our consciousness of the rules and the myriad ways that they work.

This kind of remembering, this quality of attention, has broad applicability. When the ability to remember is carried within our bodies rather than merely being a consciously engaged and discreet mental process, "remembering" becomes a particular quality of attention. Remembering the clown rules is not, first and foremost, about *recalling* the list of clown rules as they have been established. Instead, it is embodying the kind of attentive aliveness and presence that is suggested by the rules. In this way, the clown rules come to closely resemble the practice of mindfulness, which has increasingly been recognized as carrying deep resonance for the educational and scholarly contexts, particularly in fostering holistic well-being for both teachers and students (Bai, 2001; Inoue, 2012; MacDonald & Shirley, 2009; Rechtschaffen, 2014; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; and Walsh, Bickel & Leggo, 2015). In the book *The Practice of Happiness: Exercises & Techniques for Developing Mindfulness, Wisdom, and Joy*, Frýba (1995) describes the notion of "wise apprehension" in terms that resonate with my understanding of an embodied remembering of the clown rules:

> Wise apprehension of the situation does not mean some kind of analysis of motivation; it is simply a question of perceiving and making ready (taking into account) the available potentialities for action (*kattu-kamyatā-chanda*). In the exercise this step takes only a few seconds. After sufficient training, in daily-life situations it will require no more than a fraction of a second. (p. 105)

Similarly, in the clown training, we bring our conscious attention to practicing, enacting, and embodying the rules so that they might be remembered in our future lives (and performances) in "a fraction of a second," or less. My assertion is twofold: firstly, embodied attention to and awareness of the clown rules themselves could inform our work by encouraging us to engage in scholarly practices that breathe, that are surprising, that take our audiences into our world, that take risks, and that are visceral, flexible, and fun (as just a few examples); secondly, the quality of attention implied by this form of remembering (or wise apprehension) is a nuanced and living quality of attention – one that is exhilarating, consuming, and available to all "potentialities for action." Beyond simply an embodied remembering of the clown rules themselves, I posit that embodied remembering as a way of

attending, and a wise apprehension, is broadly resonant with and nourishing for scholars: such embodied remembering encourages us to perceive ourselves and our contexts deeply and to make ourselves ready for many possibilities, without necessitating laborious or drawn out analysis. Instead, it simply requires us to return to the center of ourselves and remember.

3.1.2.   The "Overall and Everything Rule"

John refers to "get yourself off" as the "overall and everything rule" (J. Turner, personal communication, July 6, 2012). Importantly, this claim does not mean that that rule can be considered in isolation from the others. Rather, it is the "overall and everything rule" because of its reliance on and ability to contribute to and connect with each of the other rules.

"Get yourself off" can be intended in the way that most people first take it – i.e., sexually – however, it is also metaphorical. In this way it refers to the broadest possible spectrum of pleasure, enjoyment, and fulfillment. As John and I discussed,

> Julia: having a blast [in order to get yourself off] can be having a blast in the depths of sadness –
>
> John: In the depth of sorrow –
>
> Julia: Yeah
>
> John: in the depth of torment, in the depth of joy and ecstasy, it can be sexual, it can be a religious frenzy, it can be any of those things, and it can be incredibly mundane. You can be getting yourself off being incredibly mundane, right? (J. Turner, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

As with so many other things in clown, the point is not the specifics of the action (the *what* that is getting us off). Rather, the point is in the being, the doing – the point is that whatever the specifics might be, we approach them with a depth of commitment and passion, and with an internal enjoyment of the very fact that we are able to experience this aspect of human life. It is that commitment and enjoyment, rather than any particular action or activity that gets us off.

The expression "get yourself off" is used for a number of reasons: firstly, the shock value of this seemingly sexual phrase helps this "rule" to stick in our memories – it is much more attention catching then the comparatively more benign "enjoy yourself"; secondly, the association of this expression with an orgasm is productive as it speaks to an experience that is not only pleasurable but also full, absorbing, embodied, and visceral; thirdly, and finally, the expression is to get *yourself* off, which clearly indicates where the responsibility lies. As a performing clown, it is not the audience's (or anyone else's) responsibility to make the experience enjoyable for you. It is not uncommon to hear actors lament a "bad audience," suggesting that the play didn't go over well, or the experience of acting in it wasn't enjoyable, because the audience "didn't get it" or "wasn't into it." This first rule of clown makes it clear that your experience is your own and your own responsibility – it is up to you to seek pleasure and to find ways of sharing this pleasure with others. Each of these elements of the rule are translatable from the practice of clowning onstage to my interest in living my clowning practice throughout the entirety of my life. As I apply the clowning principles to my life, I seek opportunities to be attention catching and memorable and I invest myself in creating experiences that are full, embodied, absorbing, and pleasurable, taking responsibility for both my successes and my failures in achieving such moments.

When performers attempt to put the audience's pleasure before their own, they begin to try to do things *to* or *for* the audience. The performer begins to ask: is my audience laughing? Are they interested? Are they learning? Are they happy with me? Am I good enough for them? Will they judge me kindly or harshly? It is not that we should ignore these questions (they are good motivators to ensure that we aren't forgetting about our responsibilities), but we have to remember that if we, ourselves, aren't laughing, aren't interested, aren't learning, aren't happy, aren't feeling good enough, aren't judging ourselves kindly, then it is very unlikely that we will be able to inspire these things in others. In short, if we aren't getting ourselves off, it is a bit unfair to expect that we will be able to get others off, or even encourage them to get themselves off. In John's words,

If you're not coming out here to have a blast, how do you expect us to? You're basically responsible - you're at the head of the ship. You're the one guiding this experience right? So, if you're not there to have a blast, what are the chances that we're going to have a blast? (J. Turner, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

Cyclically, what is most likely to help others enjoy an experience that we share with them is ensuring that we, ourselves, enjoy it. In this way, we can think about our own enjoyment – our own "getting off" – as not merely selfish but as actually being *in service* to others. As John articulated it,

The better crafted the piece, the better listened to all the rules, etc. etc. then the greater the chance of you getting yourself off. So, the point being, don't come out to help us get ourselves off. You got to have some stakes in it, you've got to have some investment in it. (J. Turner, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

Giving attention to and taking responsibility for our own enjoyment and well being are not merely self-serving pursuits. True, experiencing enjoyment *is* self-serving. But it is also other-serving, or at least it can be. I find support for this perspective in Parker J. Palmer's in-depth analysis of the relationship between being "selfish" and being an "empty self" in his book *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004). He states,

There *are* selfish acts, to be sure. But those acts arise from an empty self, as we try to fill our emptiness in ways that harm others – or in ways that harm us and bring grief to those who care about us. When we are rooted in true self, we can act in ways that are life-giving for us and all whose lives we touch. Whatever we do to care for true self is, in the long run, a gift to the world. (Palmer, 2004, p. 39)

What Palmer refers to throughout *A Hidden Wholeness* as "true self," "soul," and "living undivided," I see as precisely that which can be accessed through clowning practice: a depth of our multiple, vulnerable selves that can open up to us and also open up the world to us in new ways.

Writing this dissertation has presented me with many interesting and challenging opportunities to live into my own embodied sense of what it means to "get yourself off," and to offer that self-fulfillment to others. As just one example, throughout the writing of this dissertation, I frequently struggled with a desire to write my dissertation *to* or *for* my reader, wanting to write in ways that I felt would satisfy my projected sense of what a reader might want or expect in a dissertation about clowns. This desire led me to oscillate between the feeling that my dissertation should be or sound more "scholarly" and the feeling that my dissertation should be or sound more "clowny" (more fun, more funny). Ultimately, I found my way into writing that allowed me to embody my own multiplicity (my multiple existence as both scholar and clown) and to get myself off in the work. This approach to my writing has allowed me to satisfy myself as both clown and scholar and to find ways to play in/with my voice as an academic writer, which is an important, real, and legitimate part of who I am, including who I am as a clown.

When we practice the clown's imperative to "get ourselves off," we come into connection with others not to entertain, or educate, or inform, or do anything *for* them, but instead to share a deep aspect of ourselves – some element of our deepest pleasure – *with* them. This revelation of ourselves requires of us a deep investment in what we are doing: we cannot feel lackluster about what we are sharing and expect that it will get us off. Nor can we expect that something that we are not deeply invested in will be pleasurable for others. These elements of deep personal investment and self-revelation are at the heart of the clown's vulnerability. The clown reveals herself, her heart, and her pleasure for the audience and then must deal with the audience's true response to what she has shared. If the audience thinks that she is weird or boring or gross, she must accept this response in a way that doesn't shut down the connection between herself and her audience because the clown's ongoing pursuit is to "keep the conversation going." In her writing about wounds as a place of inquiry, inspiration, and intrigue, Dianna Denton (2006) pronounces:

> In those moments when I am wounded and close down rather than staying open to feeling I notice a contraction in my body. In the question I am repeatedly returned to the wound. The wound becomes a point of entry – a passage through darkness to expansion. (p. 137)

Remaining open – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually – in moments of deep vulnerability and even possible wounding, this is the work of clowning. The dynamics of this work and of the clown's imperative to "keep the conversation going" bring us to a discussion of the importance of heart-to-heart vulnerability in the clown's play: clowns do not merely play to "have fun." Instead, they play to "get themselves off," a distinction which implies the depth of personal investment, vulnerability, and revelation of heart that must occur in order for the clown to truly be present.

3.2.   Making Contact

A significant aspect of my learning curve with clowning as a performative practice has been to relax the vice-like hold I have on getting things "right." I am not entirely clear from whence my perfectionism stems, but I can tell you that it runs deep (and, incidentally, it has generally served me quite well as a student). The comprehensive exam structure in my program is very open ended: it requires that you do no less than two and no more than four "parts," with parts ranging broadly from papers to colloquia, from a portfolio to a performance. Naturally, I decided to do a clown performance as one part of my comprehensive exam. I struggled quite deeply during the preparation for my exam performance with my desire to "get it right." I felt tremendous pressure, in this relatively short performance, to accurately and comprehensively embody the clowning ethos that I feel so passionate about and find so slippery to define. Simultaneously, I wanted to ensure that my work spoke intelligently (or at least interestingly) about the other aspects of my scholarly interest: teaching, learning, social change, ethics, embodiment… In addition to feeling like there was too much to capture, and a lot at stake in how I captured it, this was the first time I was setting out to engage the clowning process (from mask making through to performance) without the direct guidance of my clown teachers. I felt adrift. Nothing really felt "right" to me through the entirety of my preparations for my performance. I had some ideas that I liked okay, but nothing that really thrilled me. Perhaps fortunately (though it didn't feel so at the time), the other two parts of my comprehensive exams (two thirty page papers) took up a considerable amount of time, and so I wasn't able to worry about my performance for very long and needed to make some quick decisions. Ultimately, I think that

working within a short timeframe forced me to relax my desire to "get it right" a bit, and thereby allow my instincts (my embodied remembering of the clown's quality of attention) to take over.

When I put on my red nose on the day of my comprehensive exam performance, suddenly everything I had prepared made sense to me or, perhaps more accurately, made sense to the clown. Without really thinking about it, I came out and explained to my audience members that they were about to participate in my research. While I hadn't come up with this framing in advance, it provided the perfect container for my performance, directly linking my clown antics with my scholarly practice, and with the more conventional trappings of scholarly work. Suddenly, I was thrilled!

Throughout the entire process of creating this comprehensive clown performance, I felt extremely vulnerable: I was uncertain and even, at times, unmoored by the lack of confidence I felt in my ability to embody everything I wanted to say about (and with) clowning. While this vulnerability was uncomfortable during the creation process, I knew enough about clowning to know that it would be crucial to share it openly during the performance itself. I have a tendency to shy away from vulnerability in my performances because a) it scares me and b) I like to believe that I can present a polished and entertaining piece without having to *really* reveal myself. The latter is likely true, but the polished and entertaining piece won't be clowning. I decided to counteract my tendency to avoid expressing my vulnerability by incorporating the exercise "making contact" directly into my performance.

"Making contact" is an exercise taken from John's *Clown and Mask Intensive*. In the exercise, participants walk onstage and "make contact" with every person in the audience. Sounds easy, but it's not. The goal of the exercise is to drop as much artifice, and as many of our walls, as possible in order to realize on a visceral level that you don't have to *do* anything to connect with another person, you simply have to *be*. John encourages his clown students to translate any impulses they have to do something (such as smile, laugh, speak, move, etc.) into focused concentration on their breath and their eyes. Indeed, he refers to the kind of communication that occurs in the making contact exercise as communication "through the

breath and on the eyes" (J. Turner, personal communication, August 2008). The other focus during the exercise is on relaxing all our unconscious and habitual manifestations of self-protection, such as locked knees and hunched shoulders – all of the small physical ways that we keep our walls in place and shut ourselves off from others. Standing in plain view of an audience while relaxing your body and breathing is an incredibly vulnerable thing to do. If you don't believe me (and even if you do!), I encourage you to try it yourself.

In my comprehensive exam performance, I made contact with my audience. After taking them through an experience of clown logic involving name tags, bananas, and poetry, I made my way upstage. I turned my back to the audience and slowly removed my costume and my red nose. I turned around and took in a breath, taking my audience in with it. I made contact with my audience, looking for a moment of connection (through the breath and on the eyes) with each person. I have no idea how long this took. It felt like both two minutes and three hours. I don't like the exercise making contact, but, at the same time, I love the exercise making contact. You see, there is nothing to "get right" with this exercise. Sure, I suppose you could assess how successfully or unsuccessfully someone relaxed his or her body. But the whole point of the exercise is to be present in a moment of connection with another human being. The more you worry about getting that "right," the less likely you are to experience it at all. Making contact in my comprehensive exam performance was a way for me to acknowledge and share the vulnerability that I experience bringing my clowning into my scholarly work. I felt that vulnerability poignantly during my preparation for that performance, but it is perpetually with me and it is an important part of the story of my research. The clown arrived to save me during my comprehensive exam performance, transforming some okay ideas into an experience that went beyond entertainment into something that was both revelatory *for* me (allowing me to appreciate the power and presence of the clown), and revealing *of* me (allowing me to vulnerably share my heart with others). However, the clown would not have arrived at all had I not been willing to make myself vulnerable: firstly, to my own clowning practice, trusting that if I lay the groundwork and then allowed myself to really dive straight in *something* interesting would happen; and, secondly, to my audience, allowing them to be present and to affect me.

I revealed my heart during my performance that day. I know I did because I felt it and so did others in my audience: when I finished the making contact exercise, I spoke about how the experience was for me and invited audience members to do the same. More than one person had tears in their eyes when they shared how it felt to really be seen in the moment of contact. Through the work that I have done to bring clown and scholar together in myself, I have learned that while vulnerability is omnipresent, it is often easier (and definitely more comfortable) to conceal it than to reveal it. In an effort to allow the clown to arise in these pages, I continue to reveal my vulnerable heart to you in both obvious and subtle ways and, in turn, I ask you to try to look *through* these words – this text printed on a page or projected on a screen – so that you might really see me, through the breath and on the eyes.
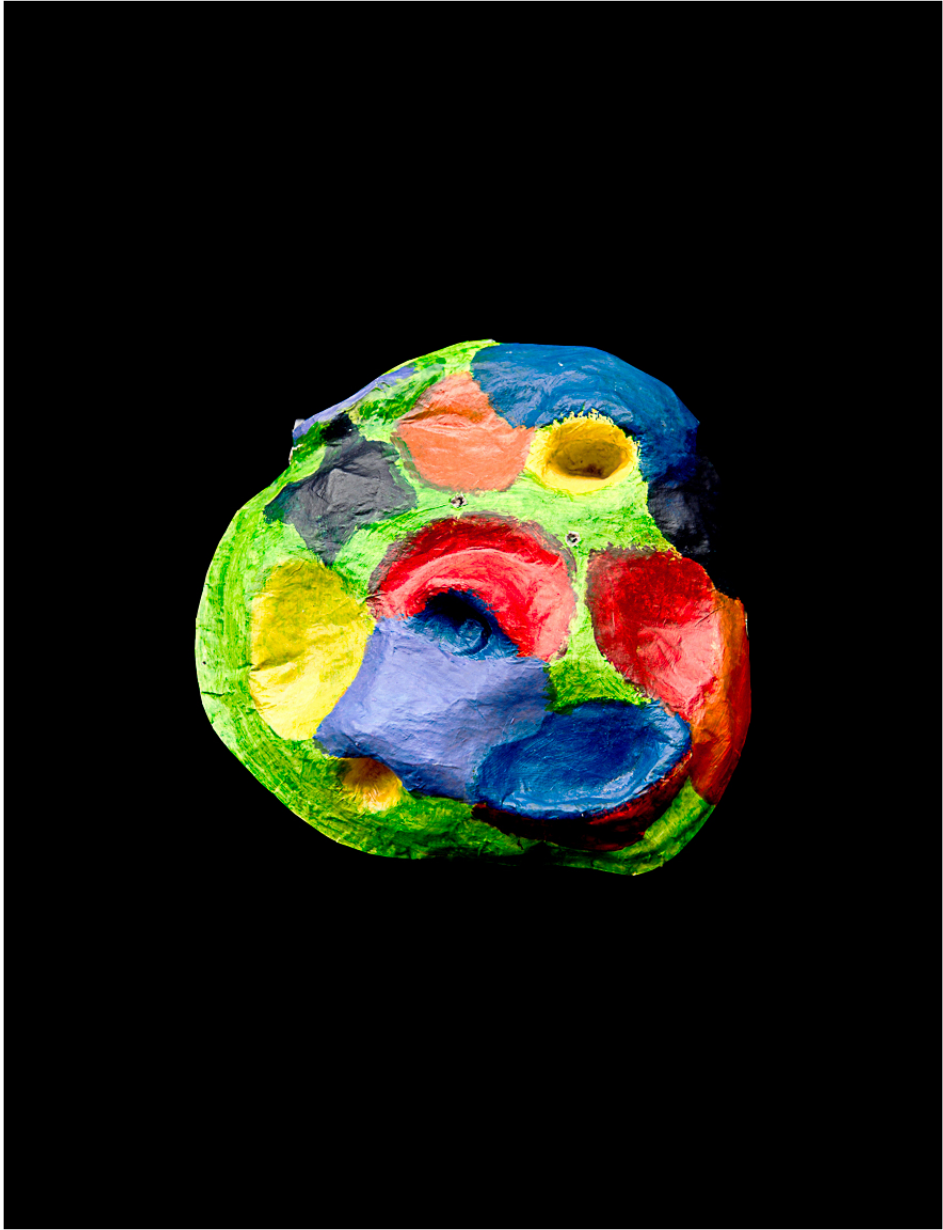
Mask 4 East

Chapter 4.

Some Foundational Principles of Clown

David MacMurray Smith explains that the clown is like the wind in that we cannot see it directly but can instead see only what it moves (D. MacMurray Smith, personal communication, May 2014). I suggest that this is because clowning is a matter of how, rather than of what. It is an approach, rather than a result. It is an interaction, rather than a tangible product. Since clowning is defined by its *how* (by approach), rather than by *what*, specifically, the clown is doing, I take this to mean that the clown can do anything. The clown can build a cedar chest or perform slapstick onstage. The statement that "clowns can do anything" does not mean that there are beings called "clowns" who, deity-like, are invincible, all-capable, and all-knowing. Instead, it refers to a core aspect of the clown approach (or clowning as an approach), which is the practice of possibility. Clowning is an approach whereby we see the impossible challenges that face us as creative tasks to be taken on in new and different ways, as opportunities to unbind ourselves from what we cannot do and embrace what we *can* do. Sometimes this will require an adjustment of frame or perspective, sometimes it will require imagination and creativity. Luckily, these are all clown fortes. It is significant to remember that being able to do anything *includes* being able to fail. Indeed, clowns are often particularly good at failing. Furthermore, being *able* to do anything doesn't mean that there aren't tasks that elude the clown. Indeed, this is clearly demonstrated by the many performances that focus on the clown's inability to accomplish a seemingly easy task.

The simplest answer to the question "What does 'the clown approach' give us/allow us to become in our work?" is "the endless possibilities of ourselves." The unpacking of that simple response will take us on the real adventure of this dissertation. I will discuss clowning as an approach and as a practice of possibilities further in the following chapter. My goal in this chapter is to establish what I understand to be four foundational principles of clowning, namely, vulnerability, co-creation in the magic space, multiplicity, and transgression toward

transformation. When taken together, these principles provide for a nuanced understanding of clowning as a practice.

4.1. Vulnerability: Red Nose, Red Heart

As human beings, we keep our hearts in protective sheaths within our bodies. Our skin, musculature, collarbones, and rib cages encase our hearts, shielding them from harm. Clowning is, at core, a vulnerable process of revelation: it is becoming/revealing/connecting with *and offering* ourselves to others. It is in this offering that we become most vulnerable. As a symbol of this vulnerability, clowns bring their hearts forward as their first place of contact with the world. While particularly sensitive individuals might be described as "wearing their hearts on their sleeves," clowns take it one step further by keeping their hearts on their faces. While there are many explanations for why the red nose has become the most enduring and easily recognizable symbol for the clown, the one that resonates most with my experience and understanding of the practice of clowning is that the red nose symbolizes the perpetual revelation of the clown's heart. Significantly, this placement of the heart requires the clown to experience the world intensely and emotionally *without* retreating or shutting down. The imperative to remain connected with others enhances the clown's vulnerability and also establishes this vulnerability as a source of strength.

Denton (2006) acknowledges the transformative power of vulnerability in her discussion of wounding. While the term "wound" is fraught with negative associations, Denton (2006) engages it metaphorically to consider how the experience of a wound might lead to an opening of possibilities:

> I have considered wounds as possible sites of expansion. The wound comes
> upon us in innocence, as the unexpected; in sacrifice, as a loss, a letting go;
> and as a gift, as an offering that is transitional, that moves us into other states
> of being. Listening to the wound we may be awakened to feeling, to a
> deepening responsiveness to self and other; we may find the seeds of
> courage, hope and heart to sustain us. (p. 137-8)

Denton (2006) finds wounds to be metaphorically poignant because of their relationship with an "intensification of feeling" and an immediacy that makes us present to "vulnerability and opening" (p. 131). These traits of a wound as a "puncturing of the feeling body" (Denton, 2006, p. 131) are equally traits that can be evoked by wounding as metaphorical for an opening up of our ongoing relationship with vulnerability and recognition that we are always vulnerable to one another. In her work, also exploring injury, Judith Butler (2004), describes this essentially human quality as "primary vulnerability" (p. xiv) – a form of vulnerability, which acknowledges that, "there are others out there on whom my life depends, people I do not know and may never know" (p. xii). For both Denton and Butler, the literal experience of a wound or injury gives rise to a broader, more perpetual, recognition about vulnerability: namely, that vulnerability is a defining characteristic of humanity. As celebrated vulnerability researcher Brené Brown has observed, "Vulnerability is the core, the heart, the center, of meaningful human experiences" (2012, p. 6). In the face of this reality, we can choose to either close down (which will still not remove the condition of our vulnerability), or to open ourselves to the possibilities that vulnerability affords us. By revealing and offering forward the heart, the clown resolutely affiliates itself with vulnerability as "a possible site of expansion" – as a practice of possibility. Like Denton's evocation of the wound, the red-nose-as-heart is both metaphorical and literal. The little piece of red plastic worn on the face is invested with so much significance that its revelation of vulnerability transcends the symbolic: John freaks out any time his clowning students put on, remove, or otherwise fiddle with their red noses while in view of the audience (and, as a direct consequence, now I do too). As he explains, this is akin to a human being conducting open heart surgery on herself in front of an audience. In sum, it is horrifying.

The red nose is a physical symbol of the clown's propensity to greet the world heart first, to stand exposed, and to offer herself to others, seeking heart-to-heart connections. It is through the vulnerability, intimacy, and exposure that come from revealing the heart that the clown comes to know (himself, others, and the world). The clown's epistemology is an epistemology of an exposed, vulnerable heart. According to the Oxford American Dictionary, "epistemology is the investigation of what distinguishes justified belief from opinion." Epistemology therefore refers to the circumstances of knowledge: when we say we

know something, how do we distinguish that knowing from the kindred experiences of belief and opinion? For some, the threshold for knowledge is common agreement, for others it is related to replication of findings. For the clown, knowledge is confirmed through the heart, which greets the world proudly in the form of the red nose. So yes, this epistemology implies that it is the clown's nose that knows.

Har, har, har.

In less prosaic terms, the clown's red nose becomes a barometer driving choices and the capacity for engagement. It is this epistemology that allows the clown to believe deeply and also change beliefs quickly: the clown knows what the heart verifies as true, and the heart's verification is entirely dependent on context and relationship. So, it is entirely possible for what is true and known to shift from moment to moment, situation to situation, and relationship to relationship.

In his discussion of the hermeneutic imagination, David G. Smith (1991) explores the desire we feel to "ask what makes it possible for us to speak, think, and act in the ways we do" (p. 188). For the clown, the answer is love and magic: It is the heart and its capacity for love that allows us to connect with others and the world and thus to know. And, because the clown is not challenged by the unknown in the ways that human beings often seem to be, the rest is magic. If epistemology is about how we know what we know, then hermeneutics is about how we interpret what we know, whether our interpretation is of specific texts or, as Smith (1991) puts it, "our lives and the world around us" (p. 188). While interpretation is often assumed to be a solitary act, Smith's conception of the hermeneutic imagination focuses on its communal core. This form of hermeneutic, he suggests, gives birth to a type of knowledge that is "made possible by the deep commonality of all people" (Smith, 1991, p. 190). Smith (1991) further explains that, like the clown, the hermeneutic imagination is capable of easily transgressing previously established barriers:

the hermeneutic imagination has the capacity to reach across national and cultural boundaries to enable dialogue between people and traditions superficially at odds. Hermeneutics is able to shake loose dogmatic notions of tradition to show how all traditions open up onto a broader world which can be engaged from within the language of one's own space. (p. 195)

Smith's focus on dialogue "from within the language of one's own space" is crucial to understanding the clown's vulnerability because vulnerability is relational. The clown reveals its heart in the form of the red nose in order to enter into dialogue across boundaries from within its own language: the language of love and magic.

It is the clown's willingness to expose herself, vulnerably, that establishes an invitation into the magic space and makes it possible for the clown to engage in what Donald (2012) has referred to as ethical relationality. As Donald (2012) explains, ethical relationality is characterized by "more complex understandings of human relationality" which is capable of holding "understandings in tension without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate" (p. 2). Here I suggest that a capacity for deep vulnerability is integral to this form of relationality, as it asks us to seek human connection without the need for the kind of rational understanding that reduces what is different to a form of sameness. In this form of relationality, I venture, we practice a revelation of the heart (and an acceptance of the heart of the Other), allowing for deep connection without seeking the kind of resolution that would simplify each of our complexities. I love Smith's (1991) explanation of this form of connection as "building a common shared reality in a spirit of self-forgetfulness, a forgetfulness which is also a form of finding oneself in relation to others" (p. 198). In this explanation Smith beautifully summarizes the experience of the performing clown, and its ethical possibilities. For the performer (or at least for me as a performer), engaging with the clown can certainly be described as an experience of "self-forgetfulness": while clowning I easily forget about myself (Julia) and slip into my deepest multiplicity and vulnerability, which can only arise in connection with others.

4.1.1. Vulnerability, Self-Forgetfulness, and the Clown

"Self-forgetfulness" as a way of "finding oneself in relation to others" (Smith, 1991, p. 198) is nicely exemplified by an experience that I had during my clown training: I loved the clay I made for my 2 South mask. It was sleek and smooth. The wet clay felt cool and slippery and slick under my fingers while I was making it and I wanted to keep running my hands along it long after I knew that it was finished. As I was putting it in the sunshine to dry, Aurora commented that it was very interesting (in direct defiance of John's instructions not to comment on each other's masks and to consciously work on being "in our own place in our own journey"). Aurora's interest made me love that clay even more. You have to understand, Aurora has long red hair, sings like a siren, and is the most striking combination of funny and insightful in everything she does. She quickly became my clown idol, despite my own best efforts to stay involved in my own journey and avoid the trap of judging myself and others in the work. If Aurora thought my clay was interesting, then my clay was definitely interesting. By the time my clay was dry, I had completely disregarded everything that John had said about egoless creativity in relation to the masks. I had forgotten that we make the clay with our eyes closed for a *reason*. My ego was in love with my 2 South clay and there was no turning back.

And then I wore the mask…and my ego was heartbroken. Gone was the beautiful, sleek, smooth clay; it had to be smashed with a hammer in order to liberate the papier mâché that I had painstakingly laid atop it. Despite my near obsessive compulsive efforts, the resulting mask was not as effortlessly sleek as the clay prototype on which it was modeled. Wearing this mask replaced my beloved clay with an embodied experience of a hunchbacked, mangled zoo keeper. Inside of this mask, I felt desperate sadness. I loved all of the animals that I tended, despite being attacked by them with alarming regularity. I felt that everything that made me happy was bound to destroy me in the long run. I had no idea what to make of this character. I struggled to create a turn to present to the class. I eventually came up with this basic script:

Enter in innocence – excited to see that my mom has left an afternoon snack of rice cake and cheese whiz

Eat snack ravenously

Each bite of the snack leads to further deformation of body – switch to experience

Eventually body is so mangled that it is nearly impossible to keep eating rice cake – and yet I still want it

This struggle is both physically and emotionally painful

The turn did not go well. I felt disconnected from the mask, from my actions, and from the audience. I wanted this disconnection because I felt betrayed by the clay to which I had given my heart (or at least my ego). How could something so beautiful, in which I had invested so much love, be so sad, so downtrodden, so…ugly? I wanted nothing to do with it. And yet, I was determined to get through the exercise. I tried to force my way through it – without listening to myself or to the audience. In struggling to perform my script as written, I denied my vulnerability: the vulnerability I felt towards this mask that I didn't understand, the vulnerable disappointment I felt in presenting this mask (which was supposed to be *interesting*) to the class, and the vulnerability that I felt as I realized that the turn wasn't going well.

After each turn John has students return to the stage to talk about their experience. "How was that?" He always asks. "Did you get yourself off?" How was it? Embarrassing and painful. However, when I answered I still wasn't ready to admit this truth because to do so would expose me, expose my fears, expose my shame. [33] So, still lying and trying to force my way through the situation, the answer I gave was the famously non-committal "fine." Did I get myself off? Absolutely not. My answer: "I'm not sure."

John walked with me backstage. I was nearly in tears; I had no interest in coming back out to work on this turn. I said as much to John. Without missing a beat, he told me that it was only Julia who was feeling shame and embarrassment and who didn't want another go at the turn. Mask 2 South – my deformed zoo keeper – still wanted to play and, especially, still wanted an opportunity to communicate his message to the world. John

reminded me to "be the mask" – to let Julia (and my bruised ego) go and let the mask come out and play. With this push, I was able to get over my fears and hesitancies, at least long enough to try the turn again. Now, I realize that what John was really inviting me to do was to transcend the normal boundaries of myself (of "Julia") to embrace my deep multiplicity, which, in some way, includes this sad zoo keeper. He was encouraging me to forget myself so that I could find myself, and my vulnerability, in relation to the others in the class who were engaging with me.

Clown work can reveal unsavoury and even frightening aspects of our selves. Further, the work asks us to find out what is *fantastic* about those very things. Ugly and sad he may be, but when allowed to play, Mask 2 South is *fantastically* ugly and sad. Finding the fantastic, though, requires us to embrace our vulnerability – requires us to vulnerably see all that we are capable of (even that which is not pretty). Performing as a clown asks us to discover this vulnerability, *and* share it with others. In allowing myself to be vulnerable to the reality of Mask 2 South, I also allowed myself to realize that I never actually "left Julia behind." Instead, I uncovered a new facet of Julia, a door within the multiplicity of myself that I had previously kept locked but which I now knew how to open.

From this perspective we can experience our capacity for vulnerability as a great gift for connection. Though vulnerability and wounding are not necessarily synonymous for the clown, true vulnerability always opens us to the *possibility* of wounding – a possibility that we must be prepared to accept without shutting down (or shutting others out), should we be truly committed to clowning. Here, then, Denton's (2006) words about wounds as "sites of expansion" (p. 137-8) are also relevant to the clown's vulnerability, and the ways that this vulnerability connects us with a practice of ethical relationality. In Denton's words (quoted above on page 47), I read several important connections to the clown's vulnerability: it is ongoing connection with and revelation of the heart that makes us susceptible to wounding (i.e., makes us vulnerable), but this connection and revelation is also precisely that which sustains us; the process of opening ourselves to wounding and to our wounds as "possible sites of expansion" (Denton, 2006, p. 137-8) (or, in my terms, as sites of multiple possibilities) involves a release into the unexpected and the unknown; through the practice

of vulnerability (or an openness to wounding), we are able to access "other states of being" – here, I suggest, that one such state of being is clown and the clown's capacity to connect us with ethical relationality.

My understanding of ethical relationality has been informed by the work of Donald (2012) and Smith (1991) as discussed above. It has also been informed by Emmanuel Levinas' conception of ethics as "first philosophy." I would like to state, at the outset and for the record, that my engagement with Levinas' work, while inspiring, is far from comprehensive. However, the work that I have read has informed mine in interesting and important ways and I would therefore be remiss to exclude from this discussion his treatment of ethics and its relationship with the vulnerability of Self to Other. I first became fascinated with Levinas' ethical philosophy when I noticed it frequently being mentioned in the work of others including, for example, Sylvia Kind's a/r/tographic explorations of art, vulnerability, and pedagogy (2008) and Julie Salverson's focus on Levinasian ethics and clown performance (2006, 2008, 2009).

Kind's chapter ("Learning to Listen: Traces of Loss, Vulnerability, and Susceptibility in Art/Teaching") in *Being with A/r/tography* explores the process of teaching as a particular kind of ethical relationship with Others, one founded on Levinas' understanding of the Self becoming in the presence of the Other. Kind (2008) explains, "there is the potential to do children great violence by teachers thinking they know beforehand what is best or right to do" (p. 174). She takes up the Levinasian perspective on ethics, and quotes from Todd, to elaborate that while it is "not uncommon for teachers to hold certain generalizations and assumptions" about children, "'it is the self's susceptibility to the Other, not knowledge about the other, to which education must address itself if it is not to inflict violence' (Todd, 2001, p. 174)" (as cited in Kind, 2008, p. 174). In light of this susceptibility and the ethical challenges presented in Levinas' work, Kind (2008) counsels "an attitude of receptivity, openness, and listening" (p. 174).

Salverson's work is especially relevant to my own as she brings together clowning and ethics through her focus on witnessing and theatricality. In her article "Witnessing Subjects: A Fool's Help," Salverson (2006) engages with Levinas' "call to witness," which she explains as a responsibility that we each bear to the other "prior to working out the *how* to do it" (p. 147). Salverson (2006) draws from Levinas a conception of witnessing that is based on the infinite obligation that the Self bears toward the Other, and the reality that there always "remains something beyond my ability to know, to sense, to imagine, something that will surprise me and which comes from outside myself" (p. 147). Salverson (2006) brings this Levinasian perspective on ethics into her work of theatrical witnessing by admitting that she will never know the Other, and yet she must "remain vigilant" and ready to "respond, attend, and remain willing to hear beyond [her] own conceptions" (p. 147). In addition to this stance, which Levinasian ethics inspires in her witnessing of the Other, Salverson (2006) understands that Levinas' perspectives on representation (as I discuss below) suggest that art must always "leave room for the other to breathe" (p. 149). Each of these aspects of the ethical relationship (a commitment to not knowing, to remaining open to the Other and ready to respond, and to leaving room for the Other within artistic representation) Salverson feels is significantly embodied by the clown, and especially in the clown's "impossible willingness and bravery," (Salverson, 2008, p. 246) as I will discuss further on.

Each of these two scholars' work resonated deeply with my own understandings, approaches, and passions. Furthermore, I began to see deep resonance between descriptions of Levinas' understanding of the ethical relationship between Self and Other and the ethical philosophies of scholars such as Dwayne Donald (2012), Judith Butler (2004), and Sarah Ahmed (2000), all of whose work I find to be moving, challenging, insightful, and inspirational. I therefore thought that it might be a good idea to familiarize myself with Levinas directly, since his philosophical thought was clearly already making in-roads into my thinking, my perspectives, and my approach to my own work and the work of others.

I, like many other arts education scholars, have come to appreciate what I understand as an important core tenant of Levinas' philosophy, which is the twofold understanding that the Self is always fundamentally reliant on the Other (for its very existence, as well as to be called into ethical relationship), and that the ethical relationship that exists between Self and Other arises precisely because the Other is what the Self can never know or reduce to sameness with itself. It is this reality which Levinas terms "alterity," that calls us into ethical relationship. Furthermore, I have come to understand that the practice of clowning weathers the storm of Levinas' critique of the arts quite well. Levinas (1930) writes that participation with the arts is something that "one can be ashamed of […], as of feasting during a plague" (p. 142). However, his central concern is with the arts as representational and as participatory in a way that removes spectators from the "the real world" and therefore from their infinite responsibility to the Other. As I argue in a forthcoming publication on Levinas and humour,[34] the clown fulfills what Levinas scholar Henry McDonald (2008) describes as the "impossible and necessary" task of "representing the unrepresentable" (p. 17): rather than simply standing in as a representative of humanity onstage, the clown acts as a living and exaggerated metaphor, revealing aspects of humanity (such as fallibility and vulnerability) which are not specifically representable. Furthermore, the clown participates in "the real world" with the audience, serving to remind them that while they may be playing in ways fantastic, they have not and cannot be transported away from the reality in which their responsibility exists. Thus, the clown is an impossible figure who can hold both the feast and the plague as a present tension, which may reveal previously unconsidered possibilities or previously unexamined habits of living.

Despite the clown's resistance to Levinas' overall critique of the arts, my ongoing exploration of Levinas' philosophy has given me many opportunities to question the wisdom of drawing connections between clowning and his conception of ethics. For instance, Levinas would likely object to the notion of "the magic space," since he has a deep dislike for "magic" and feels that the liminal space of the arts, which he refers to as "the meanwhile," is "inhuman and monstrous" (1930, p. 139). However, as I continue to ponder the various points of convergence and divergence that exist between Levinasian ethics and the practice of clowning, I return always to Levinas' own understanding (which resonates

with both Donald and Smith) that it is difference, rather than the banal and homogenizing force of sameness, that creates ethical relationship. The differences between Levinas' vision and my own therefore do not serve to undermine the meaning that I derive from his articulation of the relationship between Self and Other as ethical. Instead, they simply encourage me to continue deepening my engagement and making myself vulnerable to that which I do not understand so that I might, to borrow Donald's (2012) expression once again, maintain productive tension "without the need to resolve, assimilate, or incorporate" (p. 2).

4.1.2.   Matters of the Heart

Lecoq (2000) has referred to the clown's red nose as "the smallest mask in the world" (p. 145) as it establishes our ongoing connection with all of our masks as well as our ability to exist in the spaces between these masks. The nose is, therefore, a useful training device. This device is especially useful given that it can establish a particular form of freedom for the wearer. In Butler's (2012) articulation,

> The red nose gives the wearer permission to depart from conventional modes of prescribed behavior, and to reflect on the ways we are located within those structures of convention and prescription. This permission to operate outside of custom, to transgress normal rules of behavior, and to reject key principles of the given world locates the clown in a significantly political position. (p. 66-7)

Beyond the performer his/herself, the red nose can also signal to others the space of engagement that we are in, and/or can enter, together. As theatre practitioner and social educator Augusto Boal (1992) understood, the nose is important because it facilitates an acceptance and recognition of the critical consciousness embodied by the clown:

> We are all clowns, and the whole world is a circus – but in this arena there is no audience, everyone acts, no-one sees us. Step forward the true clown, our critical consciousness, and this is important: this clown comes dressed as one! We accept it because it has a red nose. (p. 294-95)

All of that being said, however, I wish to emphasize that the clown nose is not *necessary* to clowning. Indeed, some clown teachers (David MacMurray Smith among them) have chosen to teach clowning completely without the training tool of the red nose. The red nose can serve as an external symbol of the clown's capacities (including the capacity for critical consciousness and the capacity for vulnerability); however, the absence of this symbol does not equate to the absence of these clown capacities.

Eventually the work of the clown can be to extend their awareness of heart-to-heart connections, their creative self, and their multiplicity (represented by their masks) even when they do not have a red nose on. A focus of my present work has been on living my clowning practice both in and out of "nose." The variability in my use of the nose allows me to play with expectations, particularly the kinds of expectations that people have when they learn that my work is focused on clown. When I am invited to perform as clown, it is often clear to me that the expectation is that I will arrive wearing my red nose. Sometimes I do and sometimes I do not. It is the clown's capacity for vulnerability, connection, and ethical relationality, rather than a costume or a particular outward appearance, which is meaningful for me in my work. It has been a deep joy of my process to open up the consideration that "this too can be clown." I cannot tell you how many times I have told someone about the focus of my dissertation only to have them exclaim, "I didn't even know you could study that!" I have also experienced scepticism about my work: "really? Clowns? For a PhD?" And pressure (internal and external) to make my clowning more scholarly or my scholarship more "clown-y." While these experiences have, at times, been frustrating and confusing, they have also created opportunities for me to reinforce my understanding that while clown and scholarly practices are each often understood in a surface way as being about the *what* (their content, their image, etc.), at the heart of each is really an emphasis on the *how* (the approach, the way of being, etc.). Thus, by exploring the multi-faceted nature of clowning within a scholarly context I have also opened up the consideration that "this too can be scholarship."[35]

4.2. Co-Creation

The clown reveals her heart and becomes vulnerable in order to seek connection. It is through this ability to connect that the clown is able to co-create with others. Beyond the process of co-creating *with* others, the clown can actually be understood as being co-created *through* the interaction between a performer and an audience. As John explains,

> the clown doesn't *exist* without an audience [….] It's not a clown getting himself off in the woods by himself, with no one around to see him fall down. That's not funny, it's not clown, it's not sad, it's not anything. It doesn't exist [….] the whole act of clown is a conversation. (J. Turner, personal communication, July 6, 2012)

In Pochinko-style clown training, the interaction between the performer and the audience is known as "the magic space." There are two forms of encounter that are crucial for clowning: the first is the initial encounter between performer and audience that opens the magic space and creates the possibility for clown. The second is the encounter that occurs within the magic space, wherein deep vulnerability is present because a clown is present, and wherein co-creation becomes possible.

The magic space is closely related to the concepts of liminality and the "in-between" space, which have been extensively discussed in many fields of scholarship, including in arts education. Arnold van Gennep introduced the term "liminal" to the field of anthropology in his 1909 text *Les Rites de Passage*. However, it is arguably Victor Turner's body of work (beginning with his study of *Les Rites de Passage* in *The Forest of Symbols*, 1967) that has contributed most significantly to the subsequent popularity of the term. Turner's discussion of liminality in relation to play in his 1982 book *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* has provided my most extended engagement with his thinking. I find his differentiation between "play" and "leisure" in this text to be especially relevant to the context of clowning: he explains that "work and play are hardly distinguishable in many cases" in the "liminal phases and states of tribal and agrarian cultures" (Turner, 1982, p. 34). He continues to discuss how the modern concepts of "work" and "leisure" have produced stark divisions that have impacted engagements as diverse as ritual, games, and the reading of literature (Turner, 1982). The clown's magic space can be understood as a liminal space, particularly in

light of Turner's recognition of the power of liminality to blur the boundaries between binaries, including work and play and in particular:

The clown works at play and plays at work,

in all "human seriousness."

Many arts educators, and scholars from a variety of disciplines, have found resonance with the concept of liminality or the liminal/ "in-between" space. For example, the practice of a/r/tography has been significantly influenced and formed through recognition of the contiguous spaces between the identities of artist, research, teacher, and writer, so often embodied by arts-based educators. It is through devoted consideration of the liminal spaces in-between the various facets of our multiple identifies that Irwin and Springgay suggest open us into our own living inquiries (2008, p. xxviii). In her chapter "Liminal Lessons from Two Islands and One Son," (2012) Tasha Henry makes engagement with this liminal space personal, asking "what can be learned from teaching, mothering, and moving in and between disparate cultures?" (p. 136). Clowning is a practice of asking such questions and perpetually moving "in and between."

In *Exploring Curriculum: Performative Inquiry, Role Drama, and Learning* (2008), Lynn Fels and George Belliveau discuss the role of liminal and in-between spaces and the role of the arts to "cross the boundaries" and therefore to launch us into a capacity for engaging with and dwelling in liminal spaces (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 23). They further discuss the relationship that liminality bears to theories of chaos, complexity, and enactivism. Drawing on the work of M. Mitchell Waldrop, they envision complexity as itself a liminal, interactive space of possibilities (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 25).

While I could write about the practice of clowning with reference to liminal or in-between spaces, I have chosen to make use of the language of "the magic space of engagement" as it connects this writing directly with the clown training that has formed and inspired me. Throughout this dissertation I move from discussing the magic space of engagement specifically to discussing the broader concept of clowning as a practice of

possibilities, as heightened possibility is the heart of what liminal, in-between, magic, complex spaces offer us. In order to understand what it means for the clown to live in this co-created magic space, it is helpful to first understand the role of the "fourth wall" in theatrical conventions.

4.2.1.   The Fourth Wall

The simplest definition of "the fourth wall" is that it is an imaginative/invisible wall that, if it existed, would complete the room depicted on a stage. It is because this wall does not exist that the audience has access to the performance. In her book *Respect for Acting* (1973), Uta Hagen articulates that the imaginative *creation* of a fourth wall has a different significance for actors and performers. This creation is often a self-conscious strategy utilized by actors and performers to help them protect themselves from the audience. The actor is able to be vulnerable in front of the audience, Hagen suggests, because s/he has imaginatively erected an invisible wall at the front of the stage, which allows the audience to disappear from the actor's awareness. The actor performs *as though* s/he is in a room with four walls and *as though* there is no audience to witness the performance.

To be certain, Hagen's conceptualization of the fourth wall is merely one perspective on this theatrical construct. Furthermore, her suggestion that the actor is able to be vulnerable *because* she pretends that there is no audience to see her raises fundamental questions about the nature of vulnerability and whether or not vulnerability is inherently relational. I do not evoke Hagen here in order to provide a conclusive definition of the fourth wall (or, certainly, of vulnerability!) but rather to aid in understanding a particular perspective on the fourth wall, one which is antithetical to the clown's experience of the performative space. Instead of evoking such a fourth wall, the clown engages the both/and logic for which she is known and asks the audience to simultaneously enter a new world – a world that expands far beyond the walls of the performance space – *and* remain cognizant that they are sitting in a theatre. In this way, the world of the clown contains both the possibilities of the imaginative, creative, pretend and make-believe and the possibilities of the omnipresent seats, walls, stage, etc. of the concrete performance space. It is by actively embracing this form of simultaneity that the clown removes "the fourth wall."

Discussions of non-naturalistic/non-realist theatre, such as Brechtian theatre for example, often include consideration for how these performances "break the fourth wall." Performers "break the fourth wall" when they speak directly to the audience in a context where the invisible fourth wall between audience and performer is otherwise assumed to exist, such as in a Shakespearean soliloquy. I have used the phrase "remove the fourth wall" above to signal a distinction from this familiar understanding of "breaking" the fourth wall. In the tradition of stage clowning that I have studied, clowns do not "break" the fourth wall. Rather, there *is* no fourth wall between the clown and the audience. It simply does not exist. Indeed, there often isn't even a first, second, or third wall in clown theatre. The clown's performance takes place in a world, but it is a world that is not necessarily bound by the walls (physical or invisible and imaginatively created) of the performance space; it is a world that includes both clown and audience sharing the same space, intimately.

4.2.2.   The Magic Space

Without a fourth wall to separate them, the magic space is co-created through "open, honest, two-way conversation" (J. Turner, personal communication, August 2008) between the performer and the audience. In this approach to clowning, "the clown" is not a performed character (although the clown can and does perform characters), but is rather a living practice embodied in a moment of shared presence. Pochinko articulates that the magic space is where the clown plays. I would like to venture that the opening of a magic space between performer and audience is actually that which transforms a performer/actor into a clown. Furthermore, it is this transformative possibility that is at the core of what makes the magic space *magic*. Without the overlap of a performer's and an audience's willingness to play and to be vulnerable, at most we have a performer onstage being watched as they *pretend to clown*. With the overlap of a performer's and an audience's willingness to play, we get *magic* – we get, or become, clown.

One of the rules of clown that supports the creation of the magic space is to "drop the script." This is a twofold requirement implying, as it does, that the clown must *have* a script (something that they have created in advance of the performance) and must be willing and able to drop that script completely. In other words, clowns must be prepared in order to be able to co-create a world of possibility with those watching; however, they must also be prepared for the unforeseeable. They must be able to accept that they cannot ultimately control what happens once the performance begins. Further still, they must actively drop their plan in order to invite the audience in, not only as spectators but, most importantly, as co-creators of both the magic space and of the performance that unfolds within it. While the term "magic space" is specifically connected to the clowning practice developed by Richard Pochinko and is therefore not discussed in the broader literature, there are concepts taken up by scholars that bear what Wittgenstein (2001) would call a "family resemblance" (p. 36ᵉ) to the magic space.

In her powerful educational scholarship, bell hooks speaks of such spaces in terms that resonate deeply with Donald's conception of ethical relationality. She says,

> This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonized/colonizer. Marginality as site of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators. (hooks, 1990, p. 209)

Donald (2012) understands ethical relationality as directly related to a "decolonizing research sensibility" and as a practice that allows us to "traverse deeply learned divides of the past and present" (p. 2). In their shared understanding that such human encounters occur in magic or "inclusive" spaces, hooks and Donald also connect with Cree scholar Willie Ermine's (2007) understanding of the "ethical space" as "a venue to step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur" (p. 202). This ethical space is therefore a space in which to practice ethical relationality – a space wherein we might traverse deeply learned divides by engaging directly with one another.

As I understand it, Ermine's vision of a "stepping out of our allegiances" involves neither a simplification of our complexities nor a reduction of difference into sameness. Rather, it seems to me that he envisions a space that will allow our complexities to remain in tact *without* calcifying into the bars of a cage or the makings of "deeply learned divides." It is our *allegiances* that we step out of, not our specificities, complexities, or vulnerabilities. This process is akin to the vulnerability of multiplicity experienced through clowning. As I explained above, we practice a form of "self-forgetfulness" (Smith, 1991, p. 198) that doesn't actually require us to leave anything behind. Instead, what it asks of us is a relaxing of our self-conception: our vision of ourselves as "like this and not like that." Stepping into the ethical space and engaging in ethical relationality are therefore practices of engaging with our own internal flexibility and capacity for multiplicity. When we recognize our own multiplicity, not only do our specific allegiances begin to seem somewhat limited (like a cage that has restricted and bound us in unnecessary ways), but the divisions that we have erected between ourselves and others become less meaningful and less rigid. Rather than asking us to deny our complexity, this is a practice that allows us to embrace how truly complex we all are while also recognizing that this capacity for complexity allows us to co-create meaningfully with others.

The magic space is, I believe, an ethical space, a space reliant on ethical relationality, and a space "on the margin that is a site of creativity and power" (hooks, 1990, p. 209). Significantly, the "marginality" of the magic space is established by the ability of performers and audience members to access their deep vulnerability, or that which is marginal (as well as creative and powerful) within themselves.

4.3. Multiplicity

Encounters with multiplicity are significant throughout clown training: through the creation of masks and recognition of the masks' worlds we are invited to recognize ourselves as multiple. More precisely, we are able to see ourselves as situated at the very centre of a sphere made up of an endless number of points, each of which represents a possibility or a multiplicity of/for us. It is not that the self is singular and then dons multiple externally produced masks (or roles). Instead, it is that the self is located both in the centre and at each of the infinite points of the sphere – hence, "the" self is actually a plurality. Snowber (2011) states the matter with a clarity only achieved through directness and simplicity. Speaking as her body she declares, "I live in multiplicity and thrive in multiples" (Snowber, 2011, p. 196). I connect strongly with this plurality of my-body-self through my clown training and the development of my own clown practice. While at first we create, wear, and embody our masks as separate entities, akin to character roles we might play, eventually we are encouraged to bring more than one mask into our turns and to recognize that the masks can blur into one another precisely because they are all facets of our multiple selves.

Learning to connect with and call upon facets of the self is a form of what Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (1994) has referred to as "endogenous education" or a way that one "educates the inner self through enlivenment and illumination from one's own being and the learning of key relationships" (p. 34). Various relationships, experiences and encounters will activate/enliven various aspects of our multiple selves. This process of enlivenment involves learning what is inside us, and all that is, indeed, possible for us. Clowning can be understood as endogenous education, which presents us with opportunities to source from, validate, and offer up ourselves.

In the clown training, when all of our masks are made and have been embodied, we are born as the clown through a ritual that involves moving quickly between each of the masks. We move more and more quickly between the masks until we are no longer able to maintain distinct boundaries between them. At this point, we are welcomed to the world as a clown and come to feel – viscerally, in the body, if not necessarily rationally – that the self (the clown self and otherwise) is not singular and separate from the roles that it is able to

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play. Rather, the self is all of these masks *and*, importantly, the spaces between them. It is perhaps this step of recognizing the self in the interstices that is most helpful in developing the awareness that, unlike the physical objects of the masks, which have clear and discrete boundaries, the self is an amalgam of multiplicities wherein boundaries need only be preserved so long as they remain helpful.

The existence of the self as multiple is further intensified through recognition that selfhood is inherently relational. Philosopher Charles Taylor (1989) explains, "One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it" (p. 35). In her exploration of Buddhist and Jungian perspectives in the volume *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education*, Fidyk (2011) suggests that the very possibility of the self is created through the relationship between self and other (p. 141):[36] just like the clown, we can only come into being through encounter and relationship with others, who, themselves, are plural rather than singular. We all have multiplicities that we have identified and experienced (for example, our capacity to be both happy and sad, or to be both a child and a parent) and we also have possibilities for multiplicity that remain untapped within us. This capacity for multiplicity is, I believe, what John intends when he says that "all aspects of humanity belong to everyone."[37] Pollack (1998) draws on the work of Nancy Mairs to discuss the multiplicity of the self that is evoked in the act of creating through writing:

> Nancy Mairs hails a sensual synergy of selves living together in the writing self, calling the writing 'self' to the 'we' constitutes in the pleasures of articulating with a 'not-me': 'I don't see how anyone engaged in self-representation can fail to recognize in the autobiographical self, constructed as it is in language, all the others whom the writing self shelters. The not-me dwells here in the me. We are one and more-than-one. Our stories utter one another'" (p. 88).

It is this sense of being "one and more-than-one," of being able to engage, simultaneously, the "me" and the "not-me" that John's phrase has awakened for me.

Given that our existence is relational and multiple, we each carry within us the possibility of experiencing and being all that is imaginable for humanity. This reality, of course, does not mean that at any given moment we have actualized this possibility, but lack of actualization does not diminish or remove the possibility. The existence of these latent possibilities means that a particular experience and, especially, a particular encounter with another may evoke and inspire a previously untapped aspect of the self. This relationship between the self and the other has been described as an "attainment" of the self by the other and of the other by the self. Such attainment is predicated on the possibility of relationship between self and other that does not necessitate dissolution of individuality (Fidyk, 2011, p. 141). In turn, this attainment without dissolution is only possible because of our capacity to be multiple within our singular selves. Levinas (1985) understands this concept of attainment as the ability to see "the possibilities of the other as your own possibilities, of being able to escape the closure of your identity and what is bestowed on you, toward something which is not bestowed on you and which nevertheless is yours" (p. 70).

The process of creating and wearing masks in the clown training provides a visceral experience of the seeming paradox that Levinas has described: masks often reveal persona which initially seem "other" to our habitual experiences of ourselves. In recognizing that the complexities of the masks have been sourced only from within ourselves, we are able to recognize the possibilities of the other as our own. Or, said in another way, to recognize that there are infinite possibilities for the self when we are able to get free of the closure of identity. This closure of identity tends to keep us within our habits and, as such, maintain us within a limited range of our capacity for multiplicity.

Viewing the self as multiple in these ways is helpful for understanding the idea that the clown can do anything. We all have habits of self and facets of the multiplicity of ourselves that we are more and less inclined to inhabit/embody. Becoming aware of this tendency can allow us to recognize our habits and potentially even name them as "what is" rather than as "what must be." In so doing we may also make space for ourselves to imagine and even to manifest "what is not" (Greene, 1978, p. 173). Keller and Keller (2011) explain this process as moving from being "conceptual objects" to being "persons": "Bluntly and

briefly put, assigned roles make the players of those roles conceptual objects rather than persons" (p. 100). As we break away from the limitations of our habits in order to become "persons," we open up possibilities and access more aspects of the multiplicity of ourselves. In so doing, we recognize the potential of multiple possibilities within ourselves and, as such, become increasingly able to "do anything."

Fidyk (2011) explains the role that fear plays in maintaining a narrowly or singularly defined conception of self:

> much of our suffering originates from projecting our own desired outcomes into the flow of life, rather than surrendering to its unfolding (as in nonattachment), [in this way] we create fear, a sense of separateness and a limited repertoire of possibilities. (p. 136)

The practice of clowning is an opportunity to consciously attend to our fear and separateness in order to open ourselves up and reconnect with a sense of limitless possibility. While clowning provides this opportunity for conscious attention we may not necessarily be conscious of the work that we are actually doing. On a conscious level we may only be aware that we are playing and creating. Through the specifics of this play and creation, which involve delving into the multiple facets of the self and connecting with the multiplicities of others in an audience, we attend to our fear and separateness, even without necessarily realizing that we are doing so.

Moving away from our reactionary selves is also what I mean by being able to recognize our habits of self and expand the possibilities that we make available to ourselves. When we encounter a problem or become stuck, this is an opportunity to call on our other masks – or other facets of our multiple selves – for help. It is worthwhile to remember that many of the facets of ourselves might be stumped by the same challenge and it might therefore be tempting to give up. Just as one example – the first one that comes to mind – many of my masks, or the parts of my multiple self, feel intimidated by the work of completing this dissertation. The work is precisely not to give into the fear that they might *all* fail in the face of this task and instead continue, courageously, to call forward new parts of myself, which are able to take on pieces of the larger task. Where Fidyk (2011) speaks of a

"limited repertoire of possibilities" (p. 136) I have found my language in a limited repertoire of habits of the self, which in turn categorizes experiences into the possible and the impossible. Expanding into the infinite possibilities of multiple selves allows us to find the many possibilities that exist within every impossibility.

It is through recognition of our own ignorance, blind spots, inabilities and fledgling abilities that we are able to approach tasks with both a willingness to try (which does not exist when we see a task as "impossible") and a humility that allows us to try hard, to strive, and to bring richness to our work. Seeing the possibilities in the impossible, therefore, does not mean that we simply find ways to "get around" the challenges presented by difficult tasks (for example, by allowing ourselves to be satisfied with surface interpretations). Instead, it means that we delve deeply into the impossibility of the task and invite as much of our (multiple) selves along with us as we are able to access. In this way we shift our orientation away from what cannot be experienced to what can.

4.3.1.   Multiplicity and Possibility

Some of the most satisfying and enjoyable clown performances that I have seen (and done) involve a clown who discovers something that cannot be done, due to either an internal or an external limitation. For example, a clown may discover that she cannot blow a bubble with her chewing gum or that a sidewalk that she needs to cross has been closed. The clown then proceeds to explore creative ways to get passed this limitation, or to find the possibilities that exist within the impossible situation. What else can the clown do with her gum? What else can she use to blow bubbles? How might the clown find her way across the sidewalk? Can she hail a passing bird? It is often in exploring the possibilities presented by a seeming impossibility that clown logic can shine. Clown logic is not subject to the rules that govern rational logic. Instead, it is logic of the heart: logic that follows from what Salverson (2008) has called the clown's "impossible bravery" (p. 3). The clown's bravery is impossible because it finds possibilities where none existed previously.

In one of my favourite turns that I ever performed at The Clown Farm, the clown was determined to dance, despite being desperately clumsy. He wanted to dance because his mother used to dance with him when he was a child and he wanted to impress her with his gracefulness: despite being clumsy, he wanted to find the graceful possibilities inside himself. In a deep way, his quest was to find the aspects of his own multiplicity that connected him to his mother. He started taking dance lessons, but his mother passed away before the recital. At the recital, the clown got to do a pirouette solo. He was so proud that he ran straight from the dance hall to the cemetery (and this is where the performance actually begins – the rest is backstory):

I run and leap my way over to your headstone and clear away the fallen leaves and loose gravel that have settled over top of you, mama.

I have something to show you!

(and I am so proud)

Pirouette   Pirouette   Pirouette   Pirouette   Pirouette PirouettePirouettePirouette

… And then fall down.

See mama? I learned how.

I am dancing, just like we used to do.

I am graceful. I am free.

I love you. Thank you for dancing with me.

The clumsy clown has found the possibility of grace and of connection with his mother, even where it seemed impossible. He has done so by believing in his capacity for multiplicity.

When faced with a difficult situation it is often tempting to throw up our hands and say, "that's impossible. I can't do it." Experience with clowning, however, reveals that frequently the "I can't" is actually an "I won't" or an "I don't want to because it's hard." Clown logic and the clown's celebration of multiplicity open up vast territories of possibility for play. Indeed, they even open up the co-existence of seemingly contradictory or mutually exclusive realities. The clumsy clown with the graceful mother finds a way to *feel* grace when he moves, even if he remains clumsy on the outside. Clumsiness poses no impossible hurtle for him; instead he learns to be clumsy and graceful at the same time.

If we are to avoid using impossibility as an excuse that lets us off the hook – allows us to avoid trying, to throw our hands up, to give in, to not care – then we must open ourselves to the possibilities that exist at the core of the impossible. A surface possibility would be to simply listen to the lived experiences of others when they chose to share them. Deeper possibilities ask us to delve into our own multiplicities and discover how aspects of ourselves resonate with aspects of others. Through such encounters with others we may even uncover latent but previously untapped aspects of ourselves: we may discover our possibility for grace.

4.4.   Both/And Logic

Earlier in this work I discuss clown logic as "logic of the heart." In his classes, John frames clown logic as "dream time logic," logic that is not bound by waking concerns or by the (real or perceived) limitations of wakeful life. Clowning has also been affiliated with what is known as "both/and logic." In our every day lives we often find ourselves confronted with situations and categorizations that lend themselves to either/or thinking. In this section, I will describe the clown's both/and logic, the challenge that this logic presents to either/or thinking, and the ways that this logic helps the clown to transgress and to transform.

Clowns are often considered to be paradoxical figures and it is their adherence to both/and logic that appears to grant them this status. Judith Leggatt (2010) ably describes the nature of this "both/and" logic in her description of Trickster figures who, she suggests, "break down either/or dichotomies, with their propensity for being both/and: *both* male *and* female, *both* creator *and* destroyer, *both* role model *and* cautionary figure, *both* spiritual *and* physical, *both* animal *and* human" (p. 221). This both/and existence of the Trickster (and the clown) contributes to the complexity experienced in attempting to define what a clown *is*. Indeed, as Swortzell (1978) explains,

> Our attempt to answer the simple question 'What is a clown?' seems to lead us quickly into a dense thicket of complexities and contradictions. Clowns are both unique and universal; the art of clowning involves at once spontaneous acts of creation, many years devoted to the expression of an individual comic identity, and many centuries of tradition, imitation, and unbroken cultural continuity. (p. 4)

Furthermore, it is the clown's both/and logic that allows for its tremendous capacity for boundary crossing: either/or logic creates boundaries, while both/and logic challenges and blurs those boundaries. As Hyde (2008) describes, this leads to the "odd" existence of Tricksters wherein they insist "that their boundaries be respected," while, at the same time, "recognizing that in the long run their liveliness depends on having those boundaries regularly disturbed" (p. 13). This "odd" existence is also reflected in clown performance where it is often observed that the "clown breaks every rule except her own." I would amend that observation to say that clowns only break their own rules with care. Abiding by the boundaries and rules that the clown has established for her world is how she invites us into her world and encourages us to believe in it. If a performing clown establishes a world filled with its own unique boundaries and parameters and then easily disregards those boundaries and parameters, then we, as the audience, become lost: there is no longer a world for us to be taken into. As a brief illustration, picture a performing clown who establishes that she is on a boat, sailing through shark invested waters. If, after having established the size and shape of the boat, she simply ignores those boundaries and walks straight into the ocean, the audience will wonder why she hasn't:

a) drowned,

b) been eaten by sharks, or

c) at least noticed that she is now rather wet.

However, the clown is able to transgress her own established boundaries, rules, and parameters, so long as she does so with clear consciousness and care. Through such action the clown ably demonstrates how boundaries must always be transgressed. We cannot simply forget about them or hope that they go away. Instead, we must acknowledge them and, with care, find ways of transgressing them meaningfully and creatively.

In reality, all of our liveliness depends on having our boundaries "regularly disturbed," as it is through such disruption that we are able to see ourselves and our realities anew. In his preface to the book *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education* (2011), Peter McLaren refers to either/or thinking as an "epistemological straightjacket" (p. xv). Furthermore, he laments that "there is never any serious engagement with 'both/and' thinking" (McLaren, 2011, p. xv) in our educational contexts. The paradoxical epistemology the clown can help to free us from this straightjacket and find ways of being regularly, and productively, "disturbed." It is the role of the straightjacket to constrict and confine. It is the role of the clown to transgress such confinement in order to reveal the ever-present possibility of transformation.

4.5. An important aside about terminology

My search for writings about clowns and clowning practice has often led me to turn over stones that reveal both clown and Trickster figures. There has been a fair amount of debate in the literature concerning the relationship between Tricksters and clowns and, furthermore, concerning the appropriateness of discussing these figures together and about the language that can and should be used in such discussions. Given the sacred context of Trickster traditions and stories in a number of cultures, many scholars find any reference to "clowns" in relation to Trickster traditions to be derogatory and even offensive. And so I

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recognize that evoking the Trickster here complicates my dissertation. Tricksters are closely tied to land, to place, and to specific cultures and I have deep respect for their wisdom and for the role that they play in the lands, places, and cultures from whence they arise. My dissertation is focused on my own, embodied clowning practice and so it is valid to ask, "why bring in the Trickster at all?" My response to that question is complicated, and includes all of the following considerations:

Firstly:

My reading for this dissertation has included: works about clowns and Tricksters; works that have discussed both clowns and Tricksters; works that have used the terms "clown" and "Trickster" (and many others such as fool, jester, and picaro) as loosely interchangeable; and works that have sought to problematize the distinction drawn between clowns, Tricksters, and other figures that seem to belong on the same "family tree."

Secondly:

I have often found resonance and inspiration in descriptions of Tricksters (such as in Leggatt and Hyde above). These works feel relevant and significant for my own discussion. It would feel disrespectful and disingenuous to mention ideas about Trickster without mentioning Trickster and it would feel equally disrespectful to mention Trickster without providing some explicit consideration and context.

Thirdly:

The foundations of my clowning practice, as it was developed by Richard Pochinko, are derived from a combination of American, European, and Indigenous mask-making and clowning traditions. The Indigenous mask-making and clowning practices that inspired Pochinko are sourced from within cultures where Trickster traditions are also prevalent.

Fourthly:

I take encouragement for the possibility for cross-cultural connection through clown and Trickster from the work of "The Committee to Re-establish the Trickster" and their relationship with Pochinko's approach to clowning, as I will discuss further on page 163-164.

Having explored my rationale for mentioning "the Trickster" directly, I feel that some further contextualizing is in order: The term "Trickster" itself has been taken up as woefully inadequate to capture the complexity of the figures to which it refers. For context, consider Deanna Reder's comments in the Preface to *Troubling Tricksters* (2010):

> While it is commonly quipped that the 'Indian is a European invention,' that no Indigenous person in North America called themselves 'Indian' before the arrival of Columbus, in much the same way no Indigenous community had 'tricksters' – the term is the invention of a nineteenth-century anthropologist. Instead, the Anishinaabeg told stories about Nanabush, the Cree told stories about Wesakecak, the Blackfoot told stories about Naapi, the Stó: lō told stories about Coyote, and all these stories continue to be told and retold to this day. (p. vii)

Reder's point about the cultural specificity of Tricksters (and, indeed, all cultural traditions) is well taken and throughout this dissertation I strive to identify the socio-cultural and artistic origins of the clowning and Trickster traditions that I discuss. However, it does not seem to me to follow from Reder's important observation that one must abandon all cross-cultural consideration of the interesting and perhaps significant traits shared in common by Clown, Trickster, Picaro, Fool, Jester, etc. figures from different cultures and epochs. Indeed, as Christen (1998) explains in her encyclopaedia of clowns and Tricksters,

> The characters 'trickster' and 'clown' are closely related in many ways. Both are found in religious myths, in predominant roles in ritual celebrations, and in common folktales. They are distinguished more through academic categories than through actual indigenous terms [….] scholars themselves created these categories without specifying clear-cut distinctions, and scholars from various disciplines have attempted to sort out the differences between these two categories with little consensus. (p. ix)

Thus, in true clown fashion, it appears that we scholars have created the very challenge of terminology that we now find so difficult to resolve. In response to this challenge, some scholars (such as Biedelman, 1980) have insisted that only culturally specific studies of these figures, without reference to cross-cultural categories, are appropriate (Christen, 1998, p. xi). Others, however, have argued for the exact opposite approach. Babcock-Abrahams (1975, 1978), for instance, believes that while a unifying category is neither possible nor desirable, paying attention specifically to clowns' and Tricksters' ambiguity may help us to understand

the overlapping roles played by these figures across cultures and times. Furthermore, she believes that it is the very "messiness" of clown and Trickster figures (their connections to dualism and paradox) that allows them to enter the realm of "pure possibility" (1975 & 1978).

In her own response to the debate concerning terminology, Christen (1998) makes the crucial observation that both Tricksters and clowns are apt to change and that they must, therefore, "be seen in light of their dynamic nature" (p. xiv). The most significant challenge with the terminology used to refer to these figures is therefore its relative inflexibility: terms have a harder time shifting than either clowns or Tricksters. My focus in this writing is to respect the dynamism of both Tricksters and clowns and to avoid, wherever possible, speaking about them in ways that concretizes what is actually a shifting terrain.

4.6. Transgression Toward Transformation

Much of the existing theoretical literature on clowning has focused on whether clowns' performances are fundamentally subversive or conservative. This debate presents an interesting question, one which touches not only on the practice of clowning itself, but also on the implications that this practice might have for social change. The tension between the conservative and the subversive views on clowning is neatly demonstrated by Umberto Eco's (1984) assertion that the clown serves to "remind us of the existence of the rule" (p. 6). Those who argue that clowns represent a primarily conservative force (including Eco himself) take this to mean that clowns teach or reinforce the significance of the rules, policing their boundaries (see, for example, many of the chapters in Mitchell, 1992; Eco, 1984; Huntsman & Hooper, 1975; Turner, 1969). Those who argue that clowns represent a primarily subversive force suggest that, by revealing what might otherwise be thoughtlessly accepted rules, the clown demonstrates the arbitrariness and absurdity of the rules, showing them to be only powerful so long as they continue to garner popular support (see, for example, White, 1993; Kristeva, 1980; Stallybrass & White, 1986; and Subramani, 1987). As such, they encourage their audiences to overthrow the rules and, at times, the social systems that have created them. It is worthy of note that many of these scholars actually identify the

complexity and ambiguity of clowning as a practice (or argue in one instance that clowning is conservative only to later point to a subversive potential of the practice). On the whole, however, those who see clowning as a conservative force tend to emphasize, along with Turner, that clown performances serve to display behaviour which is "not the way things ought to be" (Hereniko, 1995, p. 163) as a social corrective. Those who see clowning as a primarily subversive force, on the other hand, tend to emphasize the radical possibilities of clown's transgressions to challenge the rules, values, norms, and structures of a society and thereby result in real social change.

The assumption that clowns must generally be *either* conservative *or* subversive is demonstrated in William E. Mitchell's conception of the clown in the book *Clowning as Critical Practice*. Mitchell (1992) suggests that clowning is hegemonic in ways that may be either subversive or conservative: "the former when it ridicules culturally accepted practices, persons and ideas, the latter when it ridicules the culturally unacceptable" (p. 24). Such a reliance on the either/or construct is antithetical to clowns' commitment to both/and logic and is therefore reductive of the actual spectrum of possibilities that attend clowning.

A definitive determination of the clown's purpose would, as John observed, be an "end to the conversation" (J. Turner, personal communication, June 2014). To assert that the clown is inherently conservative or subversive is to fall into the trap of attempting to "resolve" the complexity and the tension that attends clowning. It is the clown's prerogative to "keep the conversation going." This imperative is perhaps why the clown has become associated with subversion, since when they encounter a declaration their impulse is often to subvert it as a way of both considering new possibilities and keeping the conversation going. Consider, for example, clown teacher, practitioner, and researcher Jon Davison's (2013) statement that, anytime he encounters two people in agreement, his "instinct is to disagree with them" (p. 3). In line with this clown instinct are Vilsoni Hereniko's observations in *Woven Gods* (1995), his anthropological study of clowns in his native Rotuma:

> Is clowning a conservative or a progressive agent? An either-or response would be counterproductive; is it not possible for clowning to be both? The Rotuman material supports the view that clowning may be a catalyst for change as well as an agent for hegemony. (p. 166)

Rather than an either/or, I would agree with Hereniko that it is not only possible, but actually most fitting, for clowns to be *both* conservative *and* subversive. Which, of course, also means that clowns cannot be simply understood as either conservative or subversive.

Transgression exists in relation to boundaries. Hyde (2008) expresses succinctly that while "trickster is a boundary-crosser […] there are also cases in which trickster *creates* a boundary, or brings to the surface a distinction previously hidden from sight" (p. 7). Subversive actions are taken to destroy boundaries. Conservative actions are taken to preserve boundaries. Transgressive actions – those which engage with paradox and both/and logic – are taken to play with boundaries, testing their possibilities and their limitations.

When, upon looking at a boundary or category, we are able to determine that there is no need to choose "either/or" and instead recognize the possibility for "both/and," we become able to transcend that particular boundary. Transcending the dichotomies established by either/or thinking affords us the opportunity to see circles, cycles, and spirals where we were once only able to see straight lines. It is sometimes quipped that there "are no straight lines in nature." Clowning can help to free us from our habit of seeing straight lines, even where none exist. In this way, the transgression towards transformation that I am discussing further aligns the practice of clowning with Lange's (2004) conception of learning as both transformative and restorative. Like the clown rules, the mask-making process can serve as a grounding and restorative element in the work/play of engaging transgression towards transformation. While restoring a deep connection within ourselves, the mask-making process facilitates a transformation of our habitual ways of seeing the world. Such transcendence in turn, reveals previously unimagined possibilities, including the possibility of living with(in) paradox and tension – a possibility arising from transgression that I find particularly compelling.

If asked if clowning is conservative or subversive, my answer would be "yes…and" (or both/and): Clowning has the capacity to be both conservative and subversive, and sometimes both at the same time, yet clowning is about multiplicity and, as such, it cannot be limited even to the paradox of being simultaneously conservative and subversive. The clown's greatest gift is one of inquiry: of startling the status quo with the unexpected, the not-yet imagined, the impossibility of being human. In this way, clowning evokes questions, meaning-making, and recognition and invites us to grapple with the complexities of ourselves, of each other, and of our world. In celebrating this capacity to simultaneously provoke and reimagine, the clown transgresses even the boundary between conservative and subversive and emphasizes, instead, the ever-present possibility for transformation.

So, what, specifically, do I mean when I evoke the (potentially contentious) term "transgressive" to describe the clown? Just how are clowns transgressive? And how might these clown transgressions lead to the possibility for transformation? Keep reading to find out!

4.6.1.   Moving Beyond: The Possibility/Impossibility of Transgression

I am compelled by the clown's relationship with paradox, tension, and transformation. There is a transcended quality to the practice of clowning: the practice is about getting beyond our habitual experiences of everyday life in order to experience something *other*, which then allows us to connect with/understand our everyday experiences differently (perhaps more deeply and with more perspective). This transcendent practice is what I have been referring to as transgression. The clown's "transgression towards transformation" is one part of an overall ethos that embraces the not-yet known, ambiguity, and uncertainty and thereby works to "deliberately, but thoughtfully, affect the way things are: to enlarge the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 310).

One of the clown rules is to "take us into your world and bring us back with a new awareness." This rule speaks of transformation, since we emerge from the clown's world having had our awareness shifted. In the process, we are given the *possibility* to transform our realities or, at the very least, our experiences of our realities. And, in light of the new

awareness that we glean from the clown's world, it seems that even the choice of preservation can be transformative: we may choose to maintain our previously established ways of life, but in the very act of choosing we transform our relationship with those ways of life. Despite the fact that some clowns have chosen to self-consciously create works intended to subvert or conserve, I maintain that the clown's overall ontology is one that seeks to reveal possibilities and foster transformation. In order to facilitate such transformation, the clown is often seen transgressing existing boundaries in order to create a new awareness and in order to invite us into the simultaneously challenging and freeing realm of paradox.

The term "transgression" has negative connotations for many, perhaps due to its biblical association with the fall of Eden. Even denotatively, the term has come to be synonymous with an act that goes *against*, violates, or is offensive. The classical Latin roots of the term, however, suggest a going over, a going across, a passing, and a going beyond: an enlargement of the space of the possible (Sumara & Davis, 1997). I am interested in evoking the term transgression as a way of offering a "third space" between the terms "conservative" and "subversive" – a way of acknowledging the clown's capacity to be both at once. While certain acts of clowning may be consciously oriented towards conservation or subversion, it is also possible for clowning to simply go over, across, past, or beyond the rules and boundaries that govern every day life without intending to either subvert or conserve them. In such moments, clowns demonstrate that the rules and boundaries in question do not hold power over them in the same way that they might hold power over the average person, in the average context. Thus, where people may see the rules and boundaries of their socio-cultural context as binding them, clowns see the power that they themselves have to create society and culture. This creative power is also what Hyde (2008) observed about Tricksters that led him to claim that, through the use of disruptive imagination, Trickster "makes this world." Clowns and Tricksters do not transgress simply to violate or destroy; instead, their transgressions are creative and transformative. It is through their transgressions that clowns and Tricksters are able to recognize, along with Varela (1987), that "ours is but one of many possible worlds" (p. 62). As they caper between and across the boundaries that designate

these "many possible worlds" (Varela, 1987, p. 62), they do not merely explore worlds. Instead, they create worlds.

They participate in

the "laying down of a world" (Varela, 1987, p. 62) …

the "making of the world" (Hyde, 2008) …

the application of "disruptive imagination" that "creates culture" (Hyde, 2008) …

In order to establish my use of the term "transgression" I draw specifically on the work of bell hooks in *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), Peter Stallybrass and Allon White in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986), Barbara Babcock-Abrahams in "Arrange me into Disorder" (1984), and Davis and Sumara in "Enlarging the Space of the Possible: Complexity, Complicity, and Action-Research Practices" (1997). The titular "transgression" of hooks' work takes several forms throughout her discussion of a radical approach to pedagogy. She speaks initially of the context of the segregated education that she received primarily from black women who presented learning as "a counter-hegemonic act" and a form of resistance to "white racist colonization" (hooks, 1994, p. 2). In this way learning was understood as holding a key for transgressions that were capable of transforming the prevailing socio-cultural context. She speaks of this same school as providing her with a space wherein she could transgress her own established boundaries, or perhaps more specifically the expectations that were placed on her outside of school: "Home was the place where I was forced to conform to someone else's image of who and what I should be. School was the place where I could forget that self and, through ideas, reinvent myself" (hooks, 1994, p. 3).

Clowning allows for a space where such socio-cultural expectations of conformity are dropped so that we can explore and play within ourselves (our ideas, images, physical sensations, creativities, emotions, impulses, etc.). The "forgetting" (or "self-forgetfulness" to re-evoke Smith's (1991) terminology) of this practice of clowning is paradoxically also a remembering of aspects of our selves that have been buried by expectations of conformity:

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through this process of forgetting and remembering, we are able to find ourselves anew in relation to others.

In addition to the more established sense of "transgression" as movement across or beyond accepted boundaries, Stallybrass and White (1986) examine various Western cultural concepts of "high" and "low" (or "top" and "bottom") and, particularly, the ways that these categorizations are mutually dependent one another and, as such, actually implicated within one another. As they explain,

> the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other […], but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life. The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level. It is for this reason that what is *socially* peripheral is so frequently *symbolically* central. (Stallybrass & White, 1986, p. 5)

This perspective on transgression as actually a deep-but-unrecognized embeddedness informs me since my work has often interrogated what appear to be oppositional ideas (for example, what is and what could be, knowns and unknowns, possibility and impossibility, success and failure) and the transgressions that occur in relation to these ideas. Indeed, it seems to me that this drawing together of what could be seen as oppositional ideas is at the heart of a practice of curriculum theory and transformative education. Through my own practice, I have noted that transgression as boundary crossing (i.e., crossing from one of these ideas into the other) often reveals the deep ways that such concepts are nested within, implied by, and deeply connected to one another. The performing clown, for instance, discovers success once she is able to accept, embrace, surrender to, the experience of her failure.

In her chapter "Arrange me into Disorder," Babcock-Abrahams (1984) asks whether analysis can *do* that which it discusses. Her focus is on ritual clowning and so she specifically wonders whether analysis can engage in humour. She draws on many examples of philosophy – from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Barthes, Derrida, Socrates, and Zen masters and

including things like "'horizontal,' paralogical thought […] paradoxical and paratactical discourse of fragments and aphorisms, dialogue and pastiche [….] 'kaleidoscope logic,' 'radical discontinuity,' 'inversive irregularity,' 'metaphysical free association,' Zen 'smashing' or 'running sideways'" (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 102-103) – to demonstrate the possibility of a scholarly approach to play that remains "in the realm of play" (Ibid.). Babcock-Abrahams then enacts her own form of such analysis, one that brings quotations from a variety of sources (particularly anthropological accounts of clowning, Indigenous accounts of clowning, and philosophical ideas concerning play and meaning making) into conversation in what can best be described as a quilt of thoughts and expressions. She suggests that such a transgressive discourse – which moves beyond the habitual expectations, and even tacit requirements, for academic texts – "implies an alternative reality" (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 119).

Unveiling the existence of multiple alternative realities that run alongside and intersect with our daily reality is, I suggest, the transgressive work of the clown. Babcock-Abrahams (1984) provides me with a model of a scholar who has sought to not merely discuss but also embody this transgressive impulse of the clown in her scholarship. Babcock-Abrahams (1984) also implicitly challenges the negative associations that attend the term "transgression" by tying the clown's impulse to transgress directly to the clown's status as an ethicist (a specialist in ethics). Drawing on the work of Burke, Babcock-Abrahams (1984) states that

> At base the clown, the ironist, is really an ethicist. Aesthetic negativity involves a double negation in which 'any moralistic thou-shalt-not provides material for our entertainment' *and* our reflection as we applaud and consider the antics of 'deviants who, in all sorts of ingenious ways, violate the very Don'ts of our/their society.' (p. 121)

This understanding supports my own framing of the clown's transgressive impulse as both ethical and culturally generative. It also reinforces the idea that the clown does not merely entertain but, rather, through entertainment evokes reflexivity and the possibility for transformations.

In their chapter, "Enlarging the Space of the Possible: Complexity, Complicity, and Action-Research Practices" (1997), Sumara and Davis explore the concepts of complexity, complicity, and "simplexity," with the latter terms drawn from the work of biologist Jack Cohen and mathematician Ian Stewart (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 302-3). As Sumara and Davis explain, "simplexity" is a term used to denote systems in which *the space of the possible is fixed at the start*" (1997, p. 303). In direct contrast, complicit systems are those in which "relatively simple beginnings" are opened up into "a growth in complexity" (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 303). In complicit systems, such as evolution, "there is an opening of new possibilities, a continuous enlargement of the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 303). Sumara and Davis work to apply this conception of complicity to their approach to action-research practices by seeking to engage in research "that educates, that makes culture" (1997, p. 309). In this exploration of the space of possibility within educational research there is tremendous resonance with the clown-based approach that I articulate in these pages, further reinforcing my assertion that clowning practices are not only relevant to, or capable of being enacted by, clown performers. I am especially enchanted with Sumara and Davis' explanation that their approach to "enlarging the space of the possible" "involves a recognition of the impossibility of neatly delineated boundaries" (1997, p. 311). Like the clown, Sumara and Davis have uncovered the intertwined and intertwining relationship between possibility and impossibility and they have realized that we are enabled to move beyond our previously existing boundaries when we encounter the possibility within impossibility, and vice versa.

Clown transgressions can reveal rules and boundaries that, for many, may have become so habitual as to be unconsciously abided, thereby establishing clear parameters for both what is possible and what is impossible. My experience of clown training certainly provided me with this form of experience. Through the revelation of my masks, I was able to acknowledge boundaries that I had established for myself ("I am like this. I am not like that") without feeling pressure to necessarily do anything about those boundaries. In the clown workshop I was able to playfully transgress (go across, get beyond) the boundaries of myself and thereby open up new space and possibilities for myself. On a socio-cultural level, this opening up of possibilities is also how I see the clown transgressing through

performance: Clowns stumble or prance right across a boundary in order to reveal its borders and afford us the opportunity to re-consider this boundary from a new perspective. Seeing a boundary from a new perspective is, in its own way, already a transformation of that boundary.

Clown transgression has given me a way of bringing together my impulses to simultaneously break and satisfy "the mold." In her Neo-Bouffon workshop, Karen Hines explains that, in spite of their physical and/or emotional impairments, bouffons must attempt to accomplish their tasks "to the best of their abilities" (K. Hines, personal communication, August 2011). Julie Salverson (2006) has identified an essential quality of the clown as being the "willingness to engage in the face of failure…living even despite the humiliation of trying endlessly" (p. 153). Thus, as hapless as they may appear, clowns earnestly try to satisfy the tasks, roles, and "molds" that are presented for them. Yet, despite their best efforts they remain, as Swortzell (1978) observed of Charlie Chaplin, "slightly out of step with everyone else, and totally at odds with everything that smacks of order, authority, and organization" (p. 219). When clowns subvert, transgress, or "break the mold," it is, more often than not, the result of their failures, despite their genuine efforts. In this way, clowns demonstrate the human ability to both strive and fail. In their failure, they also, often, demonstrate a startling insight or a new approach previously unconsidered. This "endless trying" demonstrates their embodiment of uncommon tenacity. The clown's failure is therefore productive. I recognize that one aspect of my transgression may well then include striving to comply with expectations, and failing. The significance is that the failure is not the end of the story for the clown. Instead, the moment of failure is an opportunity to transgress (get beyond) those expectations and discover what lies on the other side of them.

In "Let the Body Out" Snowber (2011) speaks to the difference between theorizing the body and theorizing in and from the body – in other words, creating a theory that has flesh because it is of the flesh. This is the same kind of shift that I propose for my work about clowning and transgression. I do not wish to merely theorize about clowns and the transgressive impulse, but instead to engage in theory that *clowns*. This is theory that comes

from my disposition as a clown and as such performs as an act of clowning. In this way, it is also theory that transgresses – that moves beyond.

I am moved by the notion of theory

that can move beyond itself,

beyond the page,

and

in so doing

can help us to move beyond the places where we have become stuck

(in ourselves, in our identities, in our habits, in our scholarship, in our socio-cultural lives).

This form of movement

, I believe,

is the highest calling for the clown's capacity

for transgression.

It is transgression toward transformation.

4.7. Foundational Principles: Not What but How

Understanding clowning as a matter of *how* rather than of *what* can help to contextualize why, historically, "clown" has been such a slippery term to define. Clowns (or figures that have been included in the clown "family tree") have appeared over time and across cultures in many distinct forms. They have displayed such tremendous variation in attire, status, role, and function that the *what* of clowning is too vast to discuss. Furthermore, Turner's (1969) definition of the "liminal *personae* ('the threshold people')" helps to contextualize why clowns may be most precisely defined by their ineffability. In Turner's (1969) words, clowns (as "threshold" beings)

> are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial [*sic*]. (p. 95)

Recognizing this elusive and indefinable quality of the liminal clown figure, I maintain that there are some commonalities to the *how* of clowning, commonalities which can be fruitfully discussed and which have compelled many (including both scholars and clown performers)[38] to acknowledge an intimate relationship between cultural figures that are otherwise wholly distinct.

A focus on such commonalities has been taken up in some of the existing clown literature (see, for example, Bishop, 1976; Christen, 1998; McManus, 2003; Mitchell, 1992; Schechter, 1985). My interest, however, in this dissertation is to write from the disposition of my own embodied clown practice in a way that distinguishes the "how" of clowning from the "what" of clowning (including the trappings that are generally associated with clowns, such as humour, particular costume pieces, and even fear). My intention is to articulate clowning as an approach, a way of being. This way of being is reflected in Lecoq's (2000) understanding of clowning as a particular readiness to play. As he explains, "The driving force is not *what* to play but *how* it should be played" (Lecoq, 2000, p. 118). Other kinds of practice have also been described in similar ways as being defined in their approach, rather

than in their particular details of action. For example, Snowber (2011/2009) describes meditation in terms that I feel are evocative of clowning as an approach:

> It is more of an attitude of the heart, a presence of the body, a return to seeing, which allows us to discover, wonder, and look with playful eyes. As we discourage our engagement with life from arm's length, the binary worlds breakdown, and we are given a place to rediscover gratitude for each event which comes into our lives. (Snowber & Richmond, 2011/2009, p. 33)

Rather than being a performative practice that I suggest scholars should take up directly, choosing to teach classes or conduct research in red nose, I see clowning as just such an "attitude of the heart, a presence of the body" and an invitation to "look with playful eyes" (Snowber & Richmond, 2011/2009, p. 33). It is therefore a practice that we can all engage in, whether we see ourselves as performers or not.

As is demonstrated in Chapter 2 ("My Clown Lineage") there are multiple approaches to clown training and therefore multiple understandings about what constitutes the foundational or essential principles of a clowning practice. The principles that I discuss in this dissertation as being foundational to clowning are those that I have identified as core through my embodied experiences of clown training, clowning practice, and various kinds of research about clown traditions. These are principles that I see as crossing through many different approaches to clowning (including clowning across cultures and epochs); however, I make no claims to universality nor do I suggest that other scholars or practitioners of clown would necessarily agree that these are *the* foundational principles of clowning. Indeed, as previously discussed, agreement is not necessarily a virtue within the practice of clowning.

The form of clowning that I suggest as an approach to education, and to the pursuits of scholars in particular, draws on each of the four foundational principles of clowning that I have identified as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. These foundational principles are best understood as connected to and even implied within one another – allowing any boundaries that can be established between them to be blurred: When we invest ourselves personally in our pursuits, including by investing in our bodies, our creativity, and our deepest sense of pleasure, as we must do in order to "get ourselves off," we are able to go to the "marginal places" inside of ourselves and thereby become vulnerable. This vulnerability

allows us to invite others to connect with us on a heart-to-heart level, which, in turn, creates the possibility that we may open a magic space between us. It is within such a magic space that we are able to relate ethically (Donald, 2012; Ermine, 2007) with one another and experience marginality as a "space of resistance and creativity" (hooks, 1994). As we learn to relate to one another in these ways, we become increasingly able to co-create together. Furthermore, as we connect deeply with the vulnerability of ourselves and others, we are able to deeply appreciate multiplicity – including the multiplicity of ourselves, of others, and, of ways of being in and experiencing the world. This appreciation of multiplicity allows us to understand the world as perpetually open to inquiry and possibility and therefore as a place where both/and logic is more generative than the kinds of definitive answers provided by either/ors and binaries. It is this way of seeing that invites us to practice the clown's form of transgression toward transformation. The clown's transgressions lead to transformation as they allow for "moving beyond:" beyond ourselves, beyond established boundaries, beyond presumed dichotomies, and beyond our expectations about what is, indeed, possible.
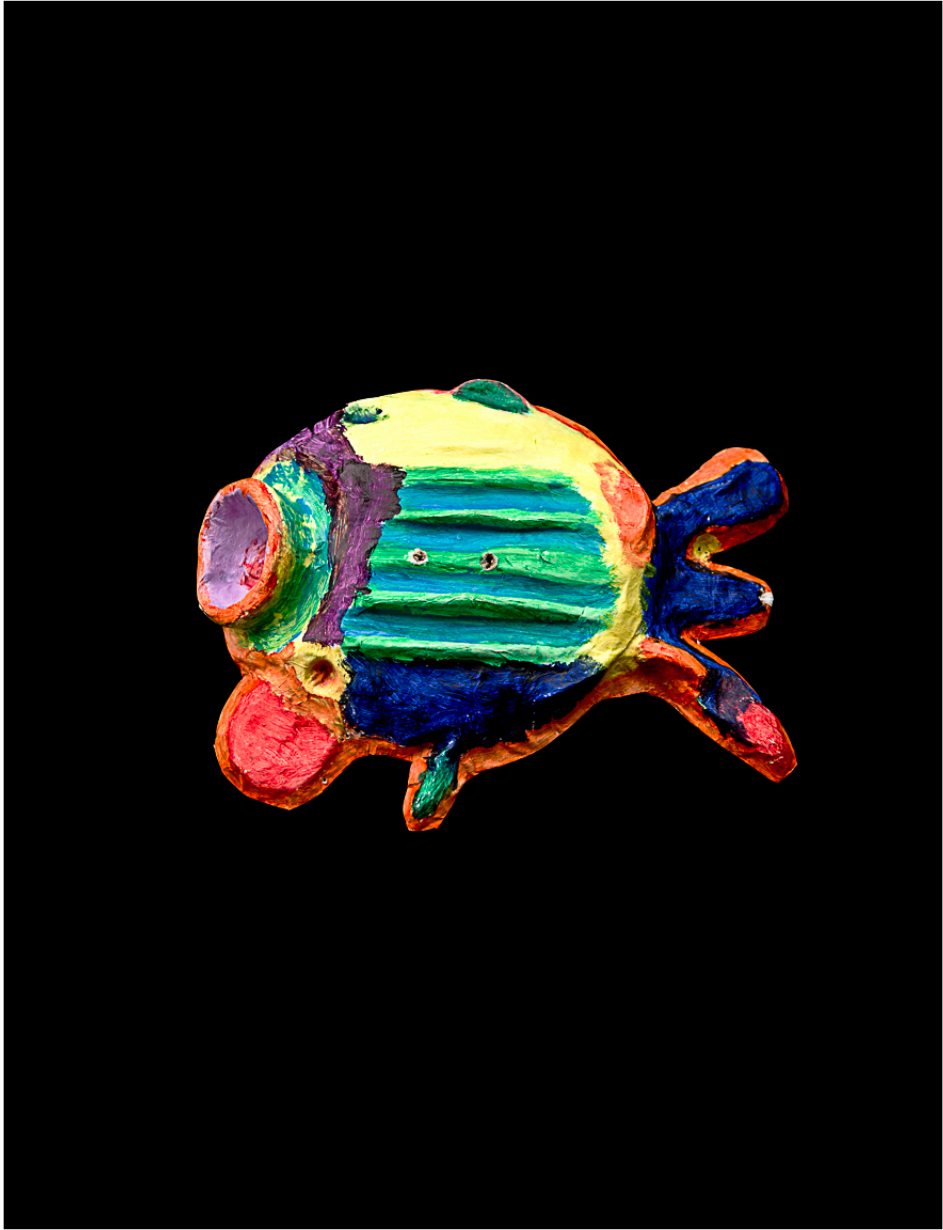
Mask 5 Below, Below

Chapter 5.

"An attitude of approach":[39] Clowning as a Way of Being

As a methodology, practice, or approach, clowning involves applying the foundational principles of vulnerability, co-creativity, multiplicity, and transgression toward transformation to the scholarly pursuits of teaching, writing, reading/research/inquiry, and being. The foundational principles of clowning can be applied anywhere and to anything, but I cannot tell you precisely how to do it. No one can tell you how to be vulnerable, how to engage your capacity for co-creativity, how to operate from your own multiplicity, or how to truly transgress the boundaries of yourself. These are things that we must explore and uncover, bit by bit, for ourselves. Which is not to say that we need to do it alone. Indeed, the principle of seeking co-creation in magic spaces explicitly requires deep engagement with others, as a way of exploring ourselves and our worlds.

What I can tell you is that whether you chose to engage it or not, you *are* vulnerable, *are* co-creating (and, significantly, co-created), *are* multiple, and *are* capable of transgressing and moving beyond your habits and expectations, thereby transforming both yourself and your world. It is possible to deny these things and operate as though your tough exterior negates your vulnerability, your adherence to a rigidly defined identity denies your multiplicity, your fierce independence excludes you from the need for co-creation, and your comfort with the status quo removes the drive to transgression. However, when you choose to acknowledge and even celebrate these principles, you are able to engage clowning as an approach. And this clown approach facilitates a unique perspective that ultimately enables you to teach, learn, grow, and change…to put impossibility aside by embracing the possibility within it.

The unique perspective that clowning, as an approach, affords has been variously described as both/and logic; "going for the unknown;" engaging the "success-failure cycle;" crossing the boundary between what is and what could be; and, by me, as finding the possibility within impossibility. In this chapter I will describe each of these perspectives, which I understand to be the clown's "practice of possibilities." The chapter will end with a reflection on how the foundational principles that I have identified in this dissertation help to establish this practice of possibilities, which is the clown approach.

5.1.   Going for the Unknown

Clowns' imaginative explorations are not limited by known boundaries, instead such boundaries become launching off points for exploration and discovery, play and creativity. In this way, clowns are like the Polynesian wayfinders who Wade Davis celebrates in his 2009 CBC Massey Lectures. As Davis (2009) describes, each wayfinder "risk[ed] his or her life […] to head into a void" (p. 49). While the question *why* people would take such a risk has been the matter of considerable debate, Davis (2009) suggests that, "Prestige, curiosity, [and] a spirit of adventure certainly played a role" (p. 49). For the clown, the imperative to "head into the void" is certainly inspired by curiosity and a spirit of adventure, and it is also fueled by an active commitment to "go for the unknown." Discussing Davis' work, Kelly (2012) suggests that Métis people are also wayfinders, as they "stand in both worlds; [and] can navigate both" (p. 365). For their part, clowns stand in, navigate, and *play between* the world of knowns and the world of unknowns, understanding each as a possible portal to the other.

The clown is the itinerant traveler of inquiry, skipping town before any answer can become comfortable enough to be called "home." The clown's transgressions are perpetual. In this way clowns can be seen as an antidote to our everyday dependence on rationality. As Davis (2009) observes, "For several centuries the rational mind has been ascendant, even though science, its finest expression, can still in all its brilliance only answer the question how, but never come close to addressing the ultimate questions: why" (p. 120). This lingering question "why" provides the omnipresent gateway to the world of the unknown

(and to the worlds of the not-yet known, ambiguity, and uncertainty) – worlds that are frequently visited by all those who do not find themselves satiated by even all that we, as a human race, can be said to collectively "know." Chief among these adventurers are children and clowns, both of whom may be interested in hows, but ultimately find them unsatisfying, and so they continue, always, to ask why.

In this context it becomes abundantly clear why one of the focal points of the *Clown Through Mask* training process is on "dropping your expectations." The more we are able to go for the unknown, the more likely we are to move beyond the expectations that we have internalized and into the entire world of imaginative possibilities that exists within us and has the power to surprise us. This process is described by Sumara and Davis (1997) as "enlarging the space of the possible" by embracing complexity and complicity. It is further described by Crowell and Reid-Marr (2006) in *Spirituality, Ethnography, and Teaching* as "admit[ting] that at some fundamental level we don't know" (p. 227). When teachers are able to make this admission, they suggest, they are able to "invite possibility and mystery into [their] teaching" (Crowell & Reid-Marr, 2006, p. 227). This invitation to possibility is predicated on the ability to relax and/or blur the boundaries that we thought were working upon and defining us. It is a recognition that the power of these boundaries is really *our* power – not something that exists outside of ourselves, but something, instead, which we can (re)claim.

The clown is not passive in relating to the unknown, instead she actively and intentionally *goes for* the unknown – challenging herself to let go of what she knows in order to seek that which remains unknown. In this way, the clown embraces all the remains not-yet known and ambiguous and uncertain. This active orientation is significant for the clown's contribution to the educational context because, as Majid Rahnema expresses in her chapter of *The Applied Theatre Reader* (2009), there is a "very basic principle of learning" that is often forgotten, which is that "no one learns who claims to know already in advance" (p. 143). Instead, "reality is the unknown," which, in Rahnema's (2009) conceptualization, "has to be '*dis*-covered together, free from all the presuppositions and influences of the known" (p. 143). Perhaps more than anything else, this is what clowning can offer to us not only as

scholars, but as human beings: an ability to go into the unknown as a possible life-opening adventure, rather than as a fearful, uncomfortable encounter.

The clown acknowledges the intrinsic relationship between knowns and unknowns, understanding that everything that we know has the potential to open up into a vast world of unknowns (and, because delineations as neat and tidy as "known" and "unknown" are actually impossible (see Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 311), also into the complex worlds of the not-yet-known, the ambiguous, the uncertain, the unnameable, the ineffable). Furthermore, unknowns have a tendency to become "knowns" (or, in some cases, "almost knowns") as they are explored. Thus, the relationship between these categories is fluid and dynamic, rather than stable and static. For the remainder of this dissertation, anytime I refer to the relationship between the known and the unknown, I do so in a way intended to evoke the inherent complexity, ambiguity, and tension that exists in the delineation of these two worlds, rather than in a way that can be easily defined and therefore dichotomized.

While the clown's imperative to "go for the unknown" may at first be understood as a corrective for the human tendency to remain within the comforting realm of that which we know, it is perhaps more accurately and richly understood as encouragement to see and acknowledge the deeply intimate relationship that exists between knowns and unknowns. To return to the Polynesian wayfinders, the striking and seemingly magical capacity to venture forth into the unknown is, itself, established by the wayfinders' capacity to carefully attend to the subtleties of the known world of which they are a part: shifts in the wind, flight paths of birds, glimmerings of stars (Davis, 2009, p. 52-6). We do not "go for the unknown" by rejecting the known world in order to dream of something different. Instead, we set off on potentially uncomfortable, but always interesting, adventures into the unknown through doorways opened by deeply perceived knowns. This is what I mean when I refer to clowning as a quality of attention: both clowns and wayfinders have honed their abilities to perceive and appreciate what is around them. It is this quality of attention that allows each of them to notice what others cannot even see because they have not yet learned to look and what others cannot even hear because they have not yet learned to listen.

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5.2.   What Is & What Could Be

For me, there is a peculiar importance in being able to take differing vantage points upon the common world, to hold as problematic what is taken for granted, and (perhaps, particularly, at this moment of history) to remain cognizant of alternative possibilities. (Greene, 1978, p. 89)

 All forms of art have been employed to help us, as people/communities/societies/ cultures, consider, dream about, and even embody that which "could be." This characteristic of art is precisely why Greene (1978) has focused upon its pedagogic potentials:

> I want to argue that encounters with the arts can lessen the immersion we see around us today and that they may do so by enabling people to break through the horizons of the ordinary, of the taken-for-granted, to visions of the possible, of 'what is not.' (p. 173)

These imaginative/generative/creative/piercing qualities of art often earn it an oppositional place alongside what is widely considered to be "reality" or "the real world," which we could also call the "what is" or the "taken-for-granted." One of the particular attributes of clowning is that it tends to blur these boundaries between "the real world" and the (artistic) "imagination," or the "what is" and "what could be," refusing to accept them as oppositional or mutually exclusive.

Clowns across cultures have long been associated with specific traditions of truth-telling and social criticism. In written accounts about clowns much is made of these figures' "outsider" status, which is considered to support their ability to both see and comment upon the "what is," or what Greene refers to above as the taken for granted in the common world. Sometimes this outsider status is established by the clown figure literally living apart from society or passing through town as a stranger (as was the case with traveling performers, such as Commedia dell'arte troupes). At other times, this outsider status was cemented by more internal characteristics, such as the clown's odd behaviours, childlike perspective, "simple" or feeble-mindedness, etc. In such cases, it was the clown's very refusal to abide by the taken for granted customs of the society that established the "outsider" quality that was considered to have provided him with an enhanced perspective on that society. In addition to this outsider perspective, the clown is also known for destabilizing either/or

categorizations by making use both/and logic. By applying this logic to questions of what is/what could be, the clown makes a unique contribution to the pursuit of "enabling people to break through the horizons of the ordinary" (Greene, 1978, p. 173).

For the clown, both what is and what could be are possibilities, with the "what is" simply representing the possibility that is currently being enacted. Thus, for the clown, "what is" is no more right, inevitable, worthy of uncritical submission or of loyalty than any other possibility. For the clown, both what is and what could be are avenues for exploration. As in Terry Eagleton's (1990) observations about children-as-theorists, clowns therefore pose "the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions" of even our most "routine social practices" (p. 34) – precisely those which we typically take for granted. Significantly, the clown is no more bound by these "routine social practices" than any other possibility for behaviour or existence. The clown is therefore uniquely able to explore the "what is" and the "what could be" with equal creativity and commitment to the opening of possibilities. Through such a practice of possibilities, the boundaries between "what is" and "what could be" become blurred and undefined. In this way, we are, perhaps, enabled to see not only the distance between what is and what could be, but also their proximity. Rather than understanding ourselves as bound to what is and striving for what could be, we come to understand both as our own creations and thus subject to our choices and actions. The clown thereby opens up, or, perhaps more accurately, draws attention to, spaces of possibility.

Although the clown training in which I have participated is not specifically focused on social criticism, it remains connected with the underlying ethos of being able to free ourselves from our previous assumptions about "what is" in order to better connect with and embrace what "could be." Importantly, this includes all that "could be" about "what is," allowing existing conditions to themselves be full of possibilities. In this training, the initial focus is on moving beyond our assumptions and habits about ourselves, in order to create more space for all that we are actually capable of or, in Pochinko's words, for the beautiful ridiculousness of ourselves. We begin by learning that we don't have to change or prepare ourselves for class. So, if this means that we work stiff and sore then we work stiff and sore.

This "lack of preparation" is fairly unique amongst theatrical training techniques, where participants are often expected to stretch and "warm-up" before they are able to "begin" the work of the training. Through this process, participants are subtly taught to replace the "what is" in their bodies for the "what could be" (i.e., increased flexibility, etc.). The shift in clown training is that we, instead, begin with what is and, through the training, begin to explore the possibilities that exist within what is. Said differently, through our connection to our own bodies, we discover "what could be" *within* "what is." In the training, this process is frequently referred to as dropping expectations (for example, expecting that feeling physically stiff will prevent us from being creative) and going for the unknown (for example, seeking what unknown forms of creativity might be uncovered within a stiff body).

Dropping our expectations of ourselves allows us to expand the landscapes of who/how/what we can actually be. While our habits and expectations may limit us to ways of being that are comfortable and familiar as aspects of the identities that we have crafted, they do not create actual limitations for what we are capable of being or doing, unless we allow them to. This expansion of our boundaries can be significant for appreciating both what is and what could be. We are thereby empowered, as Greene has repeatedly suggested, by the understanding that our actions and choices shape the world – including both what is and what could be.

As John and I wrote in a co-authored manuscript: through this process of expansion we can create space for change, in ourselves and in the world, precisely because of how deeply we have accepted "the way things are." When we are able to stop seeing "what is" and "what could be" as oppositional, we are able to understand that each is actually a possibility within the other. The idea that "what could be" is enfolded within "what is" is directly tied to the clown's perspective on each of the pairs of the known/unknown, possibility/impossibility, and success/failure. Rather than being binaries, the clown's both/and logic reveals that these pairings are best understood as perpetually found at the heart of one other: every known has an unknown at its core, every impossibility a possibility, every failure a success, and vice versa.

5.3. Finding the Possible in Impossibility

As is suggested by the title of this dissertation ("Impossibility Aside"), the clown acknowledges the existence and reality of the impossible but, rather than being limited by it, the clown puts notions of impossibility aside in order to open up new worlds of possibility. Discussing Babcock-Abrahams' body of work studying clown and Trickster figures across cultures, Christen (1998) asserts that it is these figures' "dualism and paradoxical nature that allows for 'pure possibility'" (p. xi). It is, Christen (1998) summarizes from Babcock-Abrahams, "the very 'messiness' of these characters [which] should be the focus" of our study of them (p. xi). "Either/or" categorizations help us to maintain clean boundaries and neat distinctions about the world. Pluralism and multiplicities are, indeed, "messy," and yet, as Babcock-Abrahams has observed, this messiness is actually the point. More possibilities lurk in messiness than could ever be found in the clear-cut. By both doing the seemingly impossible and struggling to accomplish what seems easily possible, the clown brings impossibility and possibility together in a messy jumble of co-existence. Through these actions the clown does not disregard impossibility, but instead puts the common understanding of impossibility aside in order to acknowledge that possibility and impossibility are enfolded within one another.

It is, in part, through the practice of perpetual inquiry that clowns put impossibility aside in order to inhabit a space of possibility. Clowns do not accept the impossible at face value. Instead, they question the impossible and embrace, as a creative task, the work of finding possibility within impossibility. This is reflected in French poet Theodore de Banville's musings about the clown:

> between the adjective 'possible' and the adjective 'impossible' the English pantomimist has made his choice: he has chosen the adjective 'impossible.' He lives in the impossible; if it is impossible, he does it. He hides where it is impossible to hide, he passes through openings that are smaller than his body, [….]; while being closely observed, he executes movements that are absolutely undetectable, he balances on an umbrella, he curls up inside a guitar case without it bothering him in the least, and throughout, he flees, he escapes, he leaps, he flies through the air. And what drives him on? The remembrance of having been a bird, the regret of no longer being one, the will to again become one. (as cited in Towsen, 1976, p. 141-142)

There are perhaps many masks that a clown may access who would be unable to execute these impossible tasks, masks who have never "been a bird." The creative task that lays before the clown is therefore to continue to access masks until she finds one who was once a bird, and who can, therefore, "fly through the air." Through alignment with and accomplishment of the impossible, the clown demonstrates the existence of endless possibilities. It is the clown's practices of creativity and inquiry that allow her to bring possibility and impossibility closer together, revealing the intimate connection between them.

While de Banville sees the clown as aligned with impossibility because of the English pantomimist's ability to accomplish seemingly impossible tasks, the flip side is also true. For many clowns, the easily accomplishable proves itself to be utterly insurmountable. As Swortzell (1978) explains of Emmet Kelly, "the easy and the impossible were just as much out of reach for him, [so] he set at both with the same painstaking determination" (p. 221). Rather than undermining the clown's ability to put impossibility aside, the struggle to achieve simple tasks raises further questions about the relationship between possibility and impossibility. Consider for example, the challenge that Grock, a celebrated Auguste,[40] experienced sitting "normally" in a chair, only to discover ease in achieving a seemingly impossible balance:

> Returning to his chair, he falls right through it when the seat collapses. The same thing happens with a new chair. Grock maneuvers his body so as to play the piano with his rear end. He sits on another chair, and its seat likewise collapses. Here he executes his famous jump to the back of the chair [….] 'All I knew was that I wanted to be on the back of the chair to play the concertina…. The simplest thing would be to jump out. I collected myself, jumped, crossing my legs in the air, and landed on the back of the chair…. No other artiste has ever done it as I did. Many have tried it, and among them fully trained acrobats. (Towsen, 1976, p. 251)

Through such challenges to common sense, clowns help to demonstrate the unfathomable complexity of human life. Clowns frequently do things "the wrong way." Paradoxically, this can sometimes be seen to be "the right way," or at the very least to provide the clown with a previously impossible solution. As Towsen (1976) explains, it is at such moments that we see "the other side of the clown's stupidity" (p. 349) as brilliance. It is a fitting paradox that the

clown is able to open up spaces of possibility both through what she is able to accomplish and through what she finds insurmountable.

The significance of clowning as a practice of possibility (or of putting impossibility aside in order to embrace possibilities) is also seen in clown training. In this context, clowning can be understood as a revelation of the myriad possibilities of the self. Lecoq (1973) says this about the experience of attending his program:

> During the school's two-year course, the student finds himself having to overcome obstacles and experiment in various kinds of dramatic direction and in different levels of acting. Through this experience, and because he is given the utmost freedom for personal creation, the student will define himself and learn to recognize his own possibilities. (p. 117-118)

Lecoq therefore also identifies the revelation of personal possibilities as core to the experience of his training. This revelation can include the realization that experiences, identifications, and actions that we previously thought were off-limits or impossible for us are, indeed, possible. John Turner explains this aspect of clown training by using Gaulier's phrase "all aspects of humanity belong to everyone" (J. Turner, personal communication, August 2008): the breadth of the human experience is open and available to us, to the extent that we are able to open ourselves to accept it. Such an understanding allows us to appreciate our human differences not as what keeps us irrevocably separate, but rather as what allows us to connect with "all aspects of humanity," differently.[41]

In accepting that "all aspects of humanity belong to everyone," we also accept responsibility for these aspects of humanity. It is this form of responsibility that Levinas suggests is perpetually placed upon us by the Other – it is a responsibility to which we are not equal. In discussing witnessing and testimony, Shoshanna Felman breaks the word "responsibility" down into "response" and "ability" (Felman & Laub, 1992). In making this linguistic move, Felman evokes Levinas' phrase "I am he who finds the resources to respond to the call [of the Other]" (1985, p. 89). The existence of the Other, and the relationship that we bear to "all aspects of humanity," perpetually provokes our *ability* to *respond*, even though our ultimate responsibility to the Other may always exceed this ability.

hooks' (1994) incisive critiques in *Teaching to Transgress* reveals that impossibility is sometimes evoked as an excuse for avoiding our responsibility for the Other:

> It is apparent that one of the primary reasons we have not experienced a revolution of values is that a culture of domination necessarily promotes addiction to lying and denial [….] When this collective cultural consumption of and attachment to misinformation is coupled with the layers of lying individuals do in their personal lives, our capacity to face reality is severely diminished as is our will to intervene and change unjust circumstances. (p. 29)

It is impossible for me to know the lived experience of another; however, this impossibility does not absolve me of my responsibility to attend carefully and genuinely to those others and to discover the possibilities that exist within this impossibility. Indeed, for Levinas, the ethical subject is "defined by the experience of an internalized demand that it can never meet, a demand that exceeds it" (Critchley, 2007, p. 10). Thus, for Levinas, the ethical subject becomes so by virtue of rising to a demand for which she is inadequate. The clown's capacity to continue to engage – to seek possibility – even within the parameters of acknowledged inadequacy or impossibility can therefore be understood as an *ethical* capacity.

In her work framing the clown as a "foolish witness," Julie Salverson (2006, 2008) speaks of the "impossible bravery and willingness" (2008, p. 246) that allow the clown to engage in the face of failure and the recognition of tragedy. The bravery that Salverson speaks of seems to be required both to encounter the pain of another's experience and to overcome our (well-intentioned) fears and ambitions as witnesses. In Salverson's (2008) words,

> sometimes the fear of appropriation can become an excuse not to act, not to risk engagement. Sometimes we can argue ourselves into a corner in the name of ethics or theory when our objections are really about the fear of making contact, of being rejected, of looking ridiculous. (p. 250-1)

It is in these moments when we require the "impossible bravery and willingness" of the clown in order to chose connection over estrangement. It is foolishness, Salverson (2008) admits, to allow ourselves to become witnesses, to experience joy in a tragic world, to act, to encounter the Other, to "step forward" (p. 253). However, she further emphasises that this

is the essential foolishness that allows us to "do what no one else can do in our place" (Salverson, 2008, p. 253) and, following a Levinasian model, to become ethical subjects. Furthermore, it is this impossible bravery that allows clowns to recognize their capacity to connect with "all aspects of humanity." The clown's capacity to do and be that which is impossible can therefore be understood as creating heightened spaces of possibility for ethical engagement.

There are some performing clowns who seem to believe that the clown's ability to "break all the rules" means that, as clowns, they should perform the opposites of these rules, conventions, codes, and expectations in order to demonstrate a "breaking of the rules." In so doing, these clowns believe that they are sharing a space of possibility, since they are demonstrating that the opposite of what is generally expected can also occur. Rather than a direct breaking of such rules, I see the clown's practice of possibility as highlighting the choices that we make to maintain even those rules that have become so familiar as to be unconscious norms. The moment of a choice (before the choice has been made) is the moment of immanence (D. MacMurray-Smith, personal communication, May 2011), the moment of possibility, and the moment when *anything* can happen. Clowns are able to dwell in this moment of immanence

–   t o s t r e t c h i t o u t   –

through their propensity to endlessly ask "what if":

> *what if I picked up this chair?*

What if I didn't?   *What if, instead of picking up the chair, I sat down in it?*

What if a seagull flew in and landed on the chair?

>   *What if the seagull could talk?*

> *What if I became best friends with the seagull?*

Performing clowns sometimes lose sight of this space of possibility by suggesting that what is important is that we challenge the habitual expectations that are placed upon us, rather than simply asking "what if…"?[42]

This mistaken understanding of the clown's transgressive role vis-à-vis social rules and habitual expectations is perhaps understandable given that clown training– at least the clown training that I have experienced – is about temporarily releasing ourselves from these rules, conventions, codes, and expectations in order to access other aspects of ourselves and our deep creativity. However, when clowns bring this release directly into performance – thereby disregarding the temporary and liminal nature of the clown training itself – they engage in what John refers to as "putting the training onstage" (J. Turner, personal communication, August 2008). The challenge with this approach is that, when emphasized repeatedly, its inherent limitations can shut down the space of possibility just as thoroughly as everyday rules, conventions, codes, and expectations do. It can establish a direct one-for-one relationship where we are encouraged to replace one set of expectations with another. In such a scenario we haven't succeeded in dropping our expectations or in engaging with the possibility at the core of impossibilities and have, instead, merely replaced an expectation with its opposite.

While it is less directly relevant to my current discussion, it is worthwhile to note that sometimes performing clowns choose to emphasize humour (going for broad laughs) over other possibilities that could attend their work. While I do not wish to pit the "humorous" and the "serious" against one another, I believe that this is precisely what happens when performers (whether clowns or not) forsake the stakes (i.e., why something matters) in their work in favour of "getting a laugh." It is my adamant position that everything is heightened for the clown, meaning that everything matters *more*. When humour arises in a clown performance (and I am not amongst those who believe that it is a necessity), it can arise from the depth of commitment and passion that the clown has invested in whatever it is she is doing, rather than from a flippancy that, in my opinion, undermines any possible impact that the clown may have on her audience.

Rather than suggesting new expectations, whether the suggestion is made consciously or unconsciously, or simply trying to make us laugh, I see the higher calling of the clown as illuminating and holding the tension of our many, many moments of choice (of the moment of immanence), and allowing us to draw our own conclusions about those choices. Babcock-Abrahams (1978) draws on Nietzsche to make a similar point about the open-ended nature of clown and Trickster interventions in society, and the health that such interventions can foster:

> clown or trickster […] never demands that we reject totally the orders of our sociocultural worlds; but neither do these figures simply provide us with a cautionary note as to what would happen should the 'real' world turn into a perpetual circus or festival (Babcock-Abrahams 1975a). Rather, they remind us of the arbitrary condition of imposing an order on our environment and experience, even while they enable us to see certain features of that order more clearly simply because they have turned insight out. For, as Nietzsche has epigrammatically reminded us: 'Objections, digressions, gay mistrust, the delight in mockery are signs of health: everything unconditional belongs in pathology' (1966:90). (p. 29)

By "enabling us to see," clowns can facilitate moments of learning, of growth, and of change by bringing our attention to the boundaries that we have drawn between possibility and impossibility, and demonstrating for us how easily these boundaries can be blurred. Instead of accepting all possibilities as equally worthy of merit, clowns (in both clown training and clown performance) call for moments wherein we might consider the specific merits of all possibilities. These moments of consideration heighten both opportunities and capacity for choice-making, as opposed to unthinking, habitual action.

The clown's attuned and playful quality of attention opens up the potentials of always asking another question. It is through this quality of attention that immanence arises; the practice of abiding within immanence, in turn, creates the possibility of transcendence and transformation. It is when we are able to suspend time, ask questions, and explore boundaries and possibilities that we are able to bring a heightened quality of attention to our experiences, rather than falling into the patterns of expectations and habits. As a direct consequence, nothing is stable or fixed or unchangeable for the clown, not even a principle as seemingly fundamental as gravity:

If the clown wants to fly, she will find a way to fly.

While definitive ways of knowing allow us to shut down possibilities in order to reign ourselves in, the clown's way of knowing – the clown's epistemology – always leaves the space of possibilities open. What's more, the clown's approach creates the conditions through which we may connect with that which is sacred, vulnerable, and immanent within one another.

5.4.   A Clown Approach

Clowning as an approach allows us to practice possibilities and to come at questions from a "both/and" perspective. This approach allows us to appreciate the relationship between what is and what could be, to see the possibility in impossibilities, to celebrate the success in failure, and to travel the ever shifting boundary between the known and unknown. The foundational principles of clowning that I have identified in this dissertation are all about opening ourselves up: through our vulnerabilities we open ourselves to others in order to give an invitation to connect and co-create; in our multiplicities, we open ourselves to ourselves, embracing the many and various ways that we can think, act, and be; and as we learn to transgress boundaries – both our own and those established by the socio-cultural contexts in which we find ourselves – we open up entirely new territories in which to play. These principles of clowning beckon us to step outside of conventions of body and mind and, as hooks (1994) describes her role models doing for her, "stop [our] mind and completely open it up and free it, even for a moment, from a conventional habitual way of looking at things" (p. 206-7). This stepping out, opening up, and freeing process is the practice of possibilities that I have been describing. It is also what David Appelbaum (1995) has termed the "stop," a concept which he describes as "the advent of an intelligence of choice" (xi). In her work on performative inquiry, Fels makes use of the concept of the stop as an opportunity for insight, connection, engagement, and transcendence. For example, in her chapter, "Each moment, a child of duration," she articulates that

A stop reminds us of our vulnerability; in the presence of others, we are startled to see ourselves anew. A stop is a moment of possible recognition, or reinvention, a reminder of what has been lost, an offering of what possibilities we might consider, if we reconsider our habits of engagement. A stop is an offering that attends our receiving. (Fels, 2012b, p. 334)

Fels (2012a) describes the stop moment as a child's tug on our sleeve, calling us to attention. In recognizing the stop moment as a call to attention and an "offering of possibilities," Fels also gives us a beautiful description of the practice of immanence. It is the combination of vulnerability and possibility that creates the clown's quality of attention. Each of the four foundational principles is, itself, a gateway into this quality of attention, into the practice of possibilities that is clowning. Cyclically, the act of practicing possibilities in this way also engages the foundational principles: stepping out of the habitual and into unknown possibilities is, itself, a transgression, one which makes us vulnerable, opens a magic space for engaging with others, and reveals to us the depth and breadth of our own multiple capabilities.

Most of the educational scholars who have inspired me in this inquiry speak explicitly about the highest goal of education as an opening up of spaces and possibilities. Clown scholars, such as Babcock-Abrahams (1984), have also called for an opening of possibilities within scholarly practices in order to allow for "a little more room to play in" (p. 103). Indeed, Babcock-Abrahams (1984) draws on Hannah Arendt to describe thinking itself as something that "transports us from one world into another and allows us to break with codes of conduct by opening everything to question" (p. 103-4), thus aligning not only education but the very act of thinking with the clown's emphasis on vulnerable openness and transgression. It is my intention throughout this dissertation to answer these scholarly calls for openness with the practice of possibilities facilitated through the foundational principles of clowning.

Working on this dissertation involved searching and iteratively re-searching: searching for my focus, searching for ideas, and perhaps most importantly and most challengingly, searching for myself within my focus, within my ideas, within the dissertation, within clowning, and within the academy. Through this searching, I have been practising my ability to dwell within the clown's quality of attention (within immanence), I have been spiraling into my inquiry, and I have been transforming and offering the possibility of transformation outward.

Ronald J. Pelias (2004) describes works of arts-based research as "mark[ing] a different space. They collect in the body: an ache, a fist, a soup" (p. 11). As a scholar, the "different space" that I attempt to enter is the magic space of engagement: I invest in this work not as a piece of singularly authored scholarship, but as a co-creation with all those whose work has come before mine and all those whose work will follow after. I have experienced the ache that Pelias describes. This ache has been a barometer for me. To borrow Leavy's (2009) words, when I have strayed from my own clown-based scholarly practices, I have noticed that my work begins "*feeling like work*. Joyless" (p. viii). However, when I have allowed myself to luxuriate in my own approach as both clown and scholar, I have returned to joy.

Mask 6 Above, Above

Chapter 6.

The Scholarly Clown

Clowns and scholars have not always made the easiest of bedfellows; indeed, they are often stereotyped and caricatured in dichotomizing ways. There are a number of reasons for this apparent divisiveness but, at base, the tension seems to rest on a tendency of those parties involved to assume that the clown is fun and frivolous while the scholar is serious and analytical. It is this assumption more than anything inherent to either the clown or the scholar that has cast them as polarized figures.

When scholars have written about clowns in the past, they have often (though certainly not always) done so in ways that ensure that "the fun is generally left out" (Mitchell, 1992, p. 6). However, it is important to note that the misunderstandings and skewed perceptions have been mutual. Clowns themselves have expressed reservations about the work done in the academy. "Rebel clown" Hilary Ramsden even goes so far as to call "clown-ness" the "polar opposite of the academy" (as cited in Davison, 2013, p. 310). She says, "Clown shows us how we don't fit. How can you mark someone on their 'misfitness'? Our clown-ness is the polar opposite of the academy, and it's never going to get in there" (as cited in Davison, 2013, p. 310). Davison (2013) connects this to the larger question of the application of clowning, asking whether the clown is "condemned, by definition, to remain an outsider" (p. 310). While these objections may have some validity in relation to certain approaches to scholarship, on the whole they seem to be a reaction against a narrow view of what the academy is and can be – a view informed primarily by common perceptions, rather than through direct relationship.

These protests from clown practitioners ignore all of the ways of engaging in scholarly practices (including assessment) that align closely with the principles, practices, and playfulness of the clown. Consider, as just one example amongst myriads, Carl Leggo's (2010) description of his research: "I live stories and tell stories and live each day with a zany zeal for walking the line like a tightrope that stretches from one unknown to another unknown" (p. 70). By acknowledging the deep connection between the clown and the scholar, we are able to recognize that knowledge and ignorance are not actually opposites or antithetical to one another; instead they exist in perpetual relationship with one another. As Malewski and Jaramillo explain in *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education* (2011), as educators we must "attend to the production of unknowing as imbricate to the production of knowing" (p. 4). As a direct result of this way of looking at knowledge we can also come to see that the clown/fool and the scholar are not diametrically opposed on a spectrum of knowledge. Instead, even the most learned amongst us has a fool within herself (or at least has the capacity to be foolish), while even the most foolish has the capacity for moments of striking insight and understanding.

This challenge to see the relationship between foolishness and wisdom aligns with Emily Levine's understanding of the Trickster as one who practices "non-oppositional strategies," strategies that allow for paradox rather than contradiction in order to appreciate that "more than one reality [can] co-exist" (2002). In bringing together my practices as clown and as scholar, I wish to foster this appreciation amongst both clowns and academics. I therefore do not see the clown as a definitive outsider from the academy (or from any other institution), as Ramsden seems to suggest. While Hyde's (2008) observation that "the trickster belongs to the periphery, not to the center" (p. 13) may well be accurate, academe is host to innumerable peripheries within which clowns and tricksters might dwell. Rather than understanding clowns (and Tricksters) rigidly as outsiders to any and all institutions, I see them as playing with all manner of insider/outsider identities and boundaries. If anything, scholarly institutions are rife with opportunities to shift boundaries and play with the relationship between centers and peripheries. Thus not only can the clown "get in there," in a real way the clown ethos is always present in meaningful scholarly practices, which push us beyond the comfort zone of what we already know.

6.1. Clowning and The Classroom

The foundational principles of clown have the potential to infuse and inform us throughout our lives, rather than simply being "educational" or "classroom" strategies. As I mentioned at the outset, clowning as a practice is most readily aligned with "education" in the broadest sense, namely an emphasis on the possibilities of learning and of transformation. However, when discussing clowning and education together the image that is most readily conjured for many is "the class clown": the student who disrupts the class, often using humour, and generally finds him or herself in trouble for the effort. It therefore seems prudent to dedicate a little space to considering how and when clowns have historically been evoked in relation to discrete classroom practices, even though such classroom practices are not the specific focus of my work.

Clowning has been utilized for teaching and learning in many ways across many eras and cultures (Coburn & Morrison, 2013; McManus, 2003; Mitchell, 1992; Otto, 2001; Peacock, 2009; Robb, 2007; Schechter, 1985; Towsen, 1976). What is rare is not an association between the clown and teaching/learning, but rather an incorporation of clowning in formal systems of education. However, the opening to Towsen's *Clowns* (1976) provides an example of an intriguing exception:

> The University of Bologna is one of the world's oldest and most venerable institutions of higher learning. In the wall of its Anatomical Lecture Hall, just a few feet above the speaker's rostrum, there is a curious little door, not much larger than a man's head. Its function had to do with an old custom: when the professor found his students growing inattentive, the door would open and a clown would show his face, crack a few jokes to make the audience laugh, then disappear. (p. xi)

This lasting physical feature of the University of Bologna points to one role that the clown can play in an educational context, namely as the entertainer who makes the less-than-interesting tasks of learning more palatable. This tradition is carried on by class clowns the world over. Like recess, this temporary and clearly bounded inclusion of "entertainment" in the teaching/learning context can actually serve to unconsciously dichotomize the

experiences of fun, enjoyment, humour, laughter, etc. from tasks more clearly linked to the "work" of learning.

Although Towsen does identify entertainment as the central element tying together a diversity of clown traditions, he also presents several examples that suggest a connection between clowning and education that runs deeper than the fleeting entertainment provided by the pop-up clown at the University of Bologna. In the Hopi kachina dances, for example, the ceremonial clowns have stated that the laughter of the spectators is crucial to establishing the educational value of their performances (Towsen, 1976, p. 15-16). In this context, laughter is understood as a specific vehicle for learning and is valued as central to the educational purpose of the performance, rather than seen as a form of entertainment that is separate or at least separate-able from the enterprise of teaching and learning. A blending of education and entertainment can also be seen in the North American circus tradition, despite this tradition's close association with a form of clown performance that is wholly superficial and vacuous. Dan Rice, as circus clown, saw himself as a "rationalist, philosopher, and moralist" (Towsen, 1976, p. 130). Indeed, he felt that the intellectual quality of his showmanship was what made it "real clown." He made this clear when he

> complained to John Ringling that 'you haven't got one real clown in your show - I mean a jester who can stand in a ring and hold the audience all by himself. Instead, you march in a dozen buffoons who try to get laughs by falling all over each other or whacking one another over their padded buttocks with bladders or staves. That's your 'bigger than ever.' Twelve idiotic simpletons instead of one talented clown.' (as cited in Towsen, 1976, p. 259)

Rice was therefore unequivocal that, for him, clowning was not defined by physical comedy or slapstick alone, but rather a "talented clown" would, like himself, have more of the philosophical to offer his audiences. The gravestone of another popular circus clown, William Wallet, reads: "Under the guise of folly he preached philanthropy, extolled truth and virtue, and berated vice. To have known him was in itself a liberal education" (Towsen, 1976, p. 196). The significance of the educational aspects of the clown's entertainment is therefore not unique to Dan Rice as a circus performer.

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Clowns have frequently been understood as depicting the child or the innocent whose main purpose it is to learn about the world that surrounds them. It is this quality of the clown that leads to Butler's (2012) assertion that

> [clowning] is about remembering what it was like, as a child, when everything seemed new, a time when we did not know, but found ourselves in a constant process of discovery. As children, this is a natural condition of existence; as we grow older, it becomes a radical act. (p. 64)

It is also this quality that leads Towsen (1976) to describe the famous clown Grock as a "naïve fool who is discovering the ways of the world for the first time" (p. 232). Clowning encourages us to come to the world through a "constant process of discovery," thereby recognizing the complexity that attends even what might appear to be simple on the surface. By examining the educational aspects of clown tactics, it becomes clear that the clown rarely sets out to teach or impart a particular message,[43] but rather attempts to create the conditions for learning or to open up awareness. Thus, while the clown isn't necessarily considered an "educator," the clown's play/performances can clearly be seen to be educative.

One of the unique ways that the clown can be seen as educative is through engagement with failure. I have already discussed several aspects of this engagement with failure, including the clown's failures and unexpected successes as that which allow us to "see the other side of the clown's stupidity" (Towsen, 1976, p. 349). Furthermore, I have explored how the clown's ability to fail – and, to use Beckett's (1999) phrase, "Fail again. Fail better" (p. 1) – affords her the status of "foolish witness," the one who can, in Julie Salverson's (2008) estimation, harness "impossible bravery and willingness" (p. 246) in order to continue seeing and being seen in the face of unimaginable tragedy. Finally, I have indicated how this capacity to fail aligns the clown with Levinas' conceptualization of ethics, as, for Levinas, it is the demand that the Other places on us for which we are always *inadequate* that requires of us our ethical capacity. In other words, it is the necessity of failure and the "impossible bravery and willingness" (Salverson, 2008, p. 246) that is required to continue despite recognition of that failure, that creates the conditions for ethical engagement.

I want to establish here that the clown's relationship with failure also serves to explain an alignment between clowning and learning. In her discussion of performance and/as education, Monica Prendergast (2015) considers learning "to be a never-ending rehearsal in the performance of lives" (p. 114), since it requires a constant process of trial and error. Furthermore, Prendergast draws on Bailes (2011) to bring together the figure of the clown, the process of learning, and the experience of failure:

> Often the process [of learning] is one of trial and error; we make mistakes, fall off the bike repeatedly, pick ourselves up and try again. Much comedy derives from this learning process. Think of a clown; he is in a constant child-like state, always trying something, failing at it (humorously), and trying again (Bailes, 2010, Ch. 2). No one would ever learn anything without continuing effort. (Prendergast, 2015, p. 114)

For her part, Bailes (2011) suggests that failure may have even more educative potential than its counterpart, success:

> failure is inclusive, permissive even. It can lead to unanticipated effects. One of its most radical properties is that it operates through a principle of difference rather than sameness. A failed occurrence signals the unpredictable outcome of events where a successful instance might, by comparison, be considered exclusive, prohibitive, and militated by mainstream values. (p. 2)

Together, Prendergast and Bailes help us to paint a picture of the clown's failure as a learning encounter, and as a specific way of opening up new spaces of possibility – spaces of possibility which the "sameness" of success might preclude.[44] The trick is to engage with our experiences of failure as worthy in themselves, rather than easily dismissing them as "wrong" or "bad." The clown is able to approach failure in this way because of what has been termed the "success-failure cycle," which I will explain in-depth below. For now, suffice to say that it is, paradoxically, the clown's abiding capacity for failure that makes her "educationally" successful.

The benefits of clowning in educational contexts are beginning to be recognized in the scholarly literature. Explicit discussions of clowning in education can be found in Butler (2012), Davison (2013), and King (2013b). As Butler (2012) explains,

> a pedagogy of clown has much to offer the progressive, critical educator concerned with accessible approaches to education – not merely for students of performance, but for any student in the twenty-first century's global context [....] To me, the clown can act as an essentially Frierean student/teacher: critically aware of one's social conditioning, constructing meaning from inquiry, and bearing witness to the world with humility, empathy, and hope. (p. 63)

In addition to the educational work done in classrooms, Davison (2013) has recognized a role for the clown in the realm of research. He explains,

> in a way that's what clowns are: they go against the grain. Whenever I see two people in agreement, my instinct is to disagree with them. Maybe that's what led me to be a clown. In any case, it's a useful research tool: a kind of naïve skepticism [sic], with no malice intended. (Davison, 2013, p. 3)

Davison's alignment of clowning and research resonates with Babcock-Abrahams' (1984) vision of criticism: "criticism, whatever the discipline, should be considered as comedy, reminded of its playful origins, and reinvested with a comic perspective. Both clowning and criticism are 'sanctioned disrespect,' ways in which society paradoxically institutionalizes doubt and questioning" (p. 107). Thinking of the academy, and the broader scholarly enterprise, as the paradoxical way that our culture maintains its focus on questioning, instead of seeing it as the institution through which we erect cultural gatekeepers to stand guard over static "knowledge," allows open passage for the clown.

Although not writing about clowning per se, the work of many educational scholars, in particular arts education scholars, expresses both a desire for and an understanding of the possibilities of new approaches to education (and, in some cases, as with Indigenous scholarship, old approaches to teaching and learning, newly applied to contemporary education) (see, for examples, Ashton & Denton, 2006; Bai, 2001; Barone & Eisner, 2012; Cajete, 1994; Fels & Belliveau, 2008; Greene, 1978, 1995; Henderson, 2001; Hogue & Bartlett; 2014; hooks, 1994; Inoue, 2012; Knowles & Cole, 2008; MacDonald & Shirley,

2009; Meyer, 2006, 2010; Rechtschaffen, 2014; Salverson, 2008; Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010; Snowber & Wiebe, 2009; Springgay, Irwin, Leggo & Gouzouasis, 2008; Walsh, 2003). This literature is broad and diverse; indeed, the body of relevant educational writings is far more vast than I have been able to consider in my reading for this dissertation. Through my research, however, I have been particularly inspired by scholarship that seeks to re-envision and enrich the educational landscape by bringing artistic and cultural practices into our approach to teaching and learning.

At core, clowning and education share three essential qualities: openness to the unknown (the not-yet known, ambiguity, or uncertainty), engagement with the possibilities of failure, and commitment to transformation. When we pursue learning, we must open ourselves to that which we do not yet know and ready ourselves for the possibility that we will fail. Furthermore, we must allow our experiences with these unknowns and these failures to transform both ourselves and our realities. When we clown, we actively *go for the unknown*, knowing that we are likely to fail in the process but believing, also, that the experience of clowning may transform us. The remainder of this chapter is focused on illuminating exemplary educational literature that connects with each of the foundational principles of clowning articulated and initially described in the previous chapter.

6.2. Vulnerability

There is a significant body of literature that considers the role of vulnerability in educational encounters (see, as prime examples, the work of Denton, 2006; Kind, 2008; and Snowber & Wiebe, 2009). This literature considers both the possibilities and the challenges that exist for exploring the vulnerability of educators and students alike within the educational context. In my work, I have become fascinated by the multiplicity of vulnerability: both the multiple layers of vulnerability that make up each one of us, and the multiple forms of vulnerability that infuse human relationships. In this section I will focus on three distinct, yet interconnected, forms of vulnerability: vulnerability to self, vulnerability to others, and the witnessing of vulnerability. Each of these facets of vulnerability is pedagogical in unique ways, as I will explore.

6.2.1.　　　Vulnerability to Self: The Success-Failure Cycle

I recognize that "vulnerability to self" might, at first glance, appear to be a strange phrase. Yet, it seems to me that embracing vulnerability begins within the self, with the ability to attune ourselves to our own feelings, including (and perhaps especially) those feelings that we might be tempted to avoid. I appreciate David MacMurray Smith's perspective on vulnerability in performance: during a workshop he explained to me that he would never ask a performer to "be vulnerable" because he recognizes that we are all – whether performing onstage or not – always already vulnerable (D. MacMurray Smith, personal communication, September 2011). This perspective is echoed by Brené Brown when she writes, "Vulnerability is not weakness, and the uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure we face every day are not optional. Our only choice is a question of engagement" (2012, p. i). Instead of "being vulnerable," then, the challenge is to find ways to engage with, access, embrace, and even revel in our omnipresent vulnerabilities. Comedian and improviser Stephen Colbert shared the following story in an interview with Joel Lovell for GQ magazine:

> 'Our first night professionally onstage,' he said, the longtime Second City director Jeff Michalski told them that the most important lesson he could pass on to them was this: 'You have to learn to love the bomb.' 'It took me a long time to really understand what that meant […] It wasn't 'Don't worry, you'll get it next time.' It wasn't 'Laugh it off.' No, it means what it says. You gotta learn to *love* when you're failing.… The embracing of that, the discomfort of failing in front of an audience, leads you to penetrate through the fear that blinds you. Fear is the mind killer.' (Lovell, 2015, n.p.)

Embracing our own vulnerability can be scary and challenging. Indeed, it can be quite tempting, instead, to shut our vulnerability down and avoid it as best we can by pretending that it doesn't exist. However, the practice of clowning asks us to face our vulnerabilities bravely, giving them the time and the space that they need. In this way, we are able to not only stop denying our vulnerabilities, but actually learn to value, appreciate, and even love them. While vulnerability may never be entirely comfortable (indeed, perhaps it isn't supposed to be), we can practice being vulnerable within our selves in ways that allow us to stop fearing this discomfort and, instead, learn to appreciate and even enjoy it. And, as

Colbert's story illustrates, there is perhaps no better way to come face-to-face with our vulnerability than to experience failure ("the bomb").

There was a strong emphasis in my clown training on dropping expectations and letting go of judgements. However, it was still possible to experience both success and failure during this training. Rather than being conducted by a source of external validation (such as a teacher), the assessment of these successes or failures was left up to each participant. That being said, the audience reacts to that which the clown-in-training offers and therefore provides constant information about what is "succeeding" and what is "failing" in a performance, for those who are able to listen to the process and tap into the clown's unique quality of attention. One of the paradoxes of clowning is that failures themselves can be successes, sometimes even the greatest successes that a clown will experience. However, this failure-as-success requires that the performer accept whatever is actually happening in the moment, including allowing herself to feel the feelings associated with failure. When performers get stuck with failure-as-failure it is often because they have been resistant to what is happening and thus aren't able to change the failure into success.

Success and failure are conceived differently by the clown than they are in everyday contexts. In their common sense usage, success and failure are understood to be opposing concepts, meaning that one can be defined by the absence of the other: we succeed when we do not fail and we fail when do not succeed. The clown, however, plays by different rules. For the clown, success and failure are understood to be intimately and even cyclically connected to one another. As Davison (2013) explains,

> A clown enters then performs an action for the audience. There are two possible outcomes: either they laugh or they don't laugh. If they laugh, that is a clown success [….] If on the other hand they don't laugh, then this is a clown failure. There are two possible responses to a failure. I can either accept it as a failure or not accept it. If I accept it, and the audience sees that I have accepted it, they will most probably laugh. In that case, I am in the same position as if my original action had made them laugh and I can continue or repeat my action in the full knowledge that my audience is with me. In other words, I have converted my failure into a success. However, if I choose not to accept my failure, but instead to solider on, bravely resisting the stage death that is looming, forging on despite boring my audience to death, then my failure will remain a failure. (p. 198)

Although Davison here frames the clown's success and failure as being contingent on the audience's laughter, the principle of the "success-failure cycle" is broadly applicable.

Many contemporary educational contexts have been designed to maximize student success and minimize failures. While on the surface this may appear to be a good thing, it can also remove opportunities for vulnerability and significantly inhibit learning and growth. And it is not only students who are impacted. When systems are designed with a strong emphasis on success at all costs, teachers too are under tremendous pressure to always perform in ways that role model success. Certainly, when teachers are feeling the pressure to perform and succeed, this anxiety cannot help but impact students and their own ability to foster and appreciate their vulnerabilities.

As a teacher, Kind (2008) found herself pondering the relative roles of success and failure in education and wondering whether "we work so hard to help education students [and I would suggest all students] succeed that we neglect to make room for the possibility of failure and for singular moments of failing the expected bounds of teaching?" (p. 176). When considered in relation to the clown's success-failure cycle, it is clear that "neglecting to make room for the possibility of failure" is also a denial of the possibilities *of* failure – all the striking discoveries, understandings and, indeed, successes that can be born of failures. Furthermore, avoiding failures easily leads to avoiding and shutting down our vulnerabilities. On the flip side, allowing ourselves – as students and teachers alike – to be vulnerable in the face of our failures (and our capacities for failure) may well prove to be far more educational than a constant striving for narrowly-defined conceptions of "success." Learning to "love the bomb" (love our failures) is learning to be vulnerable to ourselves so that we might see the possibilities within our own failures, discomforts, and vulnerabilities.

hooks (1994) observes that we must resist the temptation to equate pain with harm:

learning can be painful. And sometimes it's necessary to remind students and colleagues that pain and painful situations don't necessarily translate into harm. We make that very fundamental mistake all the time. Not all pain is harm, and not all pleasure is good. (p. 154)

At times our desire to protect ourselves, to remain comfortable, to seek pleasure, and, indeed, to avoid vulnerability and wounding can be precisely that which keeps us from learning, changing, and growing. Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman (2003) further the point by suggesting that sometimes teaching and learning require us to engage with "difficult knowledge" and such engagement can bring us face-to-face with the possibility that there is "a kernel of trauma in the very capacity to know" (p. 756). As with the temptation to quickly fill the space of the unknown with that which is knowable, the desire to heal our wounds and remove our vulnerabilities may actually prevent us from learning. As Kind (2008) discovered: "it is far more important to tenderly make evident the wound, to carefully learn from it, and to attend to one's own learning and responding; to hold these grievings and failings for a while and let them speak" (p. 177). It is by spending time with our vulnerabilities that we are able to accept them and to make them meaningful. In encouraging play with vulnerability and an ability to see vulnerability as a strength, the practice of clowning develops our capacity to engage with, rather than dismiss and diminish, vulnerability.

I recently took a clown workshop with a teacher-practitioner named Deanna Fleysher. My favourite thing that she said during this workshop was that it is helpful for us, as performers, to allow our failures to be "lighter" for ourselves. This ability is also evoked by Emily Levine (2002) who, in her Ted talk, describes Tricksters as uniquely capable of holding their ideas "lightly," in order to make space for new and unexpected ideas. This lightness of belief (which, significantly, is not the same as not having beliefs or convictions) is central to clowning as a practice of possibilities and, specifically, to the clown's ability to see, appreciate, and play with the intimate connection between success and failure. Cultivating the ability to experience our failures lightly is a way to release ourselves from the fear of failure so that we might come to embrace our vulnerabilities and "love the bomb." The ability to treat failures lightly also provides insight into the questions that Snowber raises about the "spirituality of messiness": "What if, just what if, the detours of our lives were the way of the universe to direct us to our own true path? How would we then look on our shortcomings, failures, or limitations?" (Snowber & Richmond, 2011/2009, p. 129). Pedagogically, the clown suggests that our shortcomings, failures, or limitations provide us

with opportunities to come face-to-face with our vulnerabilities. Rather than shutting these vulnerabilities down, we are thereby able to embrace them for what they have to teach us – the successes that they themselves represent. In keeping with Julie Salverson's (2008) perspective about the clown's "impossible" bravery and willingness, becoming vulnerable to ourselves allows us to – foolishly, perhaps – embrace the detours in our lives, as well as our own "shortcomings, failures, and limitations" as their own kinds of successes and opportunities.

When we "love the bomb," we learn to hold our failures lightly. It is when we are resistant to, afraid of, embarrassed by, etc. failures that they become heavy for us. When they are embraced and even celebrated, our vulnerabilities can be part of what makes us buoyant and resilient. When they are avoided and feared, our vulnerabilities are a big part of what makes us fragile. Vulnerability need not be associated with fragility and can, indeed, become a source of strengthen. What is required is an (impossible) willingness to forever embrace our vulnerabilities, look frankly on our failures, and "love our bombs."

6.2.2. Vulnerability to Others: Inter-penetrability

There has been increasing recognition that despite some of the political challenges that attend vulnerability in the classroom (perhaps particularly the vulnerability of the teacher who some still insist, in daily encounters if not in scholarship, should aim to be disembodied and dispassionate purveyors of "knowledge"), there is a vulnerable core at the heart of all educational encounters. As Snowber and Wiebe discuss in their article *In Praise of the Vulnerable* (2009), there has long been an expectation (whether spoken or otherwise) that teachers should keep "our personal lives outside the door of the classroom" (p. 1). In addition to personal lives, the vulnerabilities of our own bodies are often considered to be "inappropriate" for the teaching and learning context. Yet, we can only deny our vulnerability (physical and otherwise) so far, and in real and consequential ways, teachers remain vulnerable beings in the classroom. Indeed, hooks (1994) suggests that the empowerment promised by education "cannot happen if we [as educators] refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging students to take risks" (p. 21). Significantly, vulnerability and

risk taking are implicated in one another as allowing ourselves to become vulnerable is itself taking a risk, while true risk taking requires the ability to allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

Here I hope you will allow me a brief foray into the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin wrote, amongst other things, about the carnivalesque, the grotesque, and the clown. His discussion of the grotesque body sheds an interesting light on the subject of inter-personal vulnerability, as well as on the symbol of the red nose so iconic of the clown. Discussing the writings of Rabelais, Bakhtin (1984) explains:

> Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body [….] Special attention is given to […] all that prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside [….] The grotesque body […] is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world [….] This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body [….] The grotesque image displays not only the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one. (p. 316-18)

The grotesque body is therefore a body *vulnerable* to the world and to the Other. The grotesque body is always becoming precisely because it is *open*, hence the emphasis on the penetrable orifices of the human face: the nose and the mouth. The merging of inner and outer organs within the depiction of the grotesque body also helps to anchor the understanding of the clown's red nose as, in actuality, a heart organ. The red nose is used to symbolize the clown's heart because of the already open, penetrable, vulnerable status of the nose, demonstrating the ultimate vulnerability that the clown shares with the world. Unlike the human heart, which is hidden away and protected by the rib cage, the clown's heart is front and center: as visible, open, and vulnerable as the nose.

While we may not wish to think of ourselves in relation to the grotesque imagery described by Bakhtin, the reality is that, in both physical and metaphorical ways, human beings all exist as grotesque bodies. The word grotesque has a negative connotation, affiliated as it is with words like "disgusting," "ugly," "shocking," and "repulsive." However,

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at its core, the grotesque imagery that Bakhtin describes is interested in exploring "The confines between the body and the world and between separate bodies" (1984, p. 315). The determination that such bodies are "repulsive" says more about a particular socio-cultural discomfort with the human body and its "excesses" (the ways that it transgresses its own boundaries, such as through its various secretions) than it says about bodies themselves. The reality is that our bodies are penetrable: through our orifices (including our noses, mouths, ears, anuses, and vaginas) we are open to others. We are used to thinking of our bodies as precisely that which demarcates us as separate from others, materially if not metaphysically. However, while our bodies may appear to provide us with discrete borders and boundaries, these are regularly transgressed in both direct and indirect ways. Even physically, we remain ever-vulnerable to others: bodies forever in the process of being built and created and involved in the building and creation of others. In both physical and metaphysical ways, we penetrate and are penetrated by others and by the very world in which we exist:

We are open.

We are vulnerable.

We are beautiful.

We are grotesque.

As David MacMurray Smith said, "we are all always already vulnerable" (personal communication). The question is therefore not whether we are vulnerable to ourselves and/or to others, but instead the degree to which we embrace or deny our vulnerabilities. Furthermore, accepting our vulnerability (both within ourselves and to others) is a perpetual process, not something achieved in stages or by degrees. Even if yesterday we found ourselves truly able to "love the bomb," love our own grotesque and penetrable being, today, we must find ways to love them again. As with our internal vulnerability, our vulnerability to others is omnipresent. This vulnerability to others includes physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual vulnerability. It includes the recognition, which Judith Butler (2004) explains is born of injury, that "there are others out there on whom my life

depends, people I do not know and may never know" (p. xii). However, it goes further as well, because it is not only our lives, but also our (penetrable) bodies, our emotions, our ideas, our faith, etc. etc. that are directly impacted by others. Embracing our vulnerability to others therefore means celebrating the ways that we are shaped and changed by others, allowing others to really see us and inviting them to impact us deeply.

While our vulnerability may be a perpetual condition of being human, we are able to invite or resist the role of vulnerability in our lives. Learning to appreciate our vulnerability to others is how we are able to dwell in the kind of "self-forgetfulness" that Smith (1991) describes as "finding oneself in relation to others," (p. 198) as discussed earlier. In their work with "difficult knowledge," Pitt and Britzman (2003) describe this concept as a way of "encountering the self through the otherness of knowledge" (p. 755). By embracing our vulnerability to others we are able, through them, to learn to see ourselves anew. Indeed, we may even learn to *be* ourselves anew by uncovering aspects of our own capabilities that we had never before seen, known, or accepted. In welcoming our vulnerability to others, we therefore embrace a form of "inter-penetrability," recognizing that we are all co-created beings, shaped and changed through our relationships with others. This condition of inter-penetrability reveals the deeply pedagogical nature of our vulnerability to others.

The educational context is perhaps an especially fraught domain in which to be a penetrable body. Discomfort with the openness and excesses of the human body is at its zenith in contexts where human beings regularly gather together: as a prime example, simply consider the difference between using your toilet at home and using a public washroom. The actions may be precisely the same, but these are often qualitatively distinct experiences.

The clown loves her grotesque, penetrable, vulnerable body and she loves her emotional, spiritual, and mental vulnerabilities as well. However, it is not enough for her to simply love her own vulnerabilities; she wants to invite others into those vulnerabilities as well. She wants her vulnerabilities and the vulnerabilities of others to come out and play together, to co-create. She therefore seeks ways to invite us into her vulnerabilities. While much grotesque imagery seeks to shock us through confrontation with the openness of our bodies, the clown wishes to encourage this openness. This goal requires that the clown

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"read" her audience well. Some people may find that a shocking confrontation with the body helps them to connect. However, for others this will be off-putting and counter-productive. Certainly, within many educational contexts it would be inappropriate. It is therefore the clown's role to balance on the high wire of vulnerability, inviting us into discomfort in ways that encourage us to embrace it as our own, rather than dismiss or deny it.

In her work, Snowber has drawn lines of connection between vulnerability, sensuality, eros, and learning. Writing as the body, she calls out to her readers,

> I want you to return to a sensual knowing where you are rejuvenated in the *eros* of the everyday. What do all your senses have to tell you about wisdom, knowledge, and experience? [….] We are invited into deep vulnerability and it is in this place that worlds can open up to us. (Snowber, 2011, p. 197)

Through her focus on sensuality and the body, Snowber ties vulnerability in education to the vastness of the literature on embodiment. In her chapter *An Ethics of Embodiment* (2008), Springgay also brings together a discussion of the body, education, and vulnerability. She draws on the work of Todd (2003) to suggest that it is precisely our vulnerability to one another, our ability to be changed by an other – or, to use consistent terminology, our inter-penetrability – that forms the core of the educational endeavour (Springgay, 2008, p. 156). Were we completely *invulnerable*, there would be no possibility for learning or change and thus no point to teaching. For Springgay (2008) this pedagogical reality is reflected in "an ethics of embodiment as being-with […], the meaning that is made with, in, and through the body" (p. 158). Thus, both the ethical and the educational encounter involve the body in an "open[ing] [of] the self to the vulnerability of the other" (Springgay, 2008, p. 157). The connection of the body, vulnerability, and learning is further taken up by Sylvia Kind in her chapter "Learning to Listen: Traces of Loss, Vulnerability, and Susceptibility in Art/Teaching" (2008) wherein she argues that "disruption, opening and wounding are necessary conditions for change and transformation" (p. 176).

The reality of our existence in the world is a reality of vulnerable inter-penetrability: our beliefs, our knowledge, and our very bodies are open to being shaped and changed by others. While we may work to repress, deny, or shut down this openness, our success in accomplishing this goal will always be partial and incomplete. Teaching, learning, and vulnerability all arise in our "relation to otherness" (Kind 2008, p. 177). Furthermore, learning itself is predicated on our vulnerability: our ability to be impacted by others. Our vulnerable inter-penetrability, while often seen as controversial, is therefore integral to any pedagogical context. Teachers best support their students in opening up by role modelling their own vulnerabilities. Vulnerability is not something that can be required, demanded, or graded. Instead, it is something that can be shared. Furthermore, as Prendergast (2014) explains in her unpacking of the educational value of an autobiographical poem that she uses in her teaching, vulnerable self-revelation can act as a "prompt" that invites the vulnerabilities of others (p. 12). When less effort is put into denying and controlling our vulnerabilities, we open pedagogical spaces – and pedagogical possibilities – wherein we are able to share our own vulnerabilities and witness the vulnerabilities of others. In this way, vulnerability can become not only an underlying condition of learning, but also an important aspect of the content of our teaching.

6.2.3.   Witnessing Vulnerability

The clown shares his vulnerability as an invitation: an invitation into his world, into the magic space, and into our own vulnerability. From this invitation, we are able to "come back with a new awareness," whether we are "coming back" from the clown's world, from a direct encounter with our own vulnerability, or a connection with the vulnerability of another. In writing about witnessing vulnerability, I am fortunate to be able to reference Julie Salverson's body of work which draws lines of connection between clowning, witnessing, ethics, vulnerability, and pedagogy. My thinking about the pedagogical witnessing of vulnerability is further informed by Deborah Britzman's theorization of "difficult knowledge." Both Salverson's conception of witnessing and Britzman's understanding of "difficult knowledge" are, at heart, about vulnerability. Salverson (2008) envisions the clown as the "foolish witness" who is able to find the "dignity in failure" (p. 246). The clown,

therefore, demonstrates that witnessing is not simply about being present to another's vulnerability, but also about being available to our own foolishness and our vulnerable capacity for failure. Furthermore, while Pitt and Britzman's article (2003) begins by defining difficult knowledge as "both representations of social traumas in curriculum and the individual's encounters with them in pedagogy" (p. 755), they also define difficult knowledge more broadly as "what one makes from the ruins of one's lovely knowledge" (p. 766). From this more expansive view I understand difficult knowledge to be that knowledge which confronts us with our vulnerability and challenges the stability of our bounded sense of self: the "lovely knowledge" in which we habitually take comfort. Difficult knowledge is, therefore, not only knowledge *of* trauma but also the trauma *of* knowledge: recognition that there is a perpetual discomfort and dis-ease involved in crossing the boundary between knowns and unknowns and that learning itself is therefore a process which requires our vulnerability.

Through the work of Pitt, Britzman, and Salverson, I have come to understand that witnessing vulnerability involves both of the previous forms of vulnerability that I have discussed: namely, it requires of us our ability to be vulnerable within ourselves and to others. Salverson (2008) focuses on the clown as a *foolish* witness and emphasizes the "impossible bravery and willingness of the clown" (p. 245-6). Being a witness is foolish and requires such impossible bravery and willingness, she suggests, because it involves perpetual failure and uncertainty: we "need to accept a situation with no cure or promise of closure. There will be no final answer" (Salverson, 2008, p. 249). In this understanding Salverson draws on Levinas' characterization of the ethical subject as, in Critchley's (2007) words, "defined by the experience of an internalized demand that it can never meet, a demand that exceeds it, what he [Levinas] calls infinite responsibility" (p. 10). Salverson suggests that the clown is an effective role model for witnessing because, where people are often paralyzed by such impossibility, the clown finds the possibility within it. Because of the clowns' "impossible bravery and willingness," she is able "to step forward without certainty" (Salverson, 2008, p. 246), or, expressed differently, step forward vulnerably. Within the impossibility of witnessing "accurately" or "completely" or "perfectly," we find the

possibility of dignified failure: a failure that remains open to always trying, failing, and trying again.

For Britzman (2000), difficult knowledge is equally that which draws us into connection with the other: difficult knowledge is that knowledge that expands our "ego boundaries" as we "encounter vulnerability as a relation" (p. 35). As such, I understand difficult knowledge as being provoked through the witnessing of vulnerability – a witnessing which simultaneously calls forth vulnerability. As Britzman (2000) explains, such difficult knowledge involves a paradox:

> The paradox is that learning from another's pain requires noticing what one has not experienced and the capacity to be touched by what one has not noticed, identifying with pain requires a self capable of wounding her or his own ego boundaries, the very boundaries that serve as a defense against pain. (p. 39)

Britzman's paradox of difficult knowledge and Salverson's impossible bravery in witnessing are founded on the same awareness that vulnerability demands vulnerability. Witnessing confronts us with our vulnerability in the face of inevitable failure, and asks us to, like the clown, "hurl [our]selves forward into failure" (Salverson, 2008, p. 246). Difficult knowledge confronts us with the vulnerability of our beliefs and our knowledge. Since, together, our beliefs and knowledge shape our sense of self/selves, this confrontation is, in fact, with the vulnerability of the boundaries by which we define ourselves and through which we separate ourselves from others.

Through engagement with the foolish witness and difficult knowledge I understand that witnessing vulnerability is not simply about seeing someone else's vulnerability. Instead, it is about making contact (see p. 41-44 for my description of the clown exercise "making contact"). Making contact (witnessing vulnerability) requires of us our vulnerability, requires us to be the "foolish witness" who, despite knowing that she will fail, courageously tries and tries again. It is in making contact that we become exposed to difficult knowledge which can allow us to "reorganize our ego boundaries," reinforcing our perpetual vulnerability to the other. As Judith Butler (2009) explains of Levinasian philosophy,

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there is no self prior to its persecution by the Other. It is that persecution that establishes the Other at the heart of the self, and establishes that 'heart' as an ethical relation of responsibility. *To claim the self-identity of the subject is thus an act of irresponsibility, an effort to close off one's fundamental vulnerability to the Other, the primary accusation that the Other bears.* (p. 77-8, emphasis added)

The vulnerability that is revealed through witnessing and through difficult knowledge is not only constitutive of the ethical relationship between Self and Other, but reveals the interwoven and co-creating nature of the Self and the Other. This co-creative relationship between Self and Other is also named by Hawaiian scholar Manu Meyer (2001) in her work to recognize the cultural foundations of all knowing and all relationships. She explains,

> In relationships with people it is not simply *I* looking at *You* but *I-You* in constant rapport, experience, and dialogue. I do not see myself separate from you, because regardless of who we are, I believe that self is a reflection of other. We're connected. Simple. The autonomous *I* is a new invention. It is not an Indigenous idea to view ourselves separate from all things, nature and each other. We are all parts of a whole. This doesn't mean that collaboration is made easier; it's more a statement of connectability [….] You can't think of yourself in isolation. The very notion of self is critical. Self is not autonomous self [….] *Self is self and other* [emphasis added]. The same breath. (2001, p. 195)

In order to truly witness others, we must open ourselves to their vulnerability and, in the process, we allow them to witness our vulnerability. Truly witnessing vulnerability therefore involves opening up our own vulnerability and allowing the vulnerability of another in, so that we might recognize that we are not alone.

<div align="center">

We are vulnerable, but we are together:

</div>

<div align="right">

Self and Other.

</div>

Witnessing is not a mirror (whether one way or two).   *It is a confrontation,*

                    a dialogue,   *an engagement,*

an expansion of boundaries,   *an ethical relationality.*

Witnessing vulnerability and allowing our own vulnerability to be witnessed is essential to engaging in genuine relationship and finding acceptance.

If we do not allow ourselves to be seen in our vulnerability then we are only presenting an already edited, "acceptable" version of ourselves. "I pay a steep price when I live a divided life" says Parker Palmer in his book *Hidden Wholeness* (2004),

> Feeling fraudulent, anxious about being found out, and depressed by the fact that I am denying my own selfhood. The people around me pay a price as well, for now they walk on ground made unstable by my dividedness. How can I affirm another's identity when I deny my own? How can I trust another's integrity when I defy my own? A fault line runs down the middle of my life, and whenever it cracks open – divorcing my words and actions from the truth I hold within – things around me get shaky and start to fall apart. (p. 5)

Presenting an incomplete or inaccurate version of ourselves therefore not only denies us the chance to gain acceptance for our deepest vulnerabilities, but also collapses the possibility for witnessing vulnerability in another. In her description of testimony in performance Salverson (2008) identifies a similar challenge in a different frame. She references Brecht's concept of "culinary pleasure" or the kind of surface engagement that results in "suffering as spectacle" (Salverson, 2008, p. 247). Similarly, when we do not allow our vulnerabilities to be witnessed and shared, we present only the "culinary" or "easily digestible" version of ourselves. Moving beyond the surface level and delving into our vulnerabilities allows for what Salverson (2008) describes as a "radical collaboration of bodies together in a room, attempting a risky encounter that is not about reassurance, or the restoration of balance, or the purging of emotions, but instead the 'precariously contained explosion of the transgressive moment' (Taussig, 1993, p. 126)" (p. 247). Although Salverson is discussing performance, she could equally be describing the transgressive and transformative possibilities of a vulnerable pedagogy.

While the vulnerability of teachers and students may always be present in the educational encounter, embracing this vulnerability seems to establish a new form of freedom for learning: "when we bring our whole selves into the classroom, when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and to share our own experience with our students, we cross a

threshold, extending our sights into new horizons of learning" (Ashton & Denton, 2006, p. 6). In exploring Anne Sexton's pedagogy, Snowber (2009) observes that students of all ages crave teachers who are "a bit human […] struggling with the details of life" (p. 2). Embracing our humanity allows us to find strength and powerful pedagogy within our vulnerability, rather than seeking to cover it up (mask it) in order to "be successful." Furthermore, it is in allowing our own vulnerabilities to be present that we are able to invite and witness the vulnerabilities of others; it is in the sharing of vulnerabilities that we are able to make contact, enter the magic space, and co-create together. Seeing the power of our vulnerability encourages us to stumble without shame and, further, to understand that our stumbles are, themselves, teachable (or better yet, sharable) moments.

Pedagogically, direct engagement with our vulnerabilities allows us to recognize that 1) all knowledge has the potential to be 'difficult knowledge,' as it beckons us beyond ourselves, confronts us with new possibilities, and challenges our previously established "ego boundaries;" 2) that teaching and learning are relational, vulnerable, and embodied acts wherein knowledge and beliefs are shared, people are witnessed and become witnesses, and boundaries are transgressed/transcended; and 3) the clown's (foolishly) hopeful approach to finding possibilities within the impossible is central to witnessing vulnerability, revealing vulnerabilities, and pursuing difficult knowledge. Denton (2006) understands the power of vulnerability in education, which she describes as a "pedagogy of wounding":

> In the classroom the wound can be a point of entry to new encounters, inspiration, courage, compassion, and healing [….] There are no prescribed practices or methods for a pedagogy of wounding. We can't predict when or how the wound will enter our lives, or our teaching. We can only welcome it with grace and compassion and look to it for insight and wisdom [….] Whenever we weave our woundings and vulnerabilities into our teaching, with each gesture we offer a space of opening, an opportunity for deepening humanity and spirit. (p. 138-9)

For Denton, let us remember, that a pedagogy of wounding is not about inflicting wounds or hurt onto another, but about embracing the wounds that one inevitably experiences in living as sites of learning. This "pedagogy of wounding" or pedagogy of vulnerability opens us up to human connections and understandings that far exceed any expectations that can be

captured in lesson plans or learning outcomes. This pedagogy of vulnerability beckons us into the unknown with the promise of acceptance for our vulnerable, flawed selves and with the tantalizing possibilities of connection and learning.

The possibilities that attend vulnerability in the educational context are the same possibilities that attend vulnerability in clowning. To begin practicing clown, we must become vulnerable to ourselves: willing to explore the deepest corners of ourselves and celebrate, rather than judge and repress, that which we find there. This acceptance does not mean that we do not work on ourselves, choosing instead to revel in our own impairments, allowing them to potentially fester into psychoses. Instead, it means that we understand that the best way to improve ourselves is to accept, rather than dismiss, our own personal challenges. Once we have become vulnerable to ourselves in this way, we begin to be able to share our vulnerability with others. As a direct result, we become able to witness vulnerability. The artistic director of Theatre Grottesco describes clowning as "finding that basic state of vulnerability and allowing the audience to exist in that state with you" (as cited in Butler, 2012, p. 64). While he describes this form of vulnerability as a "state of anti-intellectualism," he also explains that it is a state that "allows the audience to draw their own conclusions" (as cited in Butler, 2012, p. 64). Thus, rather than implying that the clown's vulnerability is devoid of the intellectual, I believe that he intends to suggest that this vulnerability is one that beckons us into the unknown and therefore does not provide us with intellectual explanations and understandings, instead encouraging us to engage in experiences that allow us to create understandings for ourselves. The practice of clowning is frequently described as "liberating" and as allowing the practitioner to unleash "the more raw, vulnerable and hidden aspects of the self" (Butler, 2012, p. 68). It is clowning's intimate connection with vulnerability, both as an inward exploration of the self and as a deeply intimate quality that is openly shared with others, that I suggest connects with existing educational imperatives.

Collectively, the work of hooks, Snowber, Wiebe, Brown, Denton, Springgay, Britzman, Pitt, and Salverson discussed above can be understood as calling for more openness to vulnerability in education; however, it is not always clear how to go about fostering such vulnerability, particularly when, as is the case for teachers, the very lack of vulnerability has become synonymous with professionalism.[45] As Wiebe (2009) describes, being one's self within the classroom is "a continuous struggle with the *whys* and *hows* of living, learning, loving, and leaving" (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009, p. 3). Given the focus in clown as a practice on actively fostering vulnerability – both within one's self and in one's relations with others – I suggest that the clown approach to education that I discuss in this dissertation may provide a practical methodology for fostering the vulnerability that each of these educators understands as indelibly contributing to the overall promises of education. To say that clowning provides an approach to vulnerability is not tantamount to saying a clown approach will remove the continuous struggle of vulnerability; rather, I suggest, that clowning may provide a sense of guidance or direction for this struggle. Failing that, it will certainly provide encouragement to continue delving into our vulnerabilities as a source of insight, creativity, and learning.

While clown training does involve exercises designed to foster and encourage the revelation of one's vulnerabilities, I maintain that direct participation in clown training, while undoubtedly worthwhile and helpful, is not necessary for engaging the clown approach to teaching and learning. The clown approach involves, at its heart, an *appreciation* for vulnerability and an understanding of how our vulnerabilities are always present and are merely accepted or denied to greater or lesser extents. Furthermore, the clown approach requires recognition that vulnerability begins internally, by allowing ourselves to be present to our own idiosyncrasies and challenges, before being able to share them externally. When teachers and students engage vulnerability with these core understandings and from the perspective that learning is an inherently vulnerable act (one which makes us vulnerable to others and to the transformation of the learning), then they are connecting to the clown approach to education, whether or not they have ever experienced clown training.

6.3.   Magic Spaces

More than any other form of theater, pantomime enlists our own powers of imagination and invites our total participation in the unseen spectacle [....] masters of pantomime have the ability to suspend the rules of ordinary reality and entice us into their invisible world, an ability that is nothing less than magical. (Swortzell, 1978, p. 165)

In her discussion of the pedagogy of vulnerability, Snowber (2009) suggests that, "to teach from our vulnerability is to teach with a sense of being absolutely present to the shifts and patterns of our own interior lives" (Snowber & Wiebe, 2009, p. 5). In the practice of clowning, it is this vulnerable presence that allows us to open up a magic space of engagement with an audience and to, as Swortzell (1978) describes of the pantomimist, "invite [the] total participation" of the audience in ways that "suspend the rules of ordinary reality" (p. 165). For the clown, this vulnerable presence attends both to "our own interior lives" and to the presence of the vulnerability of others. It is where the presence of clown and audience (or teacher and student) overlap that a magic space is opened up.

In his chapter, *Dreaming, Writing, Teaching: Stories from Within Thin Places* (2006), Christopher N. Poulos describes the understanding, in Celtic lore, that there exist "thin places" that "can release us from the everyday world and open us up to a new world of possibility" (p. 167). These "thin places" are geographically anchored while the clown's "magic space" is anchored by connection and interaction between people; however, both create the conditions for putting everyday impossibilities aside in order to enter "a new world of possibility." Poulos draws on the work of Mircea Eliade, a religious historian, to explain thin places as a "*hierophany*" (as cited in Poulos, 2006, p. 167). A hierophany can be understood as both an opening up of and a movement beyond the habitual, it is

> a manifestation of the sacred, a moment in which one has the experience that something special, something powerful, is available to experience. The boundaries of ordinary space and time disappear, and we move into a sacred spiritual realm, a realm of space-time where the ordinary, everyday rules of embodied life are suspended, if only for a moment. Our ways of thinking – and being and moving and knowing – to which we have grown accustomed, simply do not apply. (Poulos, 2006, p. 167-8)

I recognize that this may seem like an abrupt jump from talking about clowns to talking about a "manifestation of the sacred." However, many clowns have served a sacred function within the context of their native cultures. Furthermore, as I will discuss below, clowning is a practice that can facilitate a transcendent and vulnerable encounter between human beings – a form of encounter, which I consider to be its own kind of sacred experience. In clowning, such transcendent encounters occur within the magic space, with "magic" specifically designating a space beyond the normal, habitual, "secular" experiences of everyday life. The magic space is therefore its own form, a clown form, of sacred.

As I understand it, the "thinness" in the description "thin places" indicates that these are places where the boundaries between our everyday, secular experiences of the world are more easily traversable, allowing us to access a more sacred plane of existence. In the concept of the magic space, it is the boundaries between people that can be understood to have become "thin" – more easily crossed. The term "magic" refers most readily to the experiences available within the magic space – the traversing and/or transcending of everyday boundaries – rather than to the space itself. It is magical to enter a place or a connection with another person that allows us to realize that our normal ways of "thinking – and being and moving and knowing" need not limit us. There are also cultures and epochs in which clowns have been understood as sacred beings. In such contexts, clowns are experienced as "expressing that which cannot be thought" and, as such, are known to be "in touch with higher mysteries, alternative realities" (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 118). Sacred clowns therefore represent their own kind of "thin place": they connect with people in order to perform the magic of bringing them into contact with alternative realities and all that which lies beyond our habitual patterns of thinking and being. When they are understood as themselves sacred, clowns can act as facilitators of thin places, as it is through their vulnerability, their "impossible bravery and willingness" (Salverson, 2008, 245), their capacity for ethical relationality, and their ability to find possibility within impossibility that an everyday place may become magic. In this way, clowns become portals for possibility. However, in my experiences with clowning, the clown cannot facilitate the magic space alone. Instead, it is through the overlap of the clown *and* the audience's vulnerabilities, bravery, and willingness that a magic space may be opened up. In this form of encounter,

two (or more) people allow that which is sacred within themselves to meet and play with what which is sacred in others. It is precisely this meeting of the sacred that allows for an opening of the magic space.

The notion that the magic space (and, equally, thin places) allows us to move beyond our habitual ways of thinking and being and moving and knowing makes abundantly clear the role that such spaces/places might play in an educational context. It is the most fundamental principle of education that it allows us to access ways of "thinking and being and moving and knowing" that were previously outside of our experience. Education, the magic space, and thin places all share the quality of opening up new worlds of possibilities for those who experience them. Throughout her body of work on performative inquiry, Fels makes productive use of Varela's (1987) poetic statement (which I have already cited in bits and pieces earlier in this dissertation): "What we do is what we know, and ours is but one of many possible worlds. It is not a mirroring of the world, but the laying down of a world" (p. 62). In the magic space of engagement, we are able to experience a heightened awareness of these "many possible worlds" because of our openness to the world of the other with whom we connect. In her work, Fels refers to such encounters as "moments of recognition" which occur in the "performative space." She explains, "Something happens when individual and shared worlds of experience, knowledge, memory, and performance intersect. Imagination, experience, and inquiry collide, resulting in startling moments of recognition" (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 29). In the clowning practice, what happens when these worlds intersect and we experience "startling moments of recognition" is that we enter the magic space wherein we experience a heightened capacity for co-creation and therefore the ability to cross the boundary between impossibility and newly recognized possibilities.

Clowns and Tricksters are well known for their boundary-crossing. As Hyde explains in *Trickster Makes This World* (2008):

> every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. (p. 7)

For a Trickster like Hermes, the ability to dwell "at the edge" is an in-born trait, a by-product of being the child of Zeus and a mortal woman (Hyde, 2008). The magic space is Pochinko's term for the connection between audience and performer that bestows this mythological quality on the performing clown. For Hermes, the relationship between god and mortal that exists within his physiological make-up creates the edge. For the performing clown, the edge is created in the act of performing and in the experience of performing as a form of inquiry. It is the boundaries between performer and audience, and the clown's ability to play with (and at) these boundaries, that establish an edge that the clown is able to cross, but only when a magic space is opened up through connection. The connection between audience and performer is facilitated by vulnerable presence and a willingness to play together. In all of these circumstances, including in thin places where the boundaries between everyday and sacred are more easily crossed, it is a magical capacity for moving beyond the edges of habitual existence that allows us to "think, be, move, and know" differently. Here we can easily see the connection between the magic space and transgression (as a movement beyond and as a transformative movement with/of one's self), as they relate to the educational context. Transgression will be discussed later in this chapter. For now, let's turn our attention to the co-created and co-creative aspects of the magic space and the ways that co-creation has been discussed in the educational literature.

In her work on living inquiry, Karen Meyer (2010) describes the "encounter between self and other" as "an interstice, an invitation, and an improvisation" (p. 95). Each term is useful for understanding the magic space in clowning: it is a place that can only exist at the interstice between Self and Other; in order for the magic space to be created, all parties must make and accept an invitation – I have been referring to this process of invitation as *willingness*; and what arises in the magic space is always improvisatory because it is co-created by those participating in ways that are unique to them and to the moment they share together. When understood as arising through such an encounter it is clear that knowledge is co-created in movement, rather than a static "something" that can be passed along from one person to another. It is in this way that we come to Babcock-Abrahams' (1984) observation about meaning in clowning as "[just] as transitional as it is transitory: in between, in the interplay; in the interconnections, the disjunctions; at the intersections, the crossroads; in the

journey, not the arrival" (p. 108). Thus when knowledge is understood as co-created, it is also easily understood as contingent and variable, as existing between particular people and their shared understandings (See, also, discussions of complexity in education, such as in Davis & Sumara, 2006). There is no knowledge that is "once and for all," only a process of learning that is shared. This co-creation exists in a "magic space" because it requires that two or more people come together with a mutual willingness (an invitation) to open themselves to the possibility of transformation – to play and to cross boundaries – together.

In moving beyond the idea that knowledge is something that teachers possess and must pass on to students (such as in Paulo Freire's (1993) concept of the transmission model of education, which he refers to as "banking education") we come to recognize that knowledge is co-created by everyone present and, furthermore, that the particular quality of the knowledge created is coloured by the dynamics of all those involved in the process (Davis & Sumara, 2006). This approach to knowledge helps us to move away from an understanding of collaboration as a simple division of labour and into an understanding of collaboration as involving "some kind of transformation in the participants" (Goulet, Krentz & Christiansen, 2003, p. 325). Importantly, my focus on collaboration here is not limited to the kinds of group work that teachers might assign to students. Instead, it involves both teachers and students as they work together to create learning. As hooks (1994) explains, the teacher "must genuinely *value* everyone's presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes" (p. 8). For Karen Meyer (2010), valuing everyone's presence involves us in a "meeting of self and other [that] requires 'letting be' the other-as-other, respectfully" (p. 93). Anything short of this "letting be" is an attempt to reduce the Other to the Self, or to something more desirable to the Self. In Levinas' (1985) conception of ethics, this process of reduction is a collapsing of the alterity of the Other into a destructive (and false) form of sameness. True valuing of presence and respect for the "other-as-other" relies on an ability to, as Fidyk (2011) describes, "hold tension, conflict, and opposites without prematurely moving to judgment of 'good' or 'bad' or to closure" (p. 149). In a real way, the closure that Fidyk (2011) mentions is the closure of the magic space of engagement or what she refers to in her own work as a "dialogical space" (p. 149). When we respectfully let the "other-as-other" be, we are able to

co-create the magic space of engagement. We become, in Snowber and Wiebe's (2009) words, "Two [or more] human beings co-creating and making meaning of what it truly means to research a life, a field, an exchange – a mutual mentoring" (p. 5). However, when conflict or the desire for recognition and sameness overtake us, the magic space of engagement collapses and the possibility for true co-creation disappears. When we are unable to respect the "other-as-other," we are equally unable to foster the magical possibilities of transformative learning.

In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), hooks speaks to the importance of excitement in the classroom. This excitement is synonymous with the willingness that I have mentioned above. Both represent an invested form of *engagement* within the learning process. The excitement, willingness, or play of the learning process is not a monologue; instead it is only fostered through what hooks (1994) calls "collective effort" (p. 8) and what I refer to as co-creation within the magic space of engagement. Not only is co-creation or "collective effort" required to foster engagement, but excitement in the learning process may also spark an opening of the magic space for co-creation. Fidyk illuminates this point beautifully in her chapter *Suffering With: Seven Moments of Ignorance* (2011):

> a transcendent moment may occur in the classroom when the student(s) and teacher are so taken by the topic that all become animated or energized whereby the boundaries between self and other blur. Fleetingly, a third entity arises which is not the teacher or the student(s) or topic. (p. 148)

The "third entity" that arises is what we refer to, in clowning practice, as the magic space of engagement. It is a co-created space that belongs not to teacher, student, or topic (performer, audience, or clown performance), but instead blurs the boundaries between all three, allowing for a deeply organic process of co-creation to take place. To my knowledge, Fidyk has no experience with clowning practice and yet her description of this "transcendent moment" provides a startlingly accurate depiction of the experience of the magic space of engagement. The accuracy of this depiction reinforces my assertion that the practice of clowning has important implications for the educational context – and, indeed, is already experienced readily within the educational context – even for those who have no experience with or inclination towards clowning as a performative practice. As Butler (2012) explains

the "fertile conditions for collective creativity and reflection" that are part of all clown training and clowning practice are "crucial not only to theatrical performance practices, but to all students' participation in, and transformation of, their own realities" (p. 71). Engagement in such collective creativity (co-creation) and transformation is inherent to all learning processes.

While I have been primarily focused on how the magic space is experienced in direct encounters between two or more people, as is the case in the performative situation of clowning, the literature makes clear that the co-creative magic space can also be opened in other contexts. Goldstein (2012) cites both Ellis and Bochner in her discussion of aesthetic works that offer their own invitations into the magic space:

> [Ellis] writes that she wants to read works that are engaging and nuanced, texts that allow her to feel and think with them. Ellis values 'evocation' and wants stories that take her into their worlds, and stories that stay with her after she has read them. Similarly, Arthur Bochner values stories that move his 'heart and belly as well as [his] head.' (p. 65)

It is significant that Ellis refers to works not that make her feel and think, but that allow her to feel and think *with* them – a co-creative act. Furthermore, she refers to stories that "stay with her," stories that help to create who she is. Bochner's emphasis on the "heart and belly" reminds us that engagement in the magic space is an embodied, holistic engagement; we do not learn and we do not co-create with our minds alone. Greene's body of work also underlines the role that literature and art can play in transformative learning experiences. As she describes,

> encounters with literary works of art make it possible for us to come in contact with ourselves, to recover a lost spontaneity. This is because, in order to enter into the illusioned world of the novel (or the short story or the poem), we must break with the mundane and the taken-for-granted. We must, as it were, bracket out the ordinary world. (Greene, 1978, p. 2)

Entering the magic space with a work of art allows us to move beyond "the ordinary" and to contact the sacred. It allows us to dream into what could be, both for ourselves and for the whole world of which we are a part. In this way, works of art and literature become their own "thin places," which, when we come to them with a willingness to engage can co-create

with us, allowing us to "come in contact with ourselves" and all the possibilities that lie outside our mundane reality that we may otherwise have merely accepted as "the way things are." It is this transformative power of engagement that provides the magic space with its magic.

6.4. Multiplicity

"*Luchar por un mundo donde ortos mundos sean possibles*" is a Zapatista saying that I have encountered several times throughout my doctoral studies. I first encountered it in Meyer and Maldonado's text *New World of Indigenous Resistance* (2010) when I took the course "Decolonizing Indigenous Research Methodologies" with Dr. Peter Cole at the University of British Columbia in 2012. I came upon it again in the Preface for Malewski and Jaramillo's *Epistemologies of Ignorance in Education* (2011) while I was writing this dissertation. In Jaramillo's translation, the saying refers to the "struggle for a world in which many other worlds are possible" (McLaren, 2011, p. xiv-xv). The form of multiplicity that I wish to discuss is similar to this Zapatista understanding of the world, as I evoke multiplicity to refer to the struggle to exist as a self in which many selves are possible. As with my overall discussion of the relationship between possibility and impossibility, the multiplicity of self involves maintaining open space for possibilities, rather than seeing choices or expressions of the self as the shutting down of possibilities. Clown training fosters this appreciation for multiplicity within the self through the creation of masks: diverse and divergent as they may be, each of the masks is creatively sourced from, as well as created and worn by, a self. The clown may "play" each of the masks, but the clown also encompasses all of the masks and the spaces/relationships between them. Through recognition of the multiplicity of the self, represented by the masks, clowns are granted compound sight similar unto that of a fly: while they look at the world through one set of eyes, they are able to see the world from a number of distinct perspectives.

The value of multiplicity in sight is well represented through Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall's concept of "Two-Eyed Seeing." In the Mi'kmaq language the word "Etuaptmumk" refers to "the gift of multiple perspectives" (Hogue & Bartlett, 2014, p. 26) and it is this gift that Albert and many others have been working to bring into the educational context and, especially, into cross-cultural collaborations. In specific, "Two-Eyed Seeing" suggests the capacity to keep one eye on "the strengths of, or the best in, the Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing" while the other eye tracks "the strengths of, or the best in, the Western (mainstream) knowledges and ways of knowing" (Marshall as cited in Hogue & Bartlett, 2014, p. 26). Significantly, the ideal of a "Two-Eyed Seeing" approach is not to maintain a rigid distinction between the vision in each of our eyes, but instead to learn to "use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Marshall as cited in Hogue & Bartlett, 2014, p. 26). As with the mask making process, the deepest value lies not in multiplicity as a construct that maintains rigid boundaries between perspectives (those of our masks, our eyes, other people, etc.), but rather in boundary crossing that allows for collaboration.

Métis scholar Vicki Kelly's (2012) understanding of two-eyed seeing may, on the surface, appear to be at odds with this interpretation. She explains,

> seeing with the one eye with the integrity of that eye, of not compromising the intimacy of my Indigenous eye, but also seeing with the exacting science of my Western eye. I need both eyes in order to focus and see deeply. *The two eyes seeing complement each other precisely because they don't blend and blur each other's reality* [emphasis added]. (Kelly, 2012, p. 365)

While expressed differently, I understand Kelly's approach to two-eyed seeing and my approach to clowning to be complementary. I believe that when Kelly speaks of "blending and blurring," she is referring to an impulse to seek synthesis and even assimilation and sameness, rather than collaboration. As is the case all too often with the overused slogan "multiculturalism," "collaboration" and "multiplicity" can be the positive spin that is placed on a tacit demand to acquiesce to the dominant forces: for the "Indigenous eye" to be subsumed by the "Western eye." When the clown transgresses and plays with boundaries, it does so in ways that maintain, emphasize, and enhance multiplicity, rather than reducing it

into homogenized sameness. Kelly (2012), too, recognizes this possibility when she states that, "two-eyed seeing is but a pathway to many-eyed seeing" (p. 365). Similarly, the clown's blurring, rather than being an erasure, develops a capacity for dwelling in many places (as in the masks) and acting on many simultaneous levels or planes. While collaboration may always involve compromise, clowning pedagogy offers the consensual compromise of multiple perspectives held in mutual esteem, rather than the compromise of one perspective/self in favour of another. This is also the hermeneutic circle as Smith (1991) conceives it, as the hermeneutic imagination is the capacity to live into myriad possibilities for ourselves and of the world. Interestingly, both the mask making process and the concept of "Two-Eyed Seeing" allow for recognition that such collaboration (or hermeneutic imagination) can begin within a ourselves (Kelly, 2012). As we foster our ability to perceive from multiple perspectives *and* to allow these perspectives to work together, rather than compete with one another, we develop an internal capacity for collaboration. This internal capacity is a valuable bedrock for engaging in co-creation with others, such as I described in the previous section.

The arts-based methodological approach known as "a/r/tography" also recognizes the significant benefits that arise through multiplicity of perspective. The core principle of a/r/tography is that arts-based scholars maintain distinct and yet interconnected practices as artists (a), researchers (r), teachers (t), and writers (ography) and each of these practices informs and supports the others. Rather than relegate each activity to its own silo, a/r/tography asks us to consider how our art practice suggests particular approaches to research, writing, and teaching; how the insights gleaned from our inquiries might spark innovations in our art, teaching, research, and writing; how our experiences teaching can be taken up as artful inquiries; and how our time spent writing can be understood as a process of both teaching, inquiring, and creating art. Where the clown practice involves blurring the boundaries between the distinct masks (or characters) that we create in the training, a/r/tography recognizes the creativity that lies within our distinct-yet-interrelated identities as artists, researchers, teachers, and writers. From such a perspective, "Meaning and understanding are no longer revealed or thought to emanate from a point of origin, rather they are *complicated* as relational, rhizomatic, and singular" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxi).

The clown is not the masks. Instead, the clown plays between the masks and brings them perpetually into complicated relationships with one another.

Significantly, as Rita Irwin and Stephanie Springgay explain in their Introduction to *Being with A/r/tography* (2008), it is not only harmony that is fruitful within multiplicity. When we embrace an approach that allows for multiple perspectives and capacities, we are embracing a generative form of tension. And yet, these spaces of tension are meaningful; they reveal to us choices and possibilities and create opportunities for collaboration, compromise, and creativity. As Kind (2008) expresses, both teaching and art-making are "processes needing difficulty to provoke creative change and transformation" (p. 167). It is precisely in such difficult moments of tension – which can arise equally within ourselves and in our relationships with others – that we are pushed beyond ourselves and beyond previously accepted habits of being, creating something distinct and unique, "for the benefit of all" (Marshall as cited in Hogue & Bartlett, 2014, p. 26).

In her work focused on research-informed theatre, Tara Goldstein (2012) discusses sociologist Laurel Richardson's concept of "crystallization" in research (p. 35). For Goldstein and Richardson, the image of the crystal is effective because it speaks to the way that a research question/project/inquiry "can be turned around in many ways to reveal multiple layers of meaning. Just like a crystal can be turned around to reveal multiple layers of light" (Goldstein, 2012, p. 35). This perspective of multiple possibilities of multiple meanings presents a direct challenge to the "realist idea that research should produce a single, unified truth" (Goldstein, 2012, p. 35), recognizing that rich research reveals, unveils, and creates a broad spectrum of truths. Similarly, Snowber (2009) evokes the metaphor of the prism. She explains, "many times it is hard to understand how the multiple lives we have fit together, how they fit into one another and inform our different roles" (Snowber, 2009, p. 101). Together, Richardson, Goldstein, and Snowber reveal that the results of our research/inquiry are multiple because we, ourselves, are fundamentally multiple. Each singular person is able to bring many perspectives to a question, depending on the roles they play in their lives. The process of creating masks in clown training does not give a person his/her multiplicity, instead it gives him/her a new way of seeing, appreciating, and

exploring this multiplicity. To borrow Snowber's (2009) words, this mask making process "allows for a new place honouring the complexity of our lives" (p. 101).

Honouring the complexity of our multiple selves is not only beneficial to allowing us to appreciate many truths in our research. Multiplicity is also an important concept in the teaching and learning relationship. Here, J.G. Henderson's (2001) conceptualization of "multiperspective inquiry" in education is especially insightful. According to Henderson (2001), multiperspective inquiry

> is an open-ended form of disciplined professional study that explores the *uniqueness* and *complexity* of human perceptions in a *playful* frame of mind. Through multiperspective inquiry, teachers become more attentive to the multiple dimensions of their work and to the thoughts and feelings of others. As they explore diverse viewpoints, they challenge their egocentric tendencies and broaden their horizons. (p. 71-2)

From this description it is perhaps easiest to consider this multiperspective approach to inquiry as involving teachers (and others) in heightened awareness of and appreciation for the diverse perspectives of students. However, the process of mask making in the clown training reveals that it is equally as valuable to heighten our awareness of and appreciation of the diverse perspectives that exist within our very selves. As discussed in relation to vulnerability, there a number of professional expectations for "the teacher" that make embracing all of the possibilities for our multi-faceted identities in the classroom challenging. According to Salvio (2007), part of the brilliance of Anne Sexton's work is that it "tests our tolerance for certain kinds of understanding— […] our capacity to hold certain difficult and uncertain ideas about ourselves as teachers and to think about what our professional identities are organized to exclude" (p. 103). Recognition that professional identities are "organized to exclude" aspects of ourselves belies the reality that all selves are inherently multiple and, furthermore, capable of playing roles that exclude or deny facets of our complexity.

While it is likely inevitable that different situations will highlight aspects of ourselves while muting others, the challenge with the "organized exclusion" that Salvio describes in teaching is that it can be understood as *the only way* to teach effectively. Indeed, hooks (1994) feels that many teachers cling to a "fear that '*this is my identity and I can't question that identity*,' [emphasis added]" a line of thinking that blocks them from being able to see their own pedagogical practices clearly (p. 135). Such blocks are not only damaging for teachers, who may become stuck within a limited frame of self-understanding and self-expression, but also for students. Palmer (2004) names this damaging force when he discusses the social pressure, which he suggests children are experiencing earlier and earlier in life, to live "divided lives":

> dividedness […] comes highly recommended by popular culture. 'Don't wear your heart on your sleeve' and 'Hold your cards close to your vest' are just two examples of how we are told from an early age that 'masked and armored' is the safe and sane way to live. (p. 16)

While perhaps not quite so explicit, the role modelling of teachers stands to play an equally (if not superior) part in either encouraging students to seek their own "hidden wholeness" (to borrow Palmer's phrase, which he, in turn, borrowed from Thomas Merton) or to deny this wholeness and live divided. Given that teachers themselves are not immune to the popular pressure that Palmer has identified – and since they may actually experience additional pressure to present only parts of themselves as "appropriate for the classroom" – living wholeness within the classroom is unlikely to happen without considerable awareness and attention. A thorough "multiperspective" approach therefore requires us to engage in the clown's work of becoming vulnerable to our own multiplicity as a means to invite the vulnerable multiplicity of others.

In his work, Henderson (2001) repeatedly emphasizes the playfulness that is involved in multiperspective inquiry: "By playing with multiple standpoints, we refine our awareness and cultivate a more multilayered sense of life. We shed our simple selves for more sophisticated identities" (p. 74). In the clown training, we play at creating and embodying masks in order to explore the range of experience and expression that is indeed available to us. In this way, we avoid shutting down possibilities by saying "this is my identity," and, instead, ask ourselves "what is my identity like if I play at being like this or thinking like

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that?" As Snowber (2009) observes, this enriches us and allows us to truly appreciate the "value of our multiple lives, roles, and responsibilities and multiple ways of knowing" (p. 91). Clearly, there are aspects of our multiplicity that are relevant to and appropriate for certain situations and aspects of our multiplicity that are not. However, recognizing that these remain possibilities for us, even when they are unexpressed, increases our capacity for empathy and connection and our ability to respect the other-as-other in their own expressed and unexpressed forms of multiplicity. For Greene (1978),

> it is profoundly important for teachers themselves to subject their own assumptions to searching criticism, using whatever tools they have at their disposal (precisely the tools their students need, if they are to learn) for it is through this searching that teachers will be able to find and celebrate their own multiplicity thereby avoiding the one-dimensional vision that freezes, fixes, and constrains. (p. 250)

Where Greene's "searching criticism" strikes me as potentially severe, I enjoy Henderson's (2001) encouragement to maintain "an openness to intellectual play" (p. 72). In his approach to education as "currere," Pinar too emphasizes the importance of "rigorous self-exploration" in order to seek "self-understanding and therefore achieve an understanding of education" (as cited in Bullough, Jr. & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 13). Regardless of which terminology you prefer, it is clear that many educational scholars have already recognized and written about the value of thoroughly exploring one's own multiplicity in order to most effectively engage in educational pursuits with the multiplicity of others.

Clown training does not create our multiplicity, nor can it invest the educational context with a form of multiplicity that does not already exist. However, it does encourage us to remain actively playful within our own multiplicity, rather than shutting it down by investing in a singular identity. Furthermore, the mask making and wearing within clowning training encourages participants to seek what is both unknown and *fantastic* about all aspects of our multiplicity. Therefore, rather than rejecting elements of ourselves as "not relevant to or appropriate for" a situation, and forcing them to "sit in the corner," we actively look for ways to engage as many facets of ourselves as possible within any given situation. Remember, the clown does not simply put on and take off these masks. Instead, the clown plays perpetually in between the masks, engaging them *and* the relationships between them.

Within the educational context, the clown's appreciation for multiplicity asks us to consider how rich our inquiries and teaching/learning experiences might be when they engage and invite the breadth of each participants' multiperspective possibilities.

6.5.   Transgression Toward Transformation

Arendt (1971) identifies the simultaneously mundane and extraordinary task that lies at the heart of scholarly practice, and indeed of all learning, calling it: "an inclination, perhaps a need, to think beyond the limitations of knowledge, to do more with this ability than to use it as an instrument for knowing and doing" (p. 11-12). Clearly thinking beyond the limitations of knowledge is a challenging task – one that may, at times, seem impossible – and yet it is also precisely what we do whenever we learn. At one level, we think beyond the limitations of our own previously established knowledge and, on another level – such as in childhood imaginings and in advanced scholarship – we think beyond the limitations of existing knowledge itself, in order to establish something that is unique and that offers new insights and perspectives. This "unique contribution" is, in fact, a generally accepted standard by which scholars and their scholarship are judged. Since "thinking" and "knowledge" are often associated with wholly rational, mental, intellectual processes, I wish to clarify that, in my understanding, such "thinking beyond" is an embodied, impulsive, and emotional process. It is one that does not establish an either/or relationship between the intellect and the body, or reason and emotions, but instead engages naturally in the clown's both/and logic, requiring

both the intellect *and* the body,

both reason *and* emotions,

to move beyond what has already been established. This need to think beyond the limitations is precisely what the practice of clowning can help to fulfill in us, since it is entirely oriented towards moving us away from our expectations, habits, and established understandings (i.e., "knowledge") and welcoming us into the "beyond," which is ever-beckoning.

The practice of clowning may allow us to do two things at once. D.C. Muecke (1969) describes this simultaneity in relation to the clown performing on the high-wire:

> The ironist is like the circus clown on the tightrope. First the ordinary tightrope walker [or *katchina*] performs his feats seriously. Then the clown, sent aloft by the ring-master, pretends to be afraid of heights, pretends to fall, perhaps falls, but the wire catches him by one of his enormous buttons, recovers himself and runs the rest of the way quickly; but all the time he is much more skillful than his fellow acrobat. He has raised tightrope walking to a higher power, in that he is performing at two levels simultaneously - as a clown and as a tightrope walker, and demonstrating at the same time both the possibility of tightrope walking and its sheer impossibility. (p. 129)

Performing at two levels simultaneously as a scholar involves the presentation of knowledge accompanied by the invitation to "think beyond" that knowledge. Such simultaneity is also recognized by Fels in her work on performative inquiry. She describes her experience of uncovering the etymology of the word "performance":

> I discovered that *per*, as a prefix, informs the word to which it nestles and has two contradictory meanings! *Per* means *through*, so that performance may be understood as 'through form we come to action.' But *per* also means *through the destruction of*, so that performance might also be read as, 'through the destruction of form we come to action.' Performance can thus be etymologically understood as 'simultaneously through form and through the destruction of form we come to action. (Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 30)

This capacity to hold seemingly contradictory principles in simultaneity is the challenge that clowning presents to us as researchers, writers, teachers, people. It is an impossible challenge. However, the more we are able to receive this impossibility as an invitation, rather than an insurmountable obstacle, the more we can foster its simultaneous possibility. In other words, we recognize that thinking beyond the limitations of knowledge is impossible. Yet, we recognize too that we are inclined and perhaps even compelled to do so. The more we continue to practice towards this impossible task, the more we are able to see the interplay between possibility and impossibility as a temporal Being (imagine here our frightened clown) teetering on between the two poles of a traversable high-wire:

When we stand on **the side of possibility**, we can clearly see the next impossible challenge that we can traverse to meet. We can recognize "the impossibility of neatly delineated boundaries" (Sumara & Davis, 1997, p. 311).

When we stand on **the side of the impossible**, we look back upon all that has become possible through our ability to "think" or "get" beyond: we are able to "lay down a path in walking" (Varela, 1987), thereby "enlarging the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997).[46]

The clown's movement "beyond" is transgressive, not in the sense of being offensive, illegal, or a violation, but in the deeper sense of a movement that brings us over, across, through, and beyond a boundary which we previously did not, or could not, cross. hooks (1994) speaks of this form of transgression as an expanding of boundaries, rather than a disavowal of them or deviance in response to them. Furthermore, this form of transgression is transformative in its ability to move us beyond limitations or, even perhaps, (re)move the limitations themselves.

Where transgression is understood as "moving beyond" or as a way of "enlarging the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997), it is clear that the impulse to transgress exists in all educational contexts, since one of the central practices of education is to expand thinking, knowing, and experiencing (both our own and that of others). The practice of clowning demonstrates ways that this impulse to transgress can be acknowledged and taken up in as generative and creative, rather than as destructive and nefarious. Transgressive clowning allows us to shake things up, to "turn the world upside down and see what falls out" (K.A. Ricketts, personal communication, July 2014). It allows us to "see from different standpoints […] [to] stimulate the 'wide-awakeness' so essential to critical awareness" (Greene, 1978, p. 173). It asks, alongside Vance (2006), how "transformation [can] become the most salient event of a class?" (p. 239). Further, it creates opportunities to ask those questions that have never before been asked, let alone answered, and to find the heart of possibility that lies within every seeming impossibility.

In the context of contemporary education and clown performance, Butler (2012) theorizes that both the physical and intellectual experiences of clowning allow us to "recognize the conditioning and the mechanisms of conditioning that have shaped our behavior, and then explore alternative ways of 'dealing with reality'" (p. 66). This description of clowning bears a striking resemblance to Greene's (1978) vision of education as that which can move us from unconscious, habitual response, to wide-awake choice making. Butler's "alternative ways of dealing with reality" and Greene's "wide-awakeness" are equally fuelled by a transgressive impulse to get beyond ourselves and transcend the conditions to which we are habituated. As Greene points out, it is this impulse that stimulates learning. The transgressive impulse that I experience at the heart of clowning is the impulse that curiously asks "what if," and moves us to take the risk of finding out. It is a transgressive impulse that shares in Fels and Belliveau's (2008) question "How might we as educators understand our engagement with curriculum as an educational quest to reawaken our curiosity and sense of agency?" (p. 20). For, if we wish to engage productively with this transgressive impulse, it must be recognized as a creative, curious desire for learning that is shared by teacher and student alike.

Clown exercises encourage us to engage in clown logic, instead of everyday logic, and to get beyond our everyday physicality by "becom[ing] critically aware of socially prescriptive notions of corporeal behavior" (Butler, 2012, p. 65) in ways as simple as "walking funny" (as John would put it). In these ways clowning represents a form of transgression that allows us to experience the specifics of our own realities as arbitrary and open to a tremendous number of possibilities. This clowning practice is, I believe, transgression as a form of Greene's (1978) "wide-awakeness," which she believes is urgently needed in our cultures:

> many, many people are moving through their lives as strangers, in the sense that Meursault was a stranger [in Albert Camus' novel *The Stranger*]. They are not reflecting; they are not choosing; they are not judging; in some sense, they have nothing to say. (p. 151)

Throughout her work, Greene makes it clear that she believes that our educational institutions are spaces in which we should foster the transgressive capacities of being "wide-awake." Similarly, Hannah Arendt (1961) writes of education as an opportunity to "prepare

them [children] in advance for the task of renewing a common world" (p. 196). Arendt (1961), too, recognizes the infinite possibilities that exist for this "common world" and challenges us, as educators, to "love our children enough" that we preserve for them the "chance of undertaking something new, something unforeseen by us" (p. 196). To apply my clowning language, Arendt and Greene both beckon us to "go for the unknown." Furthermore, they challenge us to educate in ways that perpetually invite others into the unknown (rather than holding them firmly within the grasp of our determined, and limited, "real world"), allowing others to move beyond what is known, and even beyond us, in order to "enlarge the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997). The clown transgression that I wish to evoke in this text is resonant with Greene and Arendt's visions for education as a loving and wide-awake opening of possibilities; this clown transgression invites us to experience our present reality as one possibility amongst many, "one of many possible worlds" which we, ourselves, "lay down" (Varela, 1987, p. 62). This transgression is therefore an invitation – a beckoning – to reflect, to choose, to judge, to have something of our own to say, and to create new possibilities.

Recognition of the spirit of transgression that infuses learning can shed new light on the idea of the "class clown" – the student who frequently disrupts classroom activities, often making use of humour to do so. These class clowns may actually be the educational equivalents of canaries in the coal mine: they tap into the impulse to transgress and actively demonstrate when that impulse is not being embraced in ways that encourage it to be generatively and creatively expressed. In such instances, the impulse finds other, often more destructive, forms of expression. Like the clown window that remains a part of the architecture at the University of Bologna (see page 111 for description), class clowns serve as a perpetual reminder that while our educational and academic institutions may be serious, they have an abiding need for (at least periodic) humour; while our undertakings may primarily be understood as work, they can also be approached as play; while we may be in pursuit of knowledge, we must also recognize the depth of all that we will never know. The class clown, like all clowns, is not simply disruptive or distracting. Instead, the class clown, like all clowns, can serve to remind us of forgotten possibilities, if we are able to listen.

The form of transgression that is my focus in this dissertation is creative, which is not to say that it might not also be destructive. Hyde (2008) explains in *Trickster Makes this World*,

> boundary creation and boundary crossing are related to one another, and the best way to describe trickster is to say simply that the boundary is where he will be found – sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing or moving it, but always there, the god of the threshold in all its forms. (p. 7-8)

The practice of clowning makes evident that creation and destruction are deeply intertwined. Indeed, more frequently than not, they exist in a symbiotic relationship with one another, with one acting as a necessary by-product of the other. While the clown may playfully transgress, simply to see "what happens," the educational transgression that I evoke here is one that more closely aligns with Picasso's project to "reshape and revive the world he had been born into" (Hyde, 2008, p. 13). As Hyde (2008) recounts it, Picasso "took this world seriously; then he disrupted it; then he gave it a new form" (p. 13). This taking seriously of the world in order to change it, give it new form, can also be understood through Arendt's (1961) challenge to "love our children enough" that we invite them to renew the world (p. 196). Clowns are made of love and magic. At their best, clowns also take the world seriously. They examine it closely and lovingly, and they thereby learn to see that which others have taken for granted as simply "the way things are." It is after such a *lovingly serious* (or a *seriously loving*, if you prefer) examination that one becomes able to both disrupt and create:

to renew the world

and

to

give

it

new

form.

Babcock-Abrahams discusses this possibility for transformation in the clown's use of language. She suggests that clowns use language in ways that mirror Klein's description of the creation of new possibilities. She quotes,

> it is [an] illusion to think that we can merely step outside the house of metaphysics and dance freely in the sunlight…the only possible strategy is the much more patient and laborious one…by which the foundations of the structure may be carefully but decisively deconstructed, displaced, disorganized – giving rise, *not* to a new space *outside* the old enclosure, but to new angles, new possibilities of organization within it. (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 122)

The possibilities that we encounter through the clown's transgression (and, equally, through the quality of wide-awake attention (to borrow Greene's term) inspired through the act of clowning) are not new possibilities *outside* our existing habits of existence; instead they are new possibilities for experiencing and for creating our existence. In hooks' (1994) conception, education that emphasizes "the old enclosure" and our unconscious habits of existence is "education that merely strives to reinforce domination" (p. 4). However, education that embraces the transgressive impulse at its core and fosters our ability to "deconstruct, displace, and disorganize" is "education as the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994, p. 4). By celebrating, fostering, and practicing connecting with our own transgressive

impulses, clowning can find a unique and useful place within this education as a practice of freedom.

All four of the foundational principles of clown pedagogy are invested in openness: openness to each other (vulnerability), openness to collaborative engagement and co-creation (magic space), openness to complexity and multiplicity in perspectives and in one another (identity as multiple), and openness to the beyond and to what we can experience when we allow ourselves to move beyond ourselves and our understandings (transgression). In the following chapter, I explore these forms of openness as they influenced my own educational journey.
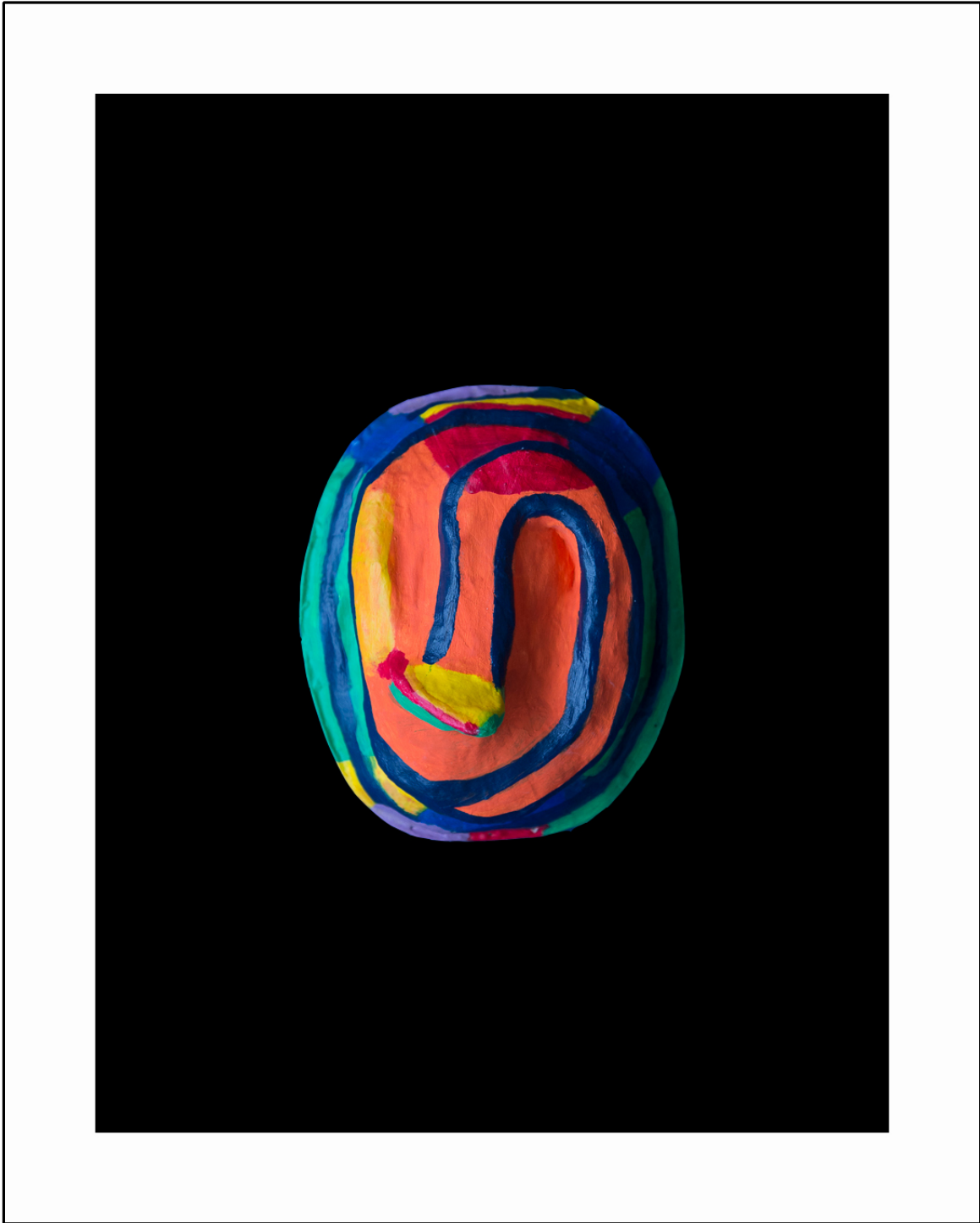
"Transgression" Mask

Chapter 7.

The Wide Awake Clown

> *Now in the midst of my life, I view my own writing in terms of stages in a quest, 'stages,'*
> *as Søren Kierkegaard put it, 'on life's way' (1940) [….] Neither my self nor my narrative*
> *can have, therefore, a single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and*
> *cultural forces; and, in any case, I am forever on the way. (Greene, 1995, p. 1).*

The spiral of my inquiry continues to turn – meandering, twisting, delving into the heart of matters. And I do not merely think or inquire or write *about* these principles of clowning. I take them to heart. I embody them. I carry them with me. In parallel to the stories of inquiry that I have been telling thus far, I also have my own stories – my own teaching stories – which provide insights into the foundational principles of clowning as I have come to live them in my own life. As I mentioned at the outset, the clown doesn't necessarily abide by the progressive pagination of a linear document. So while this writing appears here on page 157, it is perhaps more fruitful to imagine it sauntering alongside the earlier chapters, simply waiting to get a word in edgewise. All of the foundational principles are embedded, embodied, within the stories that I wish to share below. I may not have named them as explicitly here as elsewhere, and yet they are no less there. Just below the surface of the words, they wait: seeking, beckoning, welcoming, and urging the story onward…

When people ask me how I ended up doing a PhD about clowning (which happens quite regularly), I find myself asking the question "how does something 'get in your blood'?" I feel torn between responding that it "just happened" and launching into a well-worn story about my connection to clowning. Sometimes this story begins with a stunt plane flyer named Scotty McCray. Sometimes it begins with a summer afternoon in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Scotty McCray was my great-grandfather. He was also a stunt plane flyer who flew glider planes in the air show. To top it all off, he was a clown. His clown persona, Aloysius Mercatroy, fit into the tradition of the tramp-hobo (think Charlie Chaplin)[47] and also incorporated some sleight of hand magic into his performances. My great-grandmother Helen McCray, whose name I carry in the middle of my own, used to travel with Scotty to the air shows. When she was well into her eighties she informed me, with a devious look in her eye, that her nickname on the air show circuit was "kissing Helen." When I asked her why, she looked at me, incredulously, and simply told me to guess. My great-grandmother was a nurse: she earned her master's degree in nursing and became head nurse. Her husband, Scotty, used to clown with the patients at the hospital where she worked. This was well before any official hospital clown programs had been established.

It is Scott McCray who makes me wonder about how something gets into your blood. He wasn't my biological great-grandfather and I never met him (he died in a plane crash during an air show in Brazil before I was born). And yet, he is the grandfather that my mother grew up with. His identity as a clown was very much a part of his relationship with my mom; I treasure a photograph that he gave her (which is found in a scrapbook that she made as a child) that shows him dressed in his clown garb. It is inscribed with the message "To Dawn-Dawn, with love as big as my nose."

This gift establishes a direct tie between my great-grandfather's clowning and his love of his granddaughter, my mother. It also indicates his felt sense that his nose was tied to his heart, his love, and his vulnerability. Though he far pre-dated Pochinko's clown training methodology, my great-grandfather felt, intuitively, the heart-to-heart vulnerability offered to him by his red nose. Perhaps it is through my mom that this tie between love, vulnerability, and clowning got "into my blood," only to be discovered one sunny day in Regina, Saskatchewan.

When I was in high school, I begrudgingly got involved with an improv. team. I was hanging around one day after school and I stumbled on a classroom where my friends were preparing to audition for the team. They called me into the room and said I should join them. I was terrified. I was convinced that I wasn't, and would never be, funny. I was further

convinced that good improvisers are the funniest people on the planet. This particular group of my friends did nothing to dispel that association – they were *hilarious*. Everything they said seemed effortlessly witty and perfectly timed. I think it was mostly a desire to be close to their charm that motivated me to stay, in direct defiance of my brain, which was yelling at me to leave because I would never be able make people laugh.
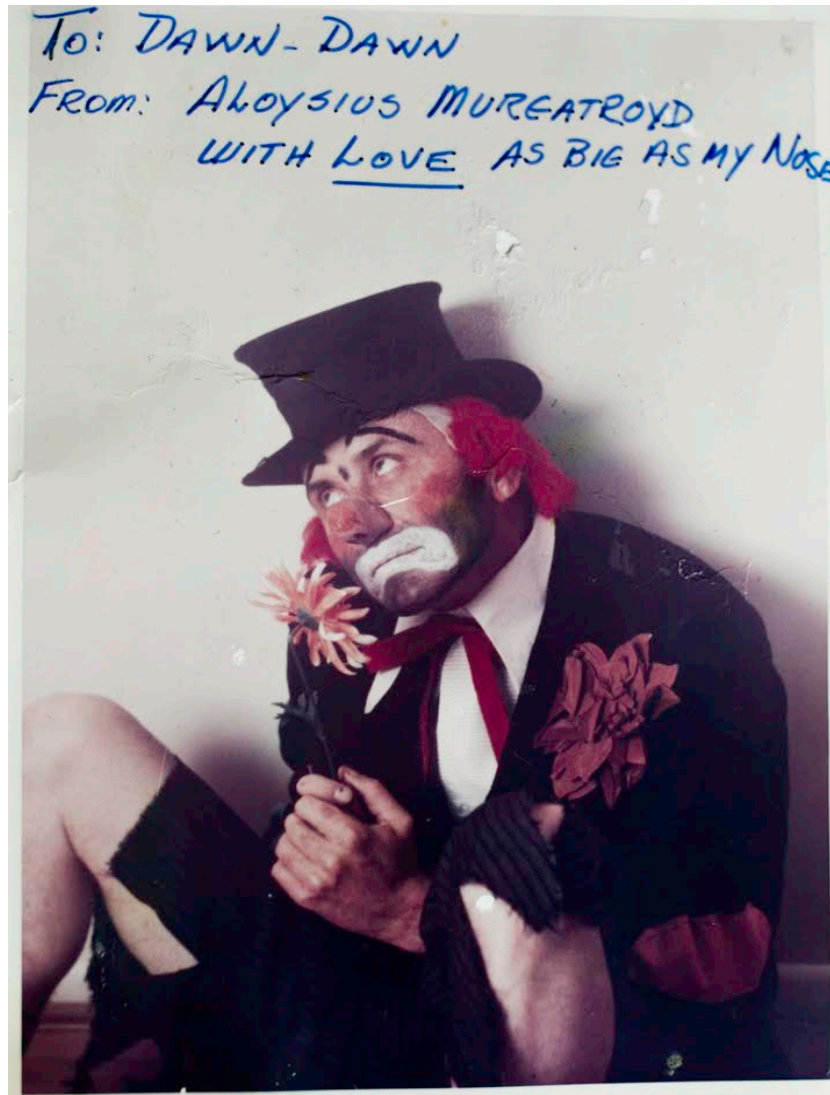
Now this story makes me think about the interplay between impulse and resistance and about saying yes to impulses, even when they ask us to do things that we think "aren't us" or that we cannot do. But those are things that I learned through clown training and so I wasn't

aware of them on that fateful afternoon in high school. All I knew was that *something* was compelling me to stay, even though I didn't think I had what it took to be "one of them."

I ended up on the improv. team and competed with the Canadian Improv. Games for one season. At the end of the season, I decided that improv. was not only something I could do, but it was also something that I *wanted* to do. So, I decided to get into a mini-van with three new friends, and drive from Ontario to Regina for improv camp. One afternoon while there, I found myself in a clown workshop with Scott Florence. Now I know that his approach to clowning is closely tied to the *Commedia dell'arte* and to European styles of clown training. At the time, however, I was only aware of how adventurous it felt to find the "song of a mask" and then take that mask home to his village to find something secret hidden in his house. I was only aware of how terrifying it felt to run, full speed, with my eyes closed through a field, in order to experience the reality and potency of our mental "walls." And then the workshop got really intense, for me. Scott asked us to go out into the hallway one at a time and pick a hat. We were to put on our hat and a red clown nose, and then re-enter the room and connect with everyone in our "audience" (the other workshop participants). I remember coming in, smiling and acting "cutesy" – the way I thought a good clown should. After a little while of me doing this, Scott came and stood next to me onstage. Slowly, he leaned over and whispered in my ear…

"you have a beautiful smile and you're hiding behind it."

I immediately burst into tears. I felt vulnerable and exposed. I felt dishonest and wondered if I had ever honestly connected with anyone in my life. I continued to cry for the rest of the day. Literally. Even after the emotional impact of his statement had worn off and I was feeling better again, the tears continued to stream down my face. I remember eating a sandwich and laughing with my friend Dave Morris, while crying. I remember swimming at the nighttime pool party, while crying. It was a surreal experience.

I wanted more.

I didn't clown again for nearly four years after this brief-but-intense encounter. I still felt compelled by it, but during my theatre undergraduate degree I seemed to always be only "clown-adjacent": there were courses offered but they didn't work with my schedule, there was an opportunity to act as an assistant director for a clown show, but I was too busy, etc. etc. Just before I graduated, I participated in another improv training session – this one part of the "Next Act" festival in Toronto. During this week of training I again did a brief clown workshop, taught by local Toronto improviser Mark Andrada. After the session I asked Mark what I should do if I wanted more clown training. He told me that I should go to The Clown Farm. So, I did. The summer after I graduated with my BA, before I began my master's degree, I packed up my camping gear in my mom's car and drove myself (and a woman who I had never met before) to Manitoulin Island. Right before we left, my mom hugged me close and said "be funny…or at least be brave." My mom is a wise woman. Indeed, in this brief piece of motherly advice she encapsulated a core element of clowning – namely the bravery attended by deep vulnerability that is required by the clown in order to both be funny and, significantly, to embrace when she is *not* funny. In her work around witnessing, Julie Salverson (2008) identifies the clown's "impossible bravery and willingness" as central to what she terms the "attitude of foolish witness" (p. 3). But, of course, at the time, I wasn't aware of any of this. I was simply called to clown and so, bolstered by some insightful advice from my mother and some tasty road trip snacks, I set off.

After driving for 7 hours, Aurora (the woman who I had never met before who had now become my new Patsy Cline singing pal) and I found The Clown Farm, nestled on 91 ½ acres of hay fields and forest. It was there that I met John Turner and did the 16-day intensive workshop known as the *Mask & Clown Intensive*. I have returned to The Clown Farm (now the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance) every summer since that first one (with this exception of the summer of 2014 when I am writing these words) to train, to provide administrative support, to play, to write, to laugh, and, perhaps most especially, to cry with that same kind of honest release I experienced the first time I ever put on a red nose. In sum, to be brave.

I consider myself to have formally begun my training that summer. At that point I had already been awarded SSHRC funding to study the relationship between theatre, Indigenous Knowledges, and environmental education in the Canadian Studies and Indigenous Studies program at Trent University. During the second half of my undergraduate studies in theatre at York University, I had begun to focus the coursework outside my major on environmental education and Indigenous studies. Through these courses I began to see intersections between the artistic creativity encouraged in my theatrical pursuits, the creativity demanded to address contemporary environmental issues, and the creative wisdom embodied in Indigenous Knowledges. I was curious to pursue these intersections through my Master's studies in order to determine whether these distinct areas of study could inform, influence, and enrich each other. Ultimately, my Master's thesis focused on embodiment and empathy as two forms of experience that united each of my areas of focus.[48]

Clowning was also to become an important part of my master's work. Although my writing continued to focus on the broader context of "theatre," I decided to embody my work in a series of clown vignettes that accompanied my written text (a DVD of the performance is included alongside the thesis). Thanks to one of my committee members, Marrie Mumford, these vignettes were woven into an annual showcase of Indigenous performance in Trent University's Nozhem theatre. Because of my inclusion in this program, I had the opportunity to work with a dancer named Norma Araiza who had gained permission from her Yaqui[49] Elders to choreograph a contemporary piece based in the traditional deer dance. She incorporated the two traditional clown figures from the deer dance into her choreography. She also invited my clown to play.

The experience of being invited, as clown, to play cross-culturally was deeply meaningful and moving for me, particularly in this context where I was working to embody and offer my scholarship back to the communities that supported my research. It was these experiences that initially called me to articulate my doctoral research project as an engagement with the potential of clowning for cross-cultural dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. With the publication of Deanna Reder and Linda Morra's *Troubling Tricksters* (2010) I was excited to learn that clowning was already at the heart of at least one instance of Indigenous/non-Indigenous dialogue, collaboration, and artistic investigation. As Jill Carter (2010) recounts in her chapter in *Troubling Tricksters*, Pochinko's interests in Indigenous theatrical traditions (including mask work) were fuelled and informed by invitations to work alongside important contemporary Indigenous theatre artists: "In 1984, [Maaka] Kleist, [Doris] Linklater, [Monique] Mojica first formed a workshop with Richard Pochinko and Ian A. Wallace dedicated to developing a technique by which to access and embody traditional trickster figures belonging to Indigenous people on this continent" (p. 265-6). This technique was a part of these Indigenous artists' interest in re-connecting with their Trickster traditions, which they formalized through the creation of

the "Committee to Re-establish the Trickster." They also published a limited run of a magazine called the "Magazine to Re-establish the Trickster." The work he did exploring the Trickster alongside Indigenous artists no doubt continued to influence and inform Pochinko's pursuit of a clowning approach that could rightfully be considered "uniquely Canadian."

The workshop that Pochinko and Ian (neither of whom self-identify as Indigenous) offered to these Indigenous artists is particularly interesting and significant because Pochinko drew on a number of Indigenous masking traditions, as well as his understanding of Indigenous spirituality, in the creation of his clown-through-mask technique. This encounter was therefore a layered, complex, and exciting moment of cross-cultural dialogue through clown.

Coming out of my experiences as a non-Indigenous scholar doing a master's degree in Indigenous Studies, my initial articulations of my doctoral work were focused on the concepts of "ethical space" and "magic space" in relation to Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships in Canada. "The ethical space" is a term coined by Roger Poole in 1972 and refined by Cree Scholar Willie Ermine in more contemporary scholarship. According to Ermine (2005), the ethical space is a "neutral zone" for "critical conversation" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous "spheres of culture and knowledge" (p. 4). Richard Pochinko's conception of the magic space of engagement is foundational in his clown training methodology and is grounded in his work with Indigenous mask-making traditions. According to Pochinko,

> The Native peoples say that there is a circle around you and a circle around me. Magic happens when our circles meet. So, if you are the audience and I am the clown on the stage we are never alone because we are both participating in this moment of magic. (as cited in Coburn & Morrison, 2013, p. 82)[50]

My initial articulations of my doctoral research suggested clowning as a performance practice that invites us into overlapping magic and ethical spaces, thus allowing us to "step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur" (Ermine, 2007, p. 202). It was the articulated goal of

my work to examine the interconnection between ethical and magical spaces and to consider how understandings from clowning as a performative practice could be applied in broader socio-cultural and educational contexts.

As I moved through my doctoral program, I continued to be fuelled by my interest in the possibility of clowning for cross-cultural dialogue, particularly in the context of Indigenous/non-Indigenous dialogue in Canada. More than an interest, I feel that such cross-cultural dialogue is both my responsibility as a Settler in this land and is also crucial for the success of important initiatives such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At the same time, however, I recognized that I wasn't interested in using clowning *per se* as a medium for cross-cultural dialogue: it wasn't necessarily my vision that groups of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples would find themselves wearing red noses and acting zany together. I thus realized that clowning isn't a *tool* that I want to use, but rather it suggests a particular approach to dialogue that I feel might be valuable in the cross-cultural context. I am interested in how the principles of clowning might contribute to a particular approach to the work (and the opportunities) of cross-cultural dialogue. It therefore became the focus of my doctoral inquiry to uncover and articulate the principles of clowning that I saw as relevant.

Because I am a graduate student doing graduate research, my inquiry into the principles and the approach of clowning organically became a living, autobiographical, and performative inquiry into the expression of these principles and this approach in the academy. As such, the entirety of my doctoral experience has become a site of inquiry: my courses, my comprehensive exams, my meetings, my readings, etc. have all been opportunities to live and perform my inquiry and, as a practitioner, I have been simultaneously enacting my scholarly and my clowning practices throughout all of my experiences as a doctoral candidate. I first became aware of this transition in my focus during an a/r/tography course that I took with Dr. Rita Irwin at the University of British Columbia. As a final project for this class, we were invited to showcase our work to our classmates in a way that demonstrated the connection between our artistic and our scholarly practices. I created a performance piece that, on the surface, appeared to be a familiar

academic conference presentation. I dressed up in grad student formal wear (i.e., a skirt and black sweater) and held the notes for my talk in front of me, making sure that I looked up and connected with my audience directly an appropriate amount of times. I even made several Prezi© slides to accompany my talk.

The content of my presentation explained that, historically, scholars have spoken and written about clowns as though they are figures who can be discussed using our familiar techniques, languages, and methodologies. Yet, intriguingly, many of these same scholars point to the role of the clown within their cultures of origin as being disruptive of "the way things are" and the people's ability to blithely continue on with their familiar routines. It is precisely this quality that has led anthropologists, such as Mitchell (1992) for example, to identify clowns as culturally "critical" figures. I then provided my audience with some information about the "Neo-Bouffon" practice established by Karen Hines as an example of a critical clowning practice. I refer to this as a performance piece, instead of as a presentation, because simultaneous with my conference-style content delivery, I was enacting a Neo-Bouffon performance. One of the core aspects of the Neo-Bouffon style is that it combines what Karen refers to as the "unholy trinity" of charm, parody/imitation, and affliction (K. Hines, personal communication, August 2011). My affliction was anxiety born from the imposter syndrome (i.e., feeling like you are not really intelligent enough to be amongst your academic peers). While experiencing this affliction, I imitated a conference presentation. I aimed to be charming by doing my task (giving the conference presentation) "to the best of my ability" (K. Hines, personal communication, August 2011), which included being polished, well-informed, and articulate in the delivery of my prepared presentation. And yet, as a performer I had the added task of sharing my own scholarly anxiety and sense of dis-ease with my audience – another task which I had to engage honestly and to the best of my ability. It was the confluence of both of these elements of my performance that allowed it to live as an enactment of clowning (rather than merely as a presentation about clowns) and to invite the critical capacities of the clown directly into the academy.

In the article "Crash Knowledge:' Pretending to be a Professor who Fails" (2012), Ricardo Dominguez reflects on his experience teaching an Introduction to Performance Art course *as* an instance of performance art. As in my a/r/tographic performance, Dominguez therefore evoked two simultaneous performance frames: the expected performance of the successful professor (or, in my case, doctoral student), and the unexpected performance, which was an enactment of the content being taught. In both Dominguez's performance and my own, the content of what was said was intended to provide the audience (or the students) with the tools necessary to read the performance as an enactment of its own subject matter (performance art and critical clowning, respectively). I am reminded of Denzin's description of performative writing as "writing that speaks performatively, enacting what it describes. It is writing that does what it says it is doing, by doing it" (2009, p. 231). Scholarly performances, such as my own and Dominguez's, which *do* what is being taught through the words that are spoken, appear to engage Denzin's understanding of performative writing and (re)appropriate it in the realm of live performance.

In her article "Misperformance Ethnography" (2014), Monica Prendergast raises ethical concerns related to Dominguez's performance. Given that the undergraduate students in Dominguez's course were never 'in on' his approach to his teaching *as* performance art, Prendergast suggests that "the problem of audience/student manipulation and intentional abuse/confusion remains in the midst of all of this incoherent and unintelligible performance of 'bad' teaching" (2014, p. 85). While I agree with Dr. Prendergast that such work walks a fine ethical line, I believe that the incorporation of clown performative practices into scholarly presentation/performances has a built in "safeguard" in the imperatives "take the audience with you," "keep the audience safe," and "keep the conversation going." "Safety" in the clown's world may look and feel quite different than everyday safety, as it can include the pleasure in risk, discomfort, and even in being abused by a performer. Certainly, many performing clowns "miss the mark" in this regard and such "misses" can result in ethically questionable performances (I have experienced many myself as an audience member). However, when a clown is able to "keep the conversation going" and "take the audience with her," she is able to invite the audience into potentially risky, uncomfortable, challenging experiences that they may otherwise avoid, and stay with them as

they find deep pleasure in those very experiences. It is in such circumstances where we see audience members squealing with laughter as they are insulted and punished by a performing clown.

In the specific circumstance of my own a/r/tographic performance experiment, my audience/fellow students expressed genuine concern for my well-being, but they also asked questions that clearly indicated to me that they "got" what I was doing: that they were playing on the simultaneous levels with me and applying the tools that I had explained to them during my presentation to unpack the performative elements of my work. As a performing clown, it was my ethical responsibility to "take my audience with me" and to sense any moments when I risked "losing" them and adjust my performance accordingly. As a scholar, it was my ethical responsibility to provide my audience with the critical tools they required to engage with my performative work. As a clown scholar, I was able to bring both of these ethical responsibilities together in order to invite critical clowning into the academy and take my academic audience with me into the world of the critical clown.

I describe this performance in detail because it was an important moment in the transformation of my doctoral research. This performance helped me to realize the significance of my personal, living experiences as a graduate student as a "site" for my inquiry into clowning not merely as content, but also as approach. I continue to see the value of clowning as an approach to Indigenous/non-Indigenous dialogue in Canada and I have continued to enact this approach in my own living experiences, including in my attendance at various events associated with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Vancouver and at SFU. However, I have come to realize that this project requires a significant amount of groundwork in order to establish clowning as an approach that encompasses several clear elements, which can be applied in the context of cross-cultural dialogue. The relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada is so crucial and, at times, so tenuous that I do not necessarily feel that it is a good testing ground for a fledgling concept, especially a concept based in work as vulnerable and deep as clowning. Furthermore, I am aware of the need for my dissertation to be a discrete project, capable of being completed within a (more or less) reasonable timeframe. Finally, as I began to think about the

relationship between the clown and the scholar, I began, increasingly, to see the practices of both as being fundamentally about the opening up of possibilities. Without me intending it, the focus of my inquiry therefore shifted contexts from clowning applied to cross-cultural dialogue to clowning applied to the pursuits of the scholar. That being said, Indigenous Knowledges, practices, and scholarship all continue to deeply inform my perspectives, my scholarly approach, and my personal orientations to this work and to the world.

Might as well accept

Life changes every second

Drop expectations

Whether you like it

Or not,

Trickster shakes things up

Drop expectations

As will become clear throughout these pages, the unexpected and unplanned have been important throughlines in my doctoral journey. It is fittingly so, given that clowning is, centrally, a practice of dropping your expectations and going for the unknown. My interest in articulating the value of clowning for scholarly practices has therefore led me into the perpetually unexpected and unplanned.

Early during my doctoral journey I met one of my committee members, Dr. Celeste Snowber, for tea. We discussed my interest in approaching clowning as not only the content but also as the form and method of my research. At that point Celeste said to me that, as far as she could tell, I was going to need to invite the Trickster (or clown) into my life, which would mean that my life and my research would probably go in unpredictable directions. This invitation to the unpredictable has been central to Celeste's own scholarly and artistic practices. She writes,

> As much as we plan the curriculum of life, the book, the lesson plan, the marriage, the family or career, they all have lives of their own. In fact, one thing is for sure, the plan will mess up, and we may even be invited into a spirituality of messiness. (Snowber, 2009, p. 121)

Given Celeste's faith in messiness and my own desire to *live* my clown practice, I embraced her suggestion enthusiastically and whole-heartedly: of course! Inviting the Trickster and/or clown spirits in to play with me was precisely what I wanted to do with my work and my life. But I forgot that these spirits aren't always kind and benignly, endearingly amusing…The change that they push us towards isn't always easy to accept or even to understand. Sometimes these figures are dark and frightening. Sometimes they leave messes that are both difficult to live with and challenging to clean up. Sometimes, frankly, they are assholes. Indeed, in *Red on Red*, Craig S. Womack (1999) writes,

> Celebrating tricksters, it seems to me, should be done with caution. It is important to remember that shape-shifting can also be a form of witchery and that tricksters can be oppressive assholes as often as liberators – just check out the stories. (p. 301)

Saying that Trickster can be experienced as an asshole is the same as saying that movement from the known into the unknown can be difficult, scary, even painful. As Karen Meyer (2006) cites Krishnamurti, "Freedom from the known is death, and then you are living" (p. 165) Trickster is, perhaps, particularly experienced as an asshole when we are in the midst of moving towards this death, in order to live. And when, in the process of this movement, we must face ourselves and the elements of ourselves (our lives and our habits) that are dark, distasteful, frightening. For a powerful example of a Trickster invading someone's life and reminding him of the dark and frightening, see Niigonwedom James Sinclair's "Trickster Reflections Part II" in *Troubling Tricksters* (2010).

Part of my adventure throughout this doctorate has involved experiencing the Trickster and clown spirit in many forms, including as assholes. This adventure has taught me to continue celebrating these Trickster and clown spirits for all they can teach me, but to do so with cautious awareness of their true power. Through this process, I have had visceral experiences of transformation – both bidden and unbidden, both painful and beautiful. These transformations have challenged me, shaped me, and helped me to grow. Celeste was

able to encourage me to "let the Trickster in," because she, too, has experienced transformation within and alongside her scholarship:

> What we hold dear most likely will change, transform into something else, and will eventually inform the fabric of our lives [….] There is something about the beauty of imperfection that attracts my attention. I've been conditioned in my scholarly and artistic endeavours to ensure that whatever I produce goes through a multitude of edits till it reaches a sense of aesthetic completion. I still adhere to my standards, in many forms, but personal lives do not always work that way. They sway, drop, fall, release to the circumstances, which can seldom be controlled or planned: death of a loved one, meeting the love of your life, illness, or deep transformation. (Snowber, 2012, p. 72)

Clowns and Tricksters may be especially aligned with transformations, but, as Snowber's writing makes clear, the possibility for transformation is present in all of our lives, and in all forms of scholarly practice. The choice is not truly between changing or staying the same, but rather between seeking or refusing the beauty of imperfection.

After my conversation with Celeste, I continued merrily along. I was taking classes at the time and was exploring clowning and my own clown performance in relation to a number of scholarly traditions and approaches. When it came time for my comprehensive exams, I (re)turned to my books in order to write two papers, one of which traced the relationship between clowning and ethics/ethical relationality and reviewed relevant methodologies in order to begin to sketch out a scholarly methodology of clown, the other of which looked at the relationship between clowning and education in a number of historical contexts. I also did a clown performance as an embodied exploration of clowning, vulnerability, ethics, and bananas. Everything continued to seem pretty straightforward: I had developed some solid skills as a scholar (including as a researcher and a writer) and I felt that my years of experience training and performing in clown provided me with insights and understanding into this art-form that had not yet been thoroughly discussed in the academic context. I hadn't yet foreseen any challenges bringing these two facets of my life, my work, and myself, together. I hadn't yet experienced any major stumbling blocks after my commitment to "let the Trickster in."

After I completed my comprehensive exams, however, this began to change. In their feedback on my exams, my committee members explained to me that I had a troubling tendency to generalize about "education" in ways that were dismissive, even insulting, and that demonstrated a lack of engagement with the richness of existing educational literature. I was shocked and for awhile felt adrift – unsure how to bring my work into a better, more inclusive direction, one that reflected my true desire to both enter the existing scholarly conversation in a respectful way, and also turn this scholarly world upside, as clowns are wont to do. In retrospect, I now believe that this experience was a necessary part of my journey. It was essential that I not simply "breeze through" my doctoral journey, encountering success after success. In order to provide depth and complexity for this work, I needed to experience this form of "failure" to re-connect me with humility and with an appreciation for the value of failures. Indeed, this experience connected me with the "success" of failure by illuminating that a central challenge of my work was to bring together the clown and scholar within myself in ways that did not allow for either to be dismissed, disparaged, or given short-shrift. The "success" of this experience therefore lay in the clarity that it eventually provided for me in terms of a direction forward. Furthermore, it appears to me now, with my 20/20 hindsight, to be the catalyzing moment for when I truly began living my inquiry, when clowning practice could no longer be relegated to the stage and began to seep inextricably into my life.

Since I do not experience a stark division between my "work" and my "personal life," it seems worthwhile to briefly mention some of the other ways that the Trickster and the clown have played in my life throughout the course of this doctoral journey. In the past two and a half years I have experienced a number of radical transformations in my life, my living situation, and my visions of the future: my eight-year romantic relationship (which had influenced my decision to move to BC) ended; I spent a year seriously questioning my sexuality, believing that perhaps I had simply gotten that wrong and that's why I wasn't able to sustain the aforementioned relationship; I tried living with another partner, only to have that end badly; I moved into a new apartment with an amazing roommate; I met a friend of that roommate's and surprised myself by beginning a relationship with and then falling in love with him; together, we got pregnant and embarked on the adventure of starting a

family; and then, as the capstone of unexpected life changes, our baby was born five weeks early! In fact, the day I went into labour I allowed myself to think "since I have five weeks left, I am pretty sure I can finish a draft of my dissertation before the baby is born…"

Felix arrived 17 hours later!

A disruption of the very best kind.

There were definitely times when all of this change felt dark and frightening. However, over the past half a year, in particular, I have felt a kind of calm and even a quiet excitement in the eye of this storm. I have witnessed myself learning to trust that even when the unexpected arises and when the path ahead is unclear, I can feel within myself that I am exactly where I am meant to be. I have continued to work, admittedly at times more diligently than others, on clarifying the core of this dissertation through all of these personal encounters with the Trickster bent on turning my world upside down. This articulation of a clear focus for my writing was, itself, not a straightforward adventure. As with so many life experiences, it involved many leaps of faith and many moments of muddling through. It involved me in a continual process of wayfinding (Davis, 2009): I would discover myself in the middle of the ocean, uncertain of which direction to go and, as Vicki would remind me in these moments, simply need to "keep paddling." In less metaphorical terms, this involved a continual commitment to simply keep writing. Even when the place of the written product was unclear, the process of the writing was the invaluable paddling that allowed me to move from being stuck, with nothing but water as far as the eye could see, to navigating in a particular direction.

7.1. Searching and Researching: Sites for Inquiry

Research is not only an outward endeavour, but it travels in the realm of re-searching our own lives, knowledge, passions, and practice. (Snowber & Richmond, 2011/2009, p. 3)

My searching and re-searching took place in several "sites" of inquiry – or through several "field studies" – including, but not strictly limited to, the following: the practice of reading; inter-views that I conducted with clown practitioners and teachers (chiefly John Turner); inquiry into teaching performed through a variety of roles held during the tenure of my doctoral degree, including as a Sessional instructor for an educational theatre course; and, especially, living/autobiographical/performative inquiry that infused all of my other work (including the writing of this dissertation, which I also approached as a site of inquiry) as I learned to be a clown within the academy. These practices have transformed not only my approach to my research, teaching, reading, and writing, but also my very ways of being in the world (of being a clown, of being a scholar, of being Julia). Conventionally, scholars conduct research across various sites of inquiry in order to establish the "findings" or the data of their research. My own approach, as clown scholar, was more iterative, more cyclical – more of a spiral. Reading, researching, inter-viewing, teaching, and writing each became its own opportunity to live and perform my understanding of the clown scholar's approach, while simultaneously, living and performing *as* clown within these sites of inquiry provided a deepening and even a transformation of my understanding of the clown scholar. My discussion below will therefore focus not only on what I did and learned from each of my sites of inquiry, but also on how each became transformative for me. What I have to offer at this stage in my inquiry are not so much "findings" as they are possibilities – openings into moments of immanence in which we might dwell in order to teach, to learn, and to transform.

7.2. Reading as Inquiry

I read deeply and broadly throughout the entirety of my doctoral journey. There were (many) times when I envied those whose work is connected to a clear and discrete body of literature. However, as I have continued my work, I have realized that the nature of scholarly practice is such that even the most disciplinarily clear-cut project has the potential to toss an inquirer into a complex web of interconnecting scholarship. Being curious is seemingly a natural characteristic of scholars. The inherent complexity of academic inquiry is therefore intensified by a tendency to be drawn in by a clever title or a juicy sounding abstract. At least it was for me! In my case, this included reading in fields related to education, clowning, performance theory and practice, Indigenous studies, and various forms of arts-based research. As each new text I picked up sparked interest in an additional five to ten texts, the breadth of my reading lists became extensive.

Given that my doctoral studies have now been underway for over five years, my process of reading has also involved various forms of re-reading, including re-reading entire texts, sections of texts, notes about texts, and my own previous writings done in response to particular texts. In this journey of reading and re-reading I have been interested in engaging in conversation with the ideas I found presented in texts. Each author's insights would call forth new ideas from me, resulting in new writing. While an organized and sensible methodological strategy would have been to maintain my thoughts in a research/reading journal, I took a different approach. Instead, I scribbled ideas across a number of notebooks (and, at times, in my iPhone's note app, in word documents on my computer, and on napkins and the backs of envelopes which seemed to inevitably get recycled before I could transcribe them). Although this process did not result in a clear and consistent engagement with the literature to which I could easily return, it did something else: it provoked me. As I was writing this dissertation, I would often recall a thought or phrase or idea that I felt resonated deeply with the section I was working on. While sometimes I would remember exactly where this phrase or idea had appeared (sometimes down to the page number!), at other times, I struggled to even remember whose thought or phrase it was, let alone which text it could be found in. When this occurred I was prompted to search back through my

various notes and sometimes even back through several entire books, seeking my remembered connection. In this process I often stumbled upon other connections that hadn't occurred to me and likely would not have if I hadn't had to sort through my various caches of ideas. So it was that this iterative process of engaging with the literature led me on rhizomatic, creative, and fruitful paths, even while it challenged my desire to keep things around me organized, neat, and efficient. While this process was certainly more time consuming, I also believe that it led me frequently into the unknown, allowing me to uncover new connections even within well-worn territories.

The red clown nose is a "sense organ" (V. Kelly, personal communication, 2014) or barometer that drives my research, my teaching, my writing, my thinking, and my reading. I am attracted to scholarship that engages the particular and personal, that delves into places of human exchange, and that considers life experiences in ways that allow the scholarship itself to, in some sense, become living. This is work, I suggest, that grapples not merely or primarily with the *what* but instead prioritizes the *how*. As I read, I attend to the presence of heart (both the original authors' and my own) in the work. In this way, I have become deeply aware of how much more compelled I am by work that calls forth my vulnerability. Furthermore, I recognized that the writings that most successfully engage my vulnerability are those in which the author has engaged with and expressed his or her own personal idiosyncrasies and therefore vulnerabilities.

Through reading I had opportunities to attend to the multiplicities of myself: various sources would appeal to and call forward distinct aspects of, or masks, within myself. These sources each provoked me differently, but they all informed and helped to shape me as I inquired and explored. My reading practice also inspired me to move beyond – transgress – my own previously held beliefs and understandings, allowing me to be surprised and my work to be enriched by many unexpected connections.

Finally, in my reading practice I have sought to enter a co-creative magic space with sources, perspectives, and authors. Rather than seek in other sources "evidence" to "support" my arguments and ideas, I have attempted to open myself to all that other works may offer toward the very development of my arguments and ideas. In this way, the works

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that I have read throughout this doctoral journey – both those cited and uncited in this final dissertation – have inextricably shaped and moulded, influenced and created my approach to being a clown scholar. This scholarship of the heart (scholarship that resonates with my clown sense organ/barometer) reveals to me choices and possibilities, instead of suggesting answers, solutions, and conclusions. Furthermore, it invites and sometimes prods me to transgress and transform myself – to get beyond myself, get beyond my own thinking, and get beyond the limitations of my own knowns and unknowns.

My studies in the Arts Education PhD program challenged me to confront the boundaries and divisions I had erected in my own understandings of artistic and scholarly practices; I struggled for a long time to see possible points of connection between the messy, boisterous, playful, irreverent, and flippant world of clowning and the precise, contained, clear, and reserved tone that I felt scholarly work demanded. These divisions were also sometimes reflected back to me through the books I read. For instance, in the introduction to *Clowning as Critical Practice* (1992), Mitchell provides a caveat that draws a clear line of distinction between the concerns of the clown and those of the scholar:

> although the book is about clowning, this is not humorous book. These essays were not written with the intent to be amusing or to entertain any more than a collection of anthropological papers on cross-cousin marriage or gender antagonism would be. Our concern is a scholarly one: to provide a descriptive analysis of the practice of clowning in societies we have studied firsthand. (p. ix)

Very little reading between the lines is required to arrive at the understanding that humour, amusement, and entertainment are what we expect from a clown and, furthermore, that these same pursuits are decidedly *not* scholarly. Despite this and other such divisions, I encountered through my reading a number of scholarly works that *were* humourous, amusing, entertaining. They were even boisterous, playful, irreverent, and, sometimes, messy. These texts were often produced within the broadly defined realm of arts-based research. However, I was sometimes surprised to find such playful, amusing, honest, and vulnerable work in far less "expected" places.

In *Sister Outsider* (2007) Audrey Lorde describes her voyage to Tashkent, Russia: "I had the distinct feeling here, for the first time in Russia, that I was meeting warm-blooded people; in the sense of contact unavoided, desires and emotions possible, the sense that there was something hauntingly, personally familiar" (p. 22). I cite Lorde here not only because she is one of the scholars with whom I have found deep resonance, but also because her description is apt: in my reading, I have sought the kind of contact that makes the author and the ideas feel "hauntingly, personally familiar;" I have sought the kind of writing that stirs my desires and emotions and makes them feel possible; I have sought to encounter "warm-blooded people" through descriptive words and active verbs. Meyer ends her article "Hawaiian Hermeneutics and the Triangulation of Meaning" (2003) with the following words: "We have moments left on this planet. Why not teach and learn about endless ways to love, to listen, to participate? Why not joy in each others *[sic]* company?" (p. 255). The reading that has most directly informed this dissertation is reading that has allowed me to "love, listen, and participate" in new ways. It has enabled me to "joy in" another's presence, even when they weren't physically present with me. It is these deeply personal qualities, identified by Lorde and Meyer that, for me, differentiate reading as inquiry from reading as a necessary and habitual task of research. Reading as inquiry is not about fact-finding and it is not about quotations. Instead, it is about visiting and connecting with another person (and their thoroughly considered, deeply felt ideas) across the distances of time and space.

As both Pelias (2014) and Prendergast (2014) have written, there is a danger that self-representation in writing can become merely a part of our overarching culture's seeming addiction "to confession, self-revelation, narcissism and voyeurism" (Prendergast, 2014, p. 3). The connection that I seek in my own reading and writing isn't satisfied by simple confession. Pelias (2014) calls this connection a "resonance" that writing "creates in its readers" and he cites hooks to suggest that confessional writing is most resonant when it "allows us to move into the personal as a way to go beyond it (p. 67)" (p. 35). While confession may be cathartic for writers (and performers and clowns), it only such movement into the personal *that opens up beyond itself* which can take us into a generative, and magical, place of resonance and connection. Similarly, clown performances that remain in the realm of cathartic confession are an indication that the practitioners are putting their "training

onstage," as previously discussed. Instead of such a narcissistic engagement with self-representation and confession, my interest is in both writing and clowning that allow for transformation through transgression: writing that moves us beyond our expectations and, perhaps, even beyond ourselves.

Even after I was able to identify these aspects of reading as inquiry, it took me quite awhile to bring these possibilities out of my reading and into my own scholarly practices. As I began to realize the potential for bringing the clown and the scholar together, I initially assumed that I would need to determine a way to become a clown scholar and *then* apply this clown scholar approach in an educational context different from my own, namely the K-12 classroom context that I typically associated with educational research. Eventually, however, I realized that my work to become a clown scholar was, in itself, the connection between clowning and education that I was seeking. My work to become a clown scholar – and my living inquiry that accompanied this work including all of its questions, uncertainties, and messiness – *was* (and *is*) me applying the approach of clowning to an educational context.

I am deeply grateful for the breadth and depth of the literature that I have had the opportunity to connect with throughout this doctoral journey. More specifically, I am grateful for the ways that this work has inspired me to make my own scholarly choices. In real and important ways, this practice of reading has allowed me to identify, and become, myself as a scholar *and* as a clown. As Greene (1978) explains,

> To identify the self is, in a sense, to understand one's preferences; to understand them is to be able to reflect upon one's preferences; to understand them is to be able to reflect upon them in the light of some standard, some set of values, some norm. The individual who does not choose, who simply drifts, cannot – from this additional vantage point – be considered free. (p. 153)

The privileged reading time that I have experienced through my studies has allowed me to begin becoming free within my scholarly practices: to understand and reflect on myself and my preferences, in relation to the diversity of academic norms. By engaging deeply with others' work, I have learned to choose my work as my own, rather than "drifting" in my work according to presumed expectations. In this choosing, I recognize that I am

tremendously vulnerable. My work reflects me. It is not a product of some pre-established course of action. Nor is it crafted to satisfy assumptions about either the clown or the scholar in me. Instead, my work *is* me while, simultaneously, it allows me to transcend (get beyond) myself and connect creatively with others. Beyond any specifics of style or approach, this is the deep possibility of clowning as an approach to inquiry and to life.

Learning to approach reading as inquiry transformed my entire understanding of scholarly practice. This reading inquiry has taught me to visit with scholars and their ideas in the same way that I visit with my mother: I listen attentively, patiently, and lovingly to what is being said to me; I ask questions hungrily to find out more; I am generous with my time and grateful for the time that the one sharing with me has invested in helping me to understand; and I expect to drink many cups of tea before I am finished. Rather than thinking about scholarship as a competition, I now understand it as a conversation – the really good kind of conversation that teaches me as much about myself as it does about anything else – the kind of conversation that occurs in the magic space. When I approach my reading now, I prepare myself to go into the unknown, to be taken into the world of the author, and to be brought back with a new awareness. Not all of the ideas that I encounter will resonate with me, but they all have something worthwhile to offer.

7.3. Inter/views as Inquiry

I use the term "inter-views" to signal the dialogical quality of the conversations that directly inform this dissertation. The Oxford American Dictionary defines "interview" in the following ways:

> A formal meeting in which one or more persons question, consult, or evaluate another person (for example, a job interview). A meeting or conversation in which a writer or reporter asks questions of one or more persons from whom material is sought for a newspaper story, television broadcast, etc. The report of such a conversation or meeting.

Much of the quality of interpersonal connection implied in the origin of the word – the Anglo-French *(s')entreveer*, meaning to see one another, meet or *entre-* inter- + *veer*, to see –

seems to be missing from the above definitions. Interviews have become functional ways for one person (in the academic context, usually the scholar) to gather information and insights from another person (the "subject" or "participant" of the study); however, my interest is not in simply seeking "material." Instead, I am drawn to an inter-view process wherein the participants (both interviewer and interviewee) emphasize seeing one another and "inter-seeing" (or "inter-viewing") – learning to see together. This resonance is now better captured in the word "dialogue" than in the word "interview." As Henderson (2001) explains in the context of multiperspective inquiry,

> Our English word *dialogue* traces back to the Greek concept of *dialogos*, which literally translates as the logic of the 'dia' – the 'in-between.' In terms of this original Greek term, a 'dialogical' view of the world is the recognition that human wisdom emerges through a playful encounter with diverse perspectives. (p. 76-7)

The process of inter-viewing can therefore also be understood as a process of engaging in dialogue in order to come to a shared sense of wisdom that exists in between myself and another. In the language of clown training, this can also be explained as engaging in "open, honest, two-way conversation" (J. Turner, personal communication, August 2008) or entering into a magic space of co-creation.

One of the founding principles of Richard Pochinko's training methodology is his understanding that "if we ever faced all directions of ourselves at once we could only laugh at the beauty of our own ridiculousness" (as cited in Coburn and Morrison, 2013, p. 3). The clown training that I have undertaken is therefore, in large part, a process of learning to inter-view: to face, see, and inter-see with all directions of ourselves. The six masks that we create and wear in the training are physical manifestations of particular points within the sphere of the creative self. Throughout the training, we intentionally focus on each of those aspects of the creative self and work to have the everyday self inter-see, or inter-view, with what is opened up within the creative self from the experience. Eventually we seek such inter-seeing or inter-viewing (if not under- or inter-standing)[51] between the clown and the human self. We also work to see together with other creative selves as they delve into their

own processes and present themselves and their creations. We work to see our (creative) selves, to see each other, and to see *with* facets of ourselves and others.

In clown training, the notion of inter-seeing/inter-viewing begins with recognition of the multiplicity that we each carry within ourselves. This form of seeing is comparable to Richardson's notion of crystallization in research. She suggests that, like a crystal, research "combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations [transformations], multidimensionalities [multiplicities], and angles of approach" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 478). Seeing through the multiple perspectives of our various masks (or selves) similarly allows us to see and engage with multiple layers of and even versions of meaning. This complexity of seeing is the kind of "inter-seeing" that the clown training can foster within us. This notion of "inter-seeing" with the complexity of our multiple selves can also have implications for engaging directly with others. As we interview, we can also strive to "inter-view." Such inter-viewing allows us to add additional complexity to our understandings as it invites another's multiple layers of and perspectives on meaning to co-exist alongside our own. The capacity to inter-view is dependent on our ability to recognize "individuals" (both ourselves and others) as multiple. This recognition of multiplicity can help us to connect with others as we inter-view with them, even when they seem very different from ourselves. Furthermore, recognition of multiplicity reminds us that people are dynamic are can never be defined or "captured" by their answers to specific questions.

Thus, when it came to gathering sources, information, insights, and inspiration for this current work, it was neither sufficient nor appropriate for me to "asks questions of one or more persons from whom material [was] sought." As a clown scholar, it is my imperative not to interview in order to learn from others, but to figure out how to inter-view in order to learn from my experience of seeing others, seeing with others, and, significantly, seeing myself, my work, and the world through my experiences with others. The latter resonates with the perspective that clowning is a practice of seeing, uncovering, embracing, and laughing at (and I would venture *with*) the beautiful ridiculousness of ourselves.

I began developing my inter-viewing process during my "field study" semester (summer 2012), which I spent on Manitoulin Island working with John Turner. This was a time of tremendous change – for me in my personal life, for John in his life, and for the institution of *The Clown Farm*, which we were in the process of transforming into the not-for-profit charity *The Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation Performance*. The dialogue that John and I engaged in throughout this summer would, on the surface, likely seem familiar to any one who has conducted informal, semi- or un-structured, dialogue-oriented interviews in the past. However, there were some major differences.

First of all, my inter-view with John initially took place over the course of a month. I say initially because this inter-view has, in fact, continued sporadically throughout the entire process of writing this dissertation: I often found myself seeking clarifications, wanting to refresh my understandings and/or excitement about ideas, needing encouragement and inspiration, or simply hoping to vent to a sympathetic listener about the challenge of writing about clowns. In this way, the inter-viewing process became an organic part of my living inquiry. When we began the inter-view (in July 2012), we were co-authoring an article about the clown training and its potentially broader educational implications. I had become curious about the clown rules and wanted to spend some time delving into discussion about them. The clown rules are uncovered during the clown training, with the focus remaining on each participant's own discovery and application of them. During the training, we discuss the rules only minimally in order to avoid falling into "analyzing" and "rationalizing" the rules without/before actually experiencing them. I had become fascinated by the rules both in terms of my experience of them and in terms of what I saw as their broad applicability beyond the context of the clown training proper. John and I had many deep, fruitful, interesting conversations over my time "in residence" at *The Clown Farm/Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance*. Some of those conversations were about the clown rules. We talked while sitting in Adirondack chairs in the shady oak grove (what we came to call our "office") in the heat of Ontario summer afternoons. We talked while driving into town to get groceries. We talked while walking John's new puppy, Gordanache. I did not have any specifically prepared interview questions other than, simply, "can we talk about the

clown rules?" As we talked, we explored our own multiple perspectives freely and in the process we came to see each other and the work in new ways: we inter-viewed.

Although we had many conversations about a huge variety of themes throughout the month, we only recorded our discussions about the rules. However, it should be noted that even those conversations had a tendency to meander through many other tangents including politics, movies, grant writing, puppy training, and our snacking needs. In the evenings, I fervently transcribed those recordings so that we could check back in with them during our next discussion and see if there was anything we had missed or wanted to expand upon. Even so, we managed to miss several rules in our conversations; I blame the aforementioned Ontario summer heat. I discovered these omissions as I began to "code" the inter-views by organizing the transcripts under the headings of the rules. At this point (in June 2014), John and I resumed our inter-view over the phone, Vancouver to Manitoulin Island. These discussions were not audio-recorded but were transcribed, by me, in "real time" and sent to John immediately in order to verify that my note taking hadn't missed any details that were, in his estimation, important. Of course, transcription always transforms a conversation in ways both obvious (from the oral to the written words) and subtle (from the dynamics of a dialogue to a single typist, struggling to select appropriate grammar to accurately reflect pauses, overlapping speech, stammers, etc.). What was important for John and I was not necessarily a precisely "accurate" transcription of our conversation, but that we continued to form and perform the knowledge together, moving from spoken to written conversation (and back again) with one another. Always, written transcriptions became platforms for new conversations, and the cycle repeated (and repeats!) itself. I am sure once John reads this dissertation the fires of conversation – of inter-viewing – will be lit underneath us once more. Rekindling our dialogue is one of the truest ways that this piece of work can succeed, a reality that makes it abundantly clear that, while a significant accomplishment to complete, this dissertation is not a place at which to end. Instead, it is one part of the ongoing journey. No ending in sight, this writing is, itself, a way to begin…

In addition to the expansive time and open-ended, dialogical nature of these discussions with John, what makes them more properly "inter-views" than "interviews" is that they were opportunities for John and I to co-create through in-depth discussion of the clown rules. Through these interviews I was not merely trying to learn what John, an "expert," thought and felt about the clown rules, but rather, together, we aimed to enter a magic space of engagement wherein our experiences of the rules might inform one another and thereby move both of our previously held understandings of the rules. There were moments in our discussions where this happened with startling insights that took us both by surprise. In this way, our inter-view process allowed us to both discuss our individual "knowns" about the rules and also, and more importantly, to go for the unknown.

This approach is in keeping with the idea, expressed by Norris (2009), that data is not collected but rather generated (p. 10). John and I took on the task of viewing the clown rules together. Should this inter-view have been conducted with or by anyone else, the knowledge and data generated would be completely different. Knowledge is thereby acknowledged in the inter-view process as not being a static "thing" that resides within one person, which can be accessed by others. Instead of engaging with knowledge as a state (a noun), we sought knowledge as an activity, a verb, a form of movement. Through our experience of viewing the rules together, John and I were also able to come to view ourselves and each other differently: our identities in relation to one another are therefore open and vulnerable as we engage in the work of inter-viewing. Our process has informed and strengthened our relationship, not only to the clown rules but also to each other.

In addition to the inter-view with John, I also had opportunities throughout the course of my doctoral degree to savour deep clown dialogues with David MacMurray Smith, Ian Wallace, and Karen Hines. Many of these occurred in the context of clown workshops in which I was a student. Opportunities for inter-viewing with Karen and David occurred both within the specifically teaching/learning context of workshops and "after hours" on lawns and in coffee shops. Though I have not had the opportunity (yet) to study in-depth with Ian,[52] I have been fortunate to share meals and ideas with him. Over both a potluck thanksgiving dinner and an afternoon of collaborative writing, Ian and I have inter-viewed

(with) one another. Although these inter-views were even more informal than the one I conducted with John (none of them was even recorded or transcribed), insights from all of these clown teachers have shaped my living inquiry and have deeply informed my understandings of both clown and myself. Further still, they have helped to shape me. Through my work with all of these practitioners/educators I have developed my understanding of dialogue or "inter-viewing" as a specific way of playing within the magic space. I am grateful to all of these practitioner/educators for their support, their passion, their generosity, their insights, and their excitement about my work.

7.4. Teaching as Inquiry

Teacher inquiry has been defined as "the analysis of one's own practice with all the attendant challenges and celebrations associated with such scrutiny" (Clarke & Erickson, 2003, p. 3); "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 23-4); and "reflection-in-action" (Taylor, 1996, p. 27–8). Traditionally, teacher inquiry involves intensive self-study, often taking place over years of teaching practice within a specific educational or classroom environment. Given that I am a teacher but not a *teacher*, such was not the case for me as I explored teaching as a site of inquiry. Instead, my inquiry has led me to understand teaching and learning as perpetually entwined practices: as I have been learning about and transforming into my vision of the clown scholar, I have simultaneously been teaching as I have offered elements of this vision and this practice on to others. Sustained consideration of the ways that I have engaged in a practice of *teaching* has been important in realizing a vision of the clown scholar.

Through my inquiry, I have come to think of teaching and learning as akin to breathing in and breathing out: as processes they are cyclical, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. I give sustained attention to my time as a Sessional instructor here. This attention is intended to reflect my understanding that pedagogical encounters are uniquely invested in both experiences of immanence and experiences of failure. As Stephen Smith (2014) explains in relation to his own somatic research, "the movements of pedagogy are

about trying to sustain such moments as *enduring durations* [emphasis added]" (p. 241). As Sara Jane Bailes (2011) describes in her account of a "poetics of failure," "There's pedagogy in failure – we learn by mistake, by accident, and by getting things wrong" (p. xix-xx). The clown dwells in moments of immanence and shines in moments of failure. It is these conceptions of pedagogy that lead me to highlight my time as a Sessional instructor – a time when I was a *teacher* and I engaged in a sustained and signalled way with pedagogy. However, this emphasis here is not intended to discount or diminish other "educational" and transformative encounters – times when I was a teacher and yet not a *teacher* – that have informed my inquiry and shaped my understanding of the clown scholar.

The unique form of inquiry that I conducted throughout my doctoral journey was an enactment of clowning as an approach in the educational context. As John describes it, the performing clown goes out onto the stage in order to explore what is in her world. She recognizes that the presence of the particular people in this particular audience will necessarily influence her world, even if it is a world that she has played in hundreds of times before. Indeed, even the fact that it is a new day will mean that the world is changed and can be encountered anew. These same principles apply when clowning as an approach is brought into the educational context. In enacting my own practice of teaching-as-clown, I come into teaching encounters in order to explore the world anew: in order to drop my expectations (of "teacher," of "student") and open myself to surprise. The teacher-as-clown goes for the unknown in her teaching as she works to engage with students in an open, honest, two-way conversation. It is through this practice that the teacher-as-clown conducts a unique and perpetual form of inquiry.

It is investment in open, honest, two-way conversation that ensures that the clown's (and the teacher's) inquiry is perpetual – it is an iterative cycle of living, action (-packed) research (Holman Jones, 2008; Meyer, 2010). Otherwise, it would be enough for the clown or the teacher to simply find out what is different and new in the world and then leave. However, for the clown and the teacher it is important that this "going for the unknown" be connected directly to communication (a conversation) with others. Engaging in conversation requires us to do the kind of self-study that is often implied by teacher inquiry. As Bullough

Jr. and Pinnegar (2001) explain, this self-study is not merely biographical but instead focuses on the context of the self *in relation*: "such study does not focus on the self per se but on the space between self and the practice engaged in" (p. 15). Applying a clowning approach to education allows us to see the "practice engaged in" as the ongoing conversation between teachers and learners. It is important to note that one's role within the conversation (i.e., "teacher" or "learner") is also liable to shift. Donald's (2012) call for "more complex understandings of human relationality" in his conception of a form of specifically *ethical* relationality is relevant here; it is these more complex understandings that allow us to "traverse deeply learned divides" (p. 2) including, for example, the divide that separates "teacher" and "student" (or, for that matter, "clown" and "scholar").

7.4.1. Teaching as clown

In her a/r/tographical work in a teacher education program, Kind (2008) explains that her "focus has gradually yet steadily shifted from emphasizing teaching (what the teachers do) to learning (how the teachers respond to what they are presented with through the children)" (p. 172). I experienced a similar shift in my teaching practice, moving me from a focus on *what* the students did to *how* they did it. Indeed, many of the exercises I did with the students are designed to be difficult to consistently "get right." While honing your focus and attention will help you to get better at the exercises, and these are important skills to develop for theatrical engagement, the truth remains that no one ever really masters these exercises: they are challenging for everyone and every time you do them, not in the least because they involve connecting with others and they are therefore highly unpredictable. My interest was therefore not in how objectively "well" the students did with these exercises, but instead simply in how they approached the exercises and, especially, how they approached their ultimate failures in the exercises. Sometimes students would get frustrated and want to give up. However, as the class went on it became more and more common to see students laugh at their failure and ask to try again. Kind (2008) further explains that her

> goal is for teacher's teaching to be transformed. I hope their art/teaching will know the joys and struggles of art making and will bring a life of creative and artistic inquiry to the students they will teach. Yet I don't directly focus on this. (p. 171)

Similarly, it is my goal that students will experience moments of shared vulnerability and co-creation in the magic space; that they will be able to explore multiplicities – both their own and those of others; and that through these opportunities they will be enabled to transgress or get beyond themselves. All of which opens up opportunities for both the students and myself to transcend our previous understandings of theatre, education, and ourselves and, as a consequence, to transform. I model these things and offer invitations to them in the classroom, but I do not speak about them directly. In this way, clowning itself becomes an approach (a how), instead of simply a matter of content (a what), in my teaching.

In addition to my role as a Sessional instructor, I found myself acting pedagogically in a variety of other educational contexts throughout the course of my doctoral program. I provided writing and learning support to both undergraduate and graduate students through my job as a Graduate Writing Facilitator with both the Student Learning Commons and the Research Commons. I also engaged in informal mentorship and peer coaching with other graduate students (particularly for writing and for student leadership in the context of my work with the Graduate Student Society). I actively attended to each of these roles as opportunities to live my inquiries about clowning as an approach to teaching and learning and to perpetually broaden my understanding and appreciation for what the "educational context," and furthermore what "teachers," "clowns," and "scholars," *are*. I was therefore also attentive to what arose during and out of these encounters as potential sources of insight into my questions about clowning, teaching, and scholarly practice.

The experiences that I have had as a teacher/student leader throughout this doctoral degree have been so utterly transformative for me that it is difficult to put them into words. Perhaps all that I have maintained through these experiences are my passions for teaching, for learning, and for making contact with others in ways that are deep and meaningful. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say that literally everything else about the way that I see, think about, experience, and understand the practices of teaching and learning has shifted. In some cases, the changes have been significant and impact me daily as I interact with others and, especially, as I foster consciousness about how I want to teach my son

(who, incidentally, never stops learning). In other cases, the transformations have been smaller, more difficult for me to put my finger on, and yet no less important for all that.

When I contemplate it now, it seems to me that the transformations that I have welcomed through this experience of teaching-as-inquiry have helped me to better live the clown rules. Through my teaching encounters I have felt the power that flows through me when I am deeply invested in what I am sharing with others; I have been challenged by the honesty of others and have been learning to share honestly of myself, especially when doing so is scary; I have had fun *as a conscious practice*; I have appreciated the power of breathing –

breathing in,

breathing with,

breathing through…

allowing breath to truly be inspiration;

I have learned as I breathed in and taught as I breathed out.

I have experienced what it is like to both follow and ignore my impulses and have learned that I am more likely to get into trouble by ignoring them; I have had to drop the script; I have allowed my heart to be witnessed by making contact with others; I have experienced the constant oscillation between listening to myself and listening to others that is true dialogue; I have had to trust and I have had to believe.

7.5. Writing as Inquiry[53]

As I mentioned briefly above, one of the paths that led me to clowning meandered through the territory of improvisation. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that I read SNL cast member Amy Poehler's book, *Yes Please* (2014), during the writing of this dissertation. What is likely more surprising is that Poehler's preface, titled "Writing is Hard," was one of my most important sources of inspiration and support during the final phases of pulling together my first complete draft. In her preface, Poehler (2014) laments the lack of honesty about writing, an activity that she calls out for often being shrouded in romanticism (p. xi-xvi). In answer to her own questions "How do we move forward when we are tired and afraid?" and "What do we do when the voice in our head is yelling that WE ARE NEVER GONNA MAKE IT?" she writes the following:

> Well, the first thing we do is take our brain out and put it in a drawer. Stick it somewhere and let it tantrum until it wears itself out. You may still hear the brain and all the shitty things it is saying to you, but it will be muffled, and just the fact that it is not in your head anymore will make things seem clearer. And then you just do it. You just dig in and write it. You use your body. You lean over the computer and stretch and pace. You write and then cook something and write some more. You put your hand on your heart and feel it beating and decide if what you wrote feels true. You do it because the doing of it is the thing. The doing is the thing. The talking and worrying and thinking is not the thing. That is what I know. Writing the book is about writing the book. (Poehler, 2014, p. xv)

I believe that it is quite possible that in this short paragraph, Poehler has touched on all of the clown rules and has brought them succinctly and clearly into relationship with the task of writing: writing is hard because it asks us to: take risks; to trust and believe (even when we aren't certain and there is a voice inside our head that tells us that it would be wiser not to); to physicalize; to ride the wave; to follow the impulse; to be honest, even if we are writing fiction; to use the gifts from the gods that we are given; to bring our readers into our world and bring them back with a new awareness; and to be vulnerable, checking in with our hearts as a barometer guiding both our honesty and our vulnerability. These are elements of what makes writing hard, just as they are elements of what makes *any* vulnerable, meaningful task hard. They are also elements of what makes such tasks compelling, worthwhile, satisfying,

and, at times, remarkably effortless. Finally, they are elements at the core of clowning and it is the transcendent quality of these things that leads John to remark that anything done in line with the clown rules is the practice of clown and David to remark that we cannot see the clown directly, instead seeing only what it moves.

Given Poehler's insightful preface, it appears that there is little left for me to do in this section. However, I will grant that it may simply be my brain that is telling me that, encouraging me to feel tired and afraid and like I have nothing further to add to the conversation. So, I will heed Poehler's advice and put my brain away in a drawer for awhile so that its doubts might be muffled. After all, as I explained to a group of new graduate students in an "Expectations of Graduate Writing" workshop last week, "writing is hard. And it doesn't stop being hard. You just get better at dealing with it being hard." So, this is me trying to deal with it and move into, rather than avoiding, the challenge.

Throughout the writing of this dissertation I have, to borrow John's phrase, worked to "get my brain out of the way," to let my heart lead me vulnerably into honesty, to remember my writing as an embodied act, and to keep up with the doing, the practice, of writing. As to the latter, I have realized that sometimes the doing of writing *includes* walking away and eating something, getting out in the sunshine, or, as the best option of all, staring into a baby's eyes for an hour…

Or two….

Or maybe three…

The writing of this dissertation was challenging because it was in the writing process that I uncovered the content for my writing. Just as clowning infuses both the form (the practice) and the content of my work, writing represents both process and embodied product for this dissertation.

Authors who write about clowns often reflect on the challenge of discussing them in the written form:

> I would expect to begin with a clear definition of the field of enquiry, but defining what a clown is is not a straightforward matter. Just about everyone has ideas, preconceptions or opinions about clowns. Clowns themselves certainly do. (Davison, 2013, p. 1)

> The very diversity of clown […] makes a comprehensive definition a complicated matter. In fact, it has proven so difficult that most scholars and historians in the field have balked at trying to define clown at all, and confined themselves to describing character traits, or points of similarity from tradition to tradition. (McManus, 2003, p. 11).

The ephemeral and diverse nature of the clown (and of clowning practice) may make it difficult to contain within a written document; however, it is these very aspects of clowning that are deeply resonant with the practice of writing *as a process*, as an action,[54] as a performance. Although you are holding a completed piece of writing in your hands (a product or a "what"), this product is the smallest and least significant part of the role that writing played in my doctoral adventure: it is an artifact, which, at its best, is an "evocative form whose meaning is embodied in the shape expressed" (Eisner, 1981, p. 6). The doing of this writing, the "how" of it, has been far more interesting, enriching, and challenging than can perhaps ever be captured in its final pages. In this way, this dissertation is an enactment of a form of *performative* writing.

7.5.1.   "It is what it is not in itself"[55]

Performative writing[56] chose me as much as, if not more than, I chose it. Given my subject matter, it did not seem to me that I could write in any other way. Or, perhaps more precisely, it felt that any other kind of writing would be disingenuous and misleading, even while at the same time, likely, being easier. According to Pollack's (1998) evocative, metonymic, subjective, nervous, citational, consequential[57] engagement with writing that performs, performative writing is, itself, a kind of clowning. As she describes,

Performative writing is an itinerant in the land of good writing. It travels side by side with normative performances of textuality, sometimes even passing for the 'same,' but always drawing its energy from a critical difference, from the possibility that it may always be otherwise than what it seems. (Pollack, 1998, p. 97)

Performative writing makes contact and finds the possible in the impossible. It invites and provokes the reader. It shifts and changes and transforms. It embraces multiplicity and it multiplies. It plays in spaces previously off-limits – it transgresses. It creates and co-creates. It allows us to "evoke rather than duplicate experience" (Pelias, 2005, p. 421). Performative writing acts. It writes (from) the heart. It expresses vulnerability and it is, itself, vulnerable.

My own performative writing has allowed me to dwell within what Dwight Conquergood (2002) refers to as "a view from the ground level, in the thick of things," celebrating a "way of knowing that is grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection: 'knowing how,' and 'knowing who'" (p. 146). It is writing that brings my friends and teachers along for the ride. It is writing that shifts through the maze of what I have learned, what I have experienced, and my inklings of what I have yet to learn and to experience. Performative writing has taught me to (begin to) accept that writing, perhaps particularly scholarly writing, is one big chance procedure – forever incomplete and partial, incorporating only what has already been stumbled upon. It is writing that holds space open for emergent knowing – the kind of knowing that stems from practice and is therefore ephemeral (Conquergood, 2002, p. 146).

It is writing in practice.

It is writing that is ephemeral.

It is writing that isn't always contained. Isn't always allowed. Isn't always safe.

It is writing that breaks rules.

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This writing finds itself, finds its spark, "beyond the permissible" (Pelias, 2014, p. 35).

For the performative writer – or, at least for me as a performative writer – words are not shackles. Instead, they can become springboards that allow us (both reader and writer) to (temporarily) flip and fly through the air…

Performative writing aims at the "threshold of language" wherein "lies more than words can say" (Smith, 2014, p. 237).

Performative writing focuses on the act of writing as, itself, worthy of consideration: as itself consequential, as itself a knowing (an unknowning), a doing (an undoing), a being (a nonbeing).

It is writing that becomes the content of writing.

It is writing that "allows for productive and creative possibilities in writing performatively about performance matters" (Prendergast, 2015, p. 82).

It is writing that "evokes the spirit of performance" (Pelias, 2005, p. 421).

It is writing that "opens the field of writing to incursion, permeation, multiplicity. It expands the very possibilities for writing to sometimes terrifying proportions" (Pollack, 1998, p. 96).

It is writing that "confounds normative distinctions […] allying itself with logics of possibility" (Pollack, 1998, p. 81).

It is writing that is citational.

It is old.   *It is new.*

It is writing that is both/and.   *It is writing that carves out the challenging space of both/and.*

Continually…

In perpetuity…

It is writing that clowns.

And I am a clown who writes.

Thomas King opens *The Inconvenient Indian* (2012) by saying "One of the difficulties of trying to contain any account of Indians in North America in a volume as modest as this is that it can't be done" (p. xiv). The same can most certainly be said of the clown. I have therefore not even tried to contain the clown (or even an account of the clown) in this dissertation. Instead, I have engaged in a writing practice intended to set the clown free in my life, including in my scholarly practices. Allowing the clown to play in and through my writing is the possibility that I have found in the impossible task of writing about the clown. As a result, my writing has shifted and changed a number of times as I have worked out this dissertation. Some of these changes are likely apparent to you as you read, while others are less easily identified in this final embodied artifact despite the significant role they played in my journey.

Because you are intelligent, discerning, and keen (You are!), you may have already noticed that my writing has shifted throughout this dissertation: it is inconsistent. I want to assure you that this inconsistency is not accidental. Rather, it is a reflection both of my multiplicity and my commitment to action-oriented, performative writing. Furthermore, it is a reflection of the fact that as a clown scholar, I am a clown and I am a scholar. There have been places during this writing where I have been inspired to incorporate poetry and narrative and photographs and dialogue, and there have been other places where a more "straight-forward, to the point, direct" form of expression was fitting for how I wanted to perform my scholarship. Rather than trying to find a middle ground so that the dissertation would read as a cohesive singularity, I have allowed the multiplicity of writings to remain. Writers often talk about the challenge of "finding your writerly voice." Throughout the work (and play) of creating this dissertation, I have discovered that I do not have a writerly voice. Instead, I have writerly voice*s*.

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then I contradict myself,

(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

from *Song of Myself* by Walt Whitman, Verse 51 (as cited in Prendergast, 2014, p. 2)

I have maintained these voices in my writing as a way of honouring my multiplicity – my multiple layers of vulnerability – and of revealing to you, dear reader, the kinds of transformations that have occurred in my thinking and my expression of that thinking throughout this journey. As I understand them, these voices represent boundaries within myself and, therefore, rather than attempting to conceal them, I choose to highlight, play with, blur, and, dare I say it?, transgress and transform them.

7.6.   Writing, Performing, Living, Questing…

Through my inquiry and through the active performing of this writing, I have been transformed. It has been through the doing of this inquiry that I have been able to live into myself as a clown scholar. And it is from my disposition as a clown scholar that I have sought to imbue this work with a life of its own: I breathe myself into these words and I urge them to breathe. I live my life alongside… with… within this document, this embodied artifact. Yes, this is an embodied artifact of my journey, but it is also more. It is a continuance; it is movement forward, movement into the future; it is a connection between you and I; it is a magic space; it is a moment in which we can inter-view, inter-see; it is a possibility, perhaps one I have not yet even imagined. I think of that as-yet-unimagined possibility, the seed planted deep within these pages, and I smile – dreaming of what has not yet been and may still be. Thank you for being here with me, dear reader. You dream me into being. You create the magic space with me. You carry me alongside… with… within you. You give me new life, new possibilities. And you help propel me ever-onward toward my embodied vision: to be a clown scholar; to clown; to inquire; to write; to perform; to live; to breathe; to question; to seek; to quest; to transform.

I value Maxine Greene's (1995) conceptualization of her own writing process as the stages of a quest. At first, it wasn't clear to me why I wanted to talk about my writing as an adventure, I simply knew that it felt "right." Perhaps initially I simply wanted to convince myself that dissertation writing could be exciting and exhilarating, like an adventure, rather than simply seeming like a daunting task that loomed endlessly on the "to-do list." I re-read the opening to Greene's *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) when I probably *should* have been

writing. While reading it, however, I suddenly understood that I have conceived of my writing as an adventure because this conceptualization allows me to not only accept but actually celebrate and embrace the conflicts, challenges, and pitfalls that accompany writing – making these "failures" lighter for myself.[58] Like the clown performer learning to see a prop misfire as a "gift from the gods," I have come to understand that writing, like any adventure, is bland and hardly even worth pursuing if there are no conflicts or challenges to be overcome, no dragons to be slayed, tamed, or befriended. What is now clear to me is that I can continue to create, explore, and transgress the boundaries of myself endlessly. There will be, can be, no end to my ability to create, and re-create, and move beyond myself, just as there is no end to my learning. Furthermore, embracing the perpetually open possibilities of myself is both my quest and the clown spirit who dwells within me. I have come to this recognition through my writing – a writing practice that has been performative, that has lived with(in) me and that I have lived my way into, that has been autobiographical, and that has been an adventure. There is still a lot of writing left to do, but I can sense that this particular adventure is wrapping up, coming to a close. And yet, the living quest continues – a flame that now dances within me, a restless clown who perpetually asks "what next?"

I understand the intersection between my life and my writing in this living/performative/autobiographical/lifewriting inquiry as being a central way that I enact the heart-to-heart vulnerability of the clown within these pages. Describing the details of the adventures that I have encountered throughout this journey is, I believe, the written equivalent of the clown bearing her heart on her face in the form of the red nose. I present myself here not as an anonymous researcher, but as a specific person who has had particular experiences (including both successes and failures) in the course of creating this piece of scholarship. I bring these experiences forward here as an invitation to you to engage with my vulnerability and, furthermore, to engage vulnerably with me. I invite you to consider your own living experiences and how they intersect with and diverge from mine. I invite you to come, wide-awake (Greene), to your own living experiences as you encounter these words. It is precisely by engaging together in such a way that we might open a magic space between us. Within the magic space, the dissertation as a static, bounded document can be

transgressed in order to become a co-creation of our lived experiences: this document can unbind itself.

Of course, I am not the first person to consider writing and inquiry as living practices. Indeed, such a perspective has been expressed throughout several bodies of literature, including in performative writing (see citations in the previous subsection), lifewriting (see, for example, Leggo, 2010), living inquiry (see, for example, Meyer, 2010), autobiographical writing (see, for example, Henderson, 2001), and literary métissage (see, for example, Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo, 2009), to name only a few. In her article *Living Inquiry: Me, My Self, and Other* (2010), Karen Meyer discusses the situatedness of living inquiry in the world of experiences and within encounters between selves and others. She draws on Kohák to express living inquiry as an opportunity to "look to experience with a fresh eye" (Meyer, 2010, p. 86). Meyer envisions this capacity of living inquiry not only as an opportunity for teacher research, but also as a responsibility that teachers have towards their students. She explains that teachers are not only entrusted with introducing students to new aspects of the world that they may not yet have encountered, but also with protecting students' ability to imagine the world in ways that perhaps no one has yet encountered (Meyer, 2010, p. 88). This protection, it strikes me, arises from the love that Arendt (1961) encourages us to have for our children, so that they might be enabled to renew the world. It is this protection – this love – that allows children (and the child within each of us) to transgress and transform: to seek out and create new possibilities.

Leggo (2010) reminds me of the perhaps self-evident, yet often overlooked point that lifewriting is not merely about writing but is also about life – it is a way of "living in the world" (p. 68). Lifewriting is therefore a practice that lives alongside… with… within us both when we are writing and when we are not. Or, expressed differently, lifewriting is a practice that allows us to consider that we are *always* writing and *always* being written into being. Henderson (2001) understands autobiographical inquiry in a similar way – as a living into experience, rather than simply a documenting of experience. He explains that autobiography is not a recounting of ourselves, our lives, and experiences but is rather an *encountering* of ourselves, our lives, and experiences: "By traveling this road of self-exploration,

you will awaken the poetry within you. You will begin to construct your identity and your life story around your noblest aspirations" (Henderson, 2001, p. 143). Henderson presents the context of autobiographical inquiry as a way of coming to know ourselves and deepen our practices. Given the infinitely multiple possibilities that exist for each one of us, coming to know ourselves autobiographically is both a crucial and a perpetual quest. This point is further reinforced by Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, and Leggo (2009) who argue that autobiographical writing is a significant curricular practice not because it documents who we are or who we have been but because it allows others to recognize "who we are becoming" in our moments of encounter (p. 33). In keeping with these understandings, this writing is autobiographical not in that it provides an account of my life (though at times it does), but rather in that it has allowed me to live into, experience, reflect upon, and deepen both my clowning and my scholarly practices. This inquiry has involved me in the experience of creating a forward moving autobiography, one that asks me to live into my identity, life story, and noblest aspirations as a clown scholar.

A clown scholar is not something that I could simply claim to be. Instead, it is an identity that I had to become through this inquiry. It is the journey of living into this inquiry that has given me the "fresh eyes" (Meyer, 2010) that I required in order to become a clown scholar. And living into this identity has given me many beautiful gifts: becoming a clown scholar has allowed me to "perform at (at least) two levels simultaneously" (as does the clown on the high-wire) and to see with many eyes; becoming a clown scholar has taught me to approach the world with loving seriousness (and with serious love) in order to appreciate the many possibilities it has to offer; becoming a clown scholar has required that I live my vision of clowning and of scholarly practice *and* that I envision my life as a clown and a scholar; becoming a clown scholar has demonstrated for me that clown and scholarly practices are no longer divisible for me. Instead, they are a conjoined multiplicity. Perhaps most of all, however, becoming a clown scholar has revealed for me that, while clowning and scholarship may be things that I *do*, "clown scholar" is who I *am*.

"Clown scholar" is an identity and a title that I rather like (I should hope so, since I made it up). And yet, I remain an itinerant traveler of inquiry. You see, it is precisely as a clown scholar that I am unable to sit still within that identity… or any other for that matter. There are too many tantalizing possibilities within this moment of immanence – possibilities that are crying out for inquiry, for consideration, for recognition, for a little bit of play… The next moment has already arrived. And the next. And the next.andthenextandthenext. And the impulses are coming rapid fire. I have to pay attention or I might miss out. This writing – these words – are the artifact, the art, that the clown scholar wanted you to find. Yet…

now it is time to keep moving.

now is the time for more living.

now is the moment of immanence.

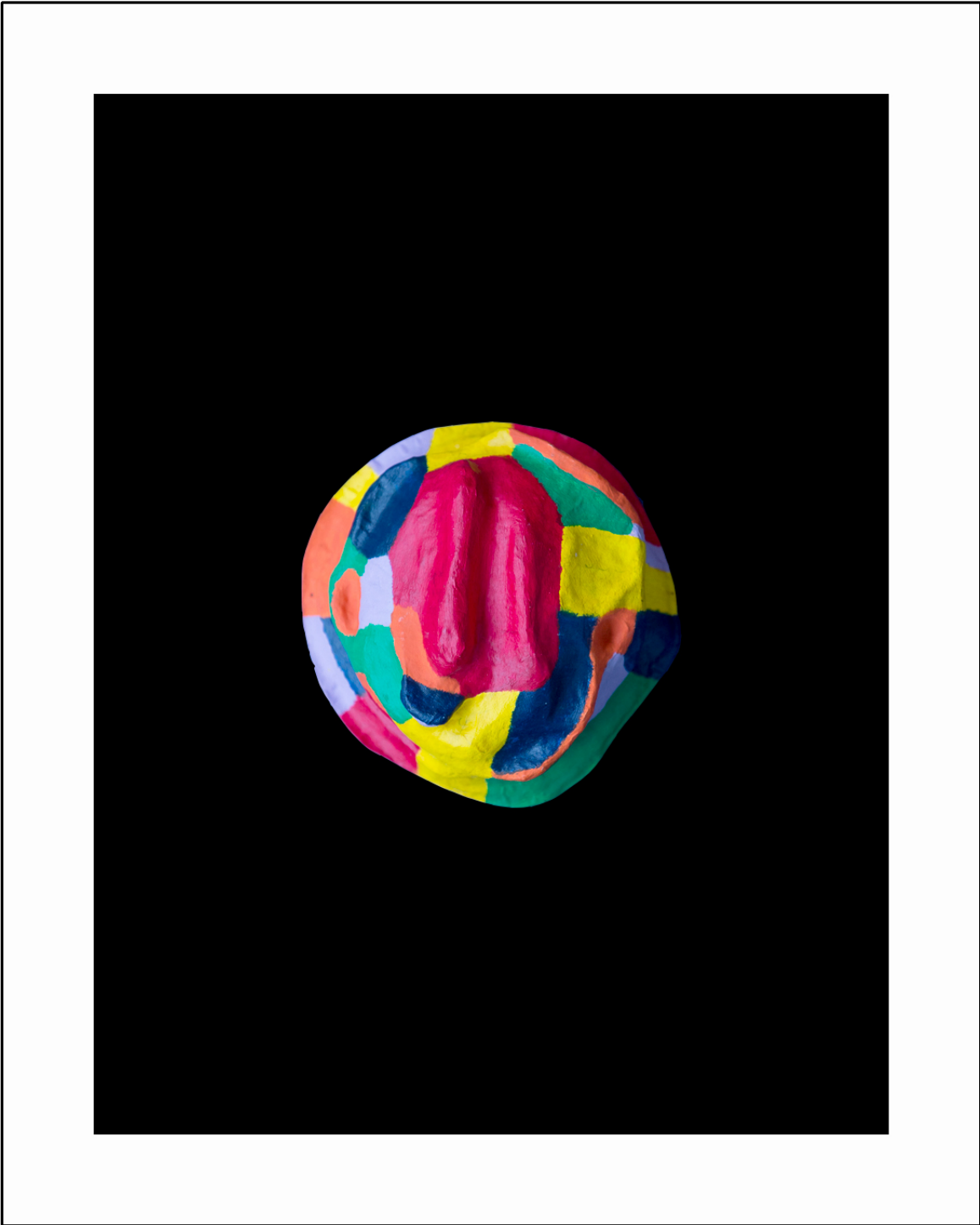*now for more transgression.*

now for another transformation.

now into the next possibility.

Here's to the clown.

Here's to the scholar.

And here is the clown scholar perpetually clowning scholarship.

"Ethics" Mask

Chapter 8.

A moment to look back on the journey we've taken together

> *Liking to find, to write beginnings, [s]he tends to multiply this pleasure: that is why [s]he writes fragments: so many fragments, so many beginnings, so many pleasures (but [s]he doesn't like the ends: the risk of rhetorical clausule is too great: the fear of not being able to resist the* last word*). (Barthes, 1977, p. 144)*

This work has truly come to feel like a Möbius strip, as the personally transformative journey that I have taken has seamlessly informed and created that which I have to offer at this moment of pause in the journey itself. At core, the transformation that I have experienced has arisen from my twofold dedication to spiraling into my work and engaging in this work in ways that are revelatory, both to me and of me. This dedication has facilitated a shift in my focus: from externally driven conventional research, to internally driven inquiry. For me, inquiry has become a way of ensuring that my scholarly and clowning practices are rooted deeply within myself – within my heart, my multiplicity, and my vulnerability – in order that they might reveal aspects of myself that can serve as an invitation toward connection with others. This commitment to inquiry has allowed me to transgress boundaries and expectations: both those that others suggested to and for me, and, more importantly, those that I, myself, had unwittingly erected between my scholarly and clowning practices. From where I stand in this moment, it is clear that the transgression of those internal boundaries has best facilitated my process of transformation and has offered me countless insights into scholarly practice, clowning, and, particularly, the possibilities of connection between the two. Through this transformation, I have learned to approach each aspect of my practice more fully, more wholly, as well as with more heart and deeper vulnerability. It is therefore through my practice of transgressive and spiraling inquiry that I feel I have been able to live into myself and to transformatively clown my scholarship.

8.1.   So What? An In/Conclusion

Many recent scholars have become suspicious of, or perhaps disillusioned with, the conventional academic conclusion – the one that neatly summarizes everything that has been discussed and clearly outlines for the reader what s/he should be taking from the overall piece. For me, as I suspect is the case for many others, this suspicion is not really the result of questioning the value of such a conclusion, per se, but rather the result of the connotation of the term "conclusion" itself, rife as it is with associations to finality and settlement. The value of this work cannot be concluded within the pages themselves because this work is a living practice of open possibilities – and those possibilities do not live on the page. Instead, the practice of possibilities is created through our experiences and encounters and, as such, cannot be "concluded" – finalized, settled, presented in its totality – within this writing. And yet, even if it cannot be concluded, every piece of writing must end *somehow*. This piece of writing will end like this (bear with me, there are still thirty or so pages left to go):

"There is nothing new under the sun," or so it is often said. I just looked that quotation up and learned that it is actually from the Bible and that the full quotation is as follows: "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9). I began this doctoral journey with questions about how we – as people/communities/societies/cultures – teach, learn, grow, and *change*. Questions about the possibility for wide-scale social change have become ever more prevalent and more pressing in the face of what appear to be increasingly complex social justice, environmental, and economic issues in our world. Indeed, as Deanna L. Fassett (2006) suggests, students (of all ages) lament "how hard it is to change the world" and conversations about "how our action – and how our inaction – makes that change possible" (p. 110) are experienced by many as central educational imperatives in the contemporary classroom. In this context, I find it fascinating to reflect on the fact that a text that has changed the world as decisively as the Bible contains this statement about the impossibility of "newness" in our world.

Upon first reading, I was demoralized by this statement. I read it as a decree that human beings are bound to a cycle wherein we repeat our previous follies with no hope for novelty, creativity, or change. Upon further reflection, however, I considered another perspective: throughout this inquiry, I frequently came upon ideas from scholars that resonated at the core of my understanding of clowning, and its value in an educational context oriented towards creating change. My reaction to these points of resonance was not to become dispirited and think "oh no, my ideas are not new, which must mean that they aren't creative and won't facilitate change." Instead, I was bolstered by the connections – I felt empowered, validated, and, perhaps most significantly, I felt part of a community.

Through my encounters with the resonant scholarship of others, I began to develop an understanding and appreciation for the idea that "there is nothing new under the sun." Rather than seeing this as a declaration of the impossibility for change, I began to see within this statement the ever-present possibility for connection – for our ideas, perspectives, and practices to connect with those of others who have come before us. Furthermore, I began to understand that something does not have to be *new* in order to be creative and different. Nor does something need to be *new* in order to produce change. While it may well be that "what has been will be again, what has been done will be done again," this reality does not by necessity mean that we are doomed to a repetitive cycle that perpetually leads to the same place because, when we "do it again," the actors and the context will inevitably have shifted. This shifting creates the possibility that we can, as Pollack (1998) describes, "repeat with a vengeance, making repetition stumble, stutter, driving a wedge into the practices of re/turn (between turn and return), thus at least promising repetition with a *difference*" (p. 92). Therefore, within this very promise of repetition lies the possibility for change – the opportunity to "put impossibility aside" and better appreciate the possibility that lies at the heart of any challenge. Here, an appreciation for the connection that my work shares with the work of other scholars throughout history has allowed me to put aside the impossibility of change that I felt was implied by a lack of "newness" in the world in order to appreciate that the opportunity of repetition implies its own form of possibility.

Neither clowning, nor the approach that it implies for scholarly practice, are new. Clowning – as an art-form and a cultural practice – is as old as humanity itself. The value that clowning can bring to a scholarly context that is concerned with personal/communal/social/ cultural change is, at its core, the same value that educational scholars have been articulating and calling for from the earliest attempts to discuss how we teach and learn, and how we might do each better. That is, clowning is a practice that connects us directly with the core of education when education is understood as that which allows us to develop as individuals, within the context of a community. Clowning resonates with scholarly and educational practices wherein inquiry and questioning are valued (beyond resolution and "answers") as ways of being able to attend to our living experiences and come to more actively choose and create our realities. While neither clowning nor such approaches to educational and scholarly practices are new, what is more novel is discussing them together. It is clear that while such educational and scholarly approaches have been articulated and even, in some cases, extensively discussed and applied, their possibilities are far from being exhausted. There remain many educational contexts in which other considerations – for example, funding, test scores, standardization, behavioural "issues," public/private partnerships, publication quotas, and even the looming threat of violence – have, rightly or wrongly, taken precedence. It is my hope that bringing existing scholarly, educational, and clown practices together can spur a repetition – a "doing again" – that, through the incorporation of a different perspective, can encourage us to learn, grow, and change as people/communities/societies/cultures. Thus, perhaps one answer to my initial question is that we change not by finding something completely new to do, but instead by seeking connections between all that is "old under the sun" so that when "what has been" comes around again, we can greet it not with our old habits, but instead as people who are wide-awake, ready to choose, and eager for the possibility of transformation.

8.2. So, How?

How can clowning and scholarly practice complement each other in order to facilitate this form of heightened awareness?

First of all, I want to reinforce that my interest is in the mutual benefits that clowning and educational/scholarly practice can offer to each other. Given that clowning is my primary artistic practice, it is often easier for me to focus on how an approach informed by clowning can benefit the educational/scholarly context than vice versa. However, as a clown, I have a deep-seated concern with some of the ways that the training, art, and practice of clowning are being taken up in the contemporary context.

It appears that we are in the midst of a resurgence of interest in clown training within Canada. While there is tremendous possibility for good from this resurgence, it is also important to consider its roots. Many people appear to be attracted to clowning as a form of self-healing or even therapy. While some clown teachers (such as David MacMurray Smith) do have a background in expressive arts therapy and may well draw on this background in their clown teaching, most who I have encountered encourage students to understand that the work is "therapeutic, but not therapy" and actively resist being cast in the role of therapist or "saviour." When people are attracted to clowning as a form of therapy, it is worthwhile to consider Greene's (1978) "suspicion"

> that persons who choose to exist 'beyond the wasteland' actually do find non-cognitive (or sub-cognitive) processes more enticing than reflective thought. Many talk as if self-awareness is an achievement, self-justifying, or curative in its own right. Those who participate in sensitivity training or other new kinds of 'therapy' [clowning could be included here] are likely to become inattentive to social realities – about which, they feel, they can do nothing anyway. Nothing seems more remote from their attention than the kind of knowing called *praxis*, a type of radical and participant knowing oriented to transforming the world. (p. 13)

I have, indeed, witnessed many people who continue with their clown training and performance practices for the two reasons that Greene identifies above: firstly, they understand self-awareness/self-exploration to be their primary (or perhaps even sole) obligations, and secondly, they understand clowning to be the antithesis to the kind of conventional "scientific" inquiry to which they have been exposed throughout their lives, in many cases, especially through their schooling. In the latter circumstance, there is a tendency to completely reject "rational" or "reflective" thought, in favour of what is understood as creativity (or what Greene is calling "non-cognitive" or "sub-cognitive" processes). My concern is that these "clown" practitioners continue to engage in either/or thinking, pitting different forms of inquiry against one another, rather than understanding, through the clown's both/and logic, that all approaches to inquiry can inform and enrich one another. Furthermore, when people isolate the self-awareness/self-exploration aspects of clowning from the understanding that the clown exists in a magic space of co-creation (i.e., in community with others), not only is the possibility for true clowning lost, but also participants may begin a process of self-centered naval-gazing that can actually serve to isolate them from community. Within the magic space, however, clowning can engage precisely the kind of praxis for which Greene (1978) calls out and can facilitate a radical transformation of the world through the opening up of previously unconsidered possibilities.

The value of connecting clowning and education for the world of clowning is, therefore, that it pushes us (as clown students, clown teachers, and clown practitioners) to ask questions about how our clowning practice is connected to the ways that people (ourselves included)/communities/societies/cultures teach, learn, grow, and change. This question not only perpetually orients us towards inquiry (both rational and "non-cognitive") about ourselves *and* others, but also connects us directly with many facets of the historical clown tradition. Therein, clowns across cultures have undertaken their antics in order to push themselves and others towards increased awareness and perhaps even overarching socio-cultural change. Consideration of this broad educational perspective therefore has the capacity to both challenge some of the more disturbing elements of attraction to clowning as a practice, and also to enrich the clowning (including training, performance, and ongoing praxis) in which we ultimately engage.

Perhaps one of the most significant factors to take into consideration when asking how clowning can complement educational/scholarly pursuits is that there is an undeniable *appeal* to clowning. Okay, so perhaps this appeal isn't entirely undeniable, but throughout the years that I have already dedicated to this scholarly journey, it has become undeniable *to me* that clowning intrigues people. Although responses varied, I don't think there was a single occasion on which the revelation of my research focus evoked indifference from others. Shock? Yes. Curiosity? Yes. Disbelief? Yes. Amusement? Yes. Even horror? Yes. But disinterest? No. Clowning is fascinating, it is edgy, it can even be dangerous; the simple mention of the word "clown" often evokes extreme feeling in people. Clowning can be fun and funny, it can be profoundly emotional, it can be deeply disturbing. But, regardless of the specifics of the reactions and/or associations that one has with clowning, there is something about it that we seem to find hard to resist (even when we know nothing about it). The depth of this appeal can be quite useful in a discussion about educational/scholarly application.

There can be an intimidation factor associated with many forms of art, with self-reflection, and with "the academy" – people often feel disconnected, disempowered, nervous, or simply like "they *can't* do that" when they are presented with an opportunity to engage in art or to delve into an "academic" discussion. Such is also often the case when we are presented with the opportunity to consider how we might create change in the world. Given these factors of intimidation, the appeal of clowning can allow for a useful "way in" to these challenging areas. Presenting the clown or the practice of clowning can allow us to evoke people's curiosity, even if the curiosity might, on the surface, seem hostile, as in the perspective "are you serious? How could clowning possibly help me teach better/change the world/connect with art? These things are *important* and clowning is just *frivolous*!" Such expressions of disbelief can actually provide a useful way into inquiry if they are simply taken at face value, as questions worthy of true consideration:

Can clowning help us teach better/change the world/connect with art?

Let's find out!

That being said, we can make use of clowning as an approach (a *how*) in our scholarly and educational contexts without ever using the word "clown" explicitly. While such an approach will forgo the value of curiosity and fascination that I have just described, it will also side step some of the controversy and misunderstanding that can be bred through associations with the word clown. Indeed, even some performers who are trained as clowns avoid using the word in their promotional materials because the fascination that it holds can, at times, be misleading or counter-productive. Yet, explicit mention of clowning is not a requirement for an approach informed by clowning to infuse our educational contexts. As Anderson (2006) came to realize as she struggled to incorporate her spirituality into her teaching practice,

> good teaching involves letting your life speak, that who you are as a person comes through how you act. If we understand ourselves well (including our motivations and joys), then our outward work will project that inner integrity. In my teaching, then, I hope that the spiritual grounding I experience in gardening will keep me centered, and help me be open to students' own experiences of spirit even if they come through different channels than mine. (p. 212)

Even without using the word "clown," the underlying principles of clowning motivate us to "understand ourselves well" and to bring that which centers us (or "gets us off"), vulnerably, into our educational encounters so that they might connect us deeply with others, allowing us to co-create with them. Furthermore, the clown imperative to have fun *should* result in an educational approach that is appealing and energizing, even in the face of work (such as changing the world or even ourselves) that might otherwise seem overwhelming. None of these benefits of clowning as an educational/scholarly approach necessitate specific reference to clowning as a practice. Earlier I mentioned the tombstone of the circus clown William Wallet, which reads "to have known him was in itself a liberal education" (Towsen, 1976, p. 196). Just as Anderson reflects on "letting your life speak" (2006, p. 212), the educational/scholarly possibilities of clowning can *exude* from those of us who live our practices, without us ever having to mention those practices explicitly; it was in such an unspoken way that Wallet's friends received a liberal education, simply by having known him.

Greene (1978) urges that "Situations must exist or be created that will permit the release of individual capacities, that will permit persons to identify themselves" (p. 153). Indeed, she feels that such self-identification and self-creation through action are core to establishing "wide-awakeness" and, given that wide-awakeness is essential to leading a moral life, must be the central pursuit of education (1978). It is in response to this call that I suggest clowning as an approach to educational contexts, including the scholarly context, as I believe that clowning represents one such "situation." I am not alone. Indeed, it seems as though there is increasing interest in the scholarly discussion concerning clowning as an approach or application for inquiry, teaching, and learning. Butler's 2012 article "*Everything Seemed New": Clown as Embodied Critical Pedagogy* is the most explicit example of a scholar articulating the value of clowning as a form of pedagogical engagement. In this article Butler (2012) states

> Through the use of 'clown logic' to negotiate or subvert arbitrary rules, the clown reveals the very arbitrary nature of rules in general, and implicitly destabilizes the prevailing values and social norms that established those rules in the first place. (p. 66)

The clown's revelation of the arbitrary nature of rules is precisely what allows for the release of individual capacities and self-identification that Greene has called for. When we are no longer tightly bound by rules that seek to define us externally, we are able to identify and create ourselves, in large part through the educational encounters that help us to learn, grow, and change. Furthermore, the clown's destabilization of prevailing values and norms supports us to not only identify ourselves but also come to see ourselves in relation to a socio-cultural context on which we can have a genuine impact. Belief in this possibility of impact is, in my reading, the key to living Greene's form of wide-awakeness – an approach to living that allows us to actively choose and create ourselves and, as a direct consequence, our realities.

Clowning as an approach has already been fruitfully applied in a variety of contexts beyond the stage and circus arena where one might generally expect to find "the clown:" in hospitals (see "Fools for Health," http://web2.uwindsor.ca/fools_for_health/index.html, among others), war-zones (see *Don't Shoot the Clowns* (2006) by Jo Wilding), developing

nations (See "Clowns Without Borders," http://www.clownswithoutborders.org/), churches (see *Serious Play* (2009) by Louise Peacock for historical and contemporary examples), and world summits (see Jon Davison's (2013) discussion of "The World Parliament of Clowns" beginning on page 304 of *Clown*). In each of these settings and more clowns have demonstrated that this practice has an applicability and a value that extends far beyond the realms of performance and entertainment. This value is not insignificant, given that there is often considered to be a tension between education and entertainment. As Ron Scapp explains in hooks' *Teaching to Transgress* (1994)

> Pleasure in the classroom is feared. If there is laughter, a reciprocal exchange may be taking place. You're laughing, the students are laughing, and someone walks by, looks in and says 'OK, you're able to make them laugh. But so what? Anyone can entertain.' They take this attitude because the idea of reciprocity, of respect, is not ever assumed. It is not assumed that your ideas can be entertaining, moving. To prove your academic seriousness, students should be almost dead, quiet, asleep, not up, excited, and buzzing, lingering around the classroom. (p. 145)

Such a "fear of pleasure" in the classroom can represent a hurtle to appreciating the value of clowning – long associated with humour and "simple" entertainment – in the educational context. While the notion that "anyone can entertain" is itself pejorative (discounting, as it does, the serious commitment, artistry, and craft that entertainers of all stripes dedicate to their work), the presence of clowns in hospitals is helpful for illuminating why clowning should not be considered simply for its "entertainment" value.

Clowns in hospital wards are often associated with children and with an understanding that "laughter is the best medicine," or that having some pleasure and "entertainment" will help to distract patients from their illnesses (and, perhaps, physical symptoms of pain) which will, in turn, help them to heal. However, this association presents only a surface understanding of the value of clowning. Indeed, Patch Adams (arguably the most famous hospital clown) has explicitly denounced such a surface view, including its famous catch phrase:

I would never agree laughter is the best medicine, I've never said it. Friendship is clearly the best medicine, friendship is the most important thing in life, our relationships with those we love. And so, unfortunately the media being the way it is, long before they meet me, they had the idea laughter is the best medicine and so when they write the article they just put this phrase in there because they are actually not thinking. (2007, n.p.)

As is clear from his emphasis on friendship, Adams' commitment is to connection and to an empathetic model of medical care, rather than to the laughter and "entertainment" frequently associated with clowning. Furthermore, it is Adams' clown logic that helps him to understand the transgressive, and yet common sense, idea that dying people are, in fact, *living* people and wish to be treated as such (Adams, 1993, p. 81). This commitment to connection and to a movement beyond prevailing norms for interacting with the ill have little, if anything, to do with entertainment. And yet, they have everything to do with the practice of clowning and the value of its application in the hospital context.

While clowning as an approach can contribute to the "up, excited, buzzing" and entertaining classroom context that Scapp describes, these are likely not the most important contributions that clowning can make. Similarly, while Patch Adams may make his patients laugh, the value of his humour is not more significant than the value of his commitment to empathetic care and human connection with the profoundly ill. What is perhaps most significant to consider is that clowning as an approach does not force an either/or: it does not suggest that education/scholarly practice (or hospital care) must be serious *or* entertaining. Instead, clowning as an approach allows us to appreciate that while entertainment may not be the most important aspect of education, it can be a tool that helps us to build those aspects of education and scholarly practice that we consider to be of more significance or value. As I have suggested throughout this work, the educational aspects that clowning is equipped to most effectively reinforce are the recognition of personal empowerment through vulnerability, the magical ability to connect and co-create, the revelation of multiplicity, and a capacity for "moving beyond" or "enlarging the space of the possible" (Sumara & Davis, 1997). When we combine these gifts with a lovingly serious (or seriously loving) approach to the world, we become able to live into the endless realm of possibilities, a realm in which we perpetually inquire and transform.

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Clown actions can, at times, be deceptively simple (consider, for example, the stereotypical clown actions of slipping and falling on a banana peel or stepping on a rake). What is significant about these clown performances is not the actions themselves, but what they reveal. Such clown actions are done in the service of revealing something about the vulnerability of the clown performer and this revelation, in turn, is intended to facilitate connection with the vulnerability of those who are watching. When this heart-to-heart, vulnerable connection is established, a magic space is opened that allows for co-creation between the clown and those watching. This co-creation, in turn, allows for a transgression of boundaries, both the boundaries that exist between us and the boundaries of our every day habitual lives, or what we are able to do/be in isolation from one another. The approach of clowning applied to the educational/scholarly context allows us to understand that, similarly, it is not the complexity of what we teach, but rather the complexity that we make space for through our teaching, that is important. Clowning as an approach to the educational and scholarly contexts encourages us to understand that the content/lesson-plan/curricula of our teaching may be deceptively simple and that this is actually a good thing, if our teaching is able to reveal the empowerment of personal vulnerability, connect us deeply to one another so that we might co-create together, reinforce the existence of multiplicities that require us to engage with perpetual inquiry (rather than being satisfied with resolutions and "answers"), and move beyond ourselves and the places where we have been before.

So, how can clowning and education/scholarly practice compliment each other? By recognizing that there is a pedagogical approach unique to clowning and that, by accepting the invitations that such an approach makes to us, we can move both clowning and education/scholarly practice towards their highest potential for fostering learning, growth, and change amongst people/communities/societies/cultures. By drawing on the appeal/curiosity evoked by clowning in order to help overcome the intimidation and overwhelming feelings that are sometimes associated with art-making, education/scholarship/"academics," and the fostering of change. By making use of the clown capacity to "negotiate or subvert arbitrary rules" in order to foster increased awareness, self-reflection, self-creation, action, "wide-awakeness" (Greene), and transformation. By embracing the entertaining qualities of

clowning in order to allow education to escape the binary of being "either serious or entertaining/exciting" and instead allowing it to be both/and. And by, at times, allowing the content (the what) of education to be deceptively simple in order to foster an approach (the how) that is personal, vulnerable, co-creative, multiple, and transgressive.

8.3. So, Who?

Who can clown? Who can apply clowning in education/scholarly practice?

There is a prevailing cultural perception that if you put a red nose on someone, that person is a clown. For example, when the founder of *Cirque du Soleil*, Guy Laliberté, traveled into outer space, he handed out foam red noses to all those aboard the space craft. This action sparked many to publish articles with headlines that read, "clowns in space," rather than merely "people wearing red noses in space." While this perception diminishes both the art and the craft of clowning to a simple costume piece, it also perhaps taps into a fundamental belief shared by many clowns (including Richard Pochinko) that all people have a clown force or spirit inside of them that can be tapped into. Or the notion, expounded by John Turner, that human beings are conduits for the clown energy that exists, perpetually and abundantly, in the universe. From the former perspective, clown training is not about creating clowns but rather about revealing the clowns that already exist within us. From the latter perspective, clown training is best understood as preparation to sense and connect with clown energy, becoming available to it as a conduit. There is a sense of universal accessibility implied by both of these perspectives: either we all have an in-born clown force or spirit within us, or we all have the capacity to act as a conduit for the clown energy that swirls perpetually around us. Both perspectives are lent credence by the fact that many of the world's most admired clowns had no training to speak of. Take, for example, both Charlie Chaplin and Joseph Grimaldi (the most famous English pantomime clown, because of whom the term "Joey" is still used to describe a particular type of clowning); although both were born to performer parents and thus grew up in the theatre, neither received any formal theatrical training, let alone clown-specific training. Yet, there is some debate and even tension regarding the relative accessibility of clowning as a practice and an art form.

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As scholarly interest in the application of clowning in the educational context has increased, so too has discussion of clowning's accessibility. Butler (2012) takes a clear position on this issue, stating,

> Rather than subscribe to the notion that clowning requires a certain degree of mastery or virtuosity acquired at the end of a long period of theatrical training, I instead maintain that by locating clowning in the authentic body, or framing the clown as self, we actually render it vastly accessible. (p. 63)

Education scholar Julie Salverson (2009) concurs. Although she acknowledges that clowning is saved for the final stage of training in both Lecoq and Gaulier's schools, she takes the position that "this approach to clown has tremendous potential with *untrained* [emphasis added] people of all ages" (Salverson, 2009, p. 40). Both Butler and Salverson seem to suggest that while there is value to be taken from clown training, rigorous and in-depth training is not, itself, a necessary pre-requisite for an experience of or connection with clowning. For Butler, clown's accessibility is rooted in understanding clowning as an embodied practice that is primarily oriented towards self-discovery. For Salverson (2006) theatrical clown exercises can be employed in work related to witnessing and testimony as ways of overcoming what she describes as "the victim/hero polarities" and "the tragic appropriations of pain" (p. 155). Indeed, for Salverson, the distinct ways that clowning and (unintentional) melodrama illuminated her students' inexperience were critical. In the latter case, performances became "'weighted with worthiness,'" making them exhausting for both performers and audience members (Salverson, 2009, p. 36). In contrast, performances informed by and infused with clowning revealed the tension between students' "desire and conviction to tell the story" and their "awkwardness and inexperience" (Salverson, 2009, p. 37). Rather than create a sense of dis-ease amongst the audience, as did the unintentionally sentimental and melodramatic performances, this juxtaposition allowed the audience to acknowledge their own failings, appreciate the students' bravery, and love them for trying, despite the threat of failure (Salverson, 2009, p. 37). For Salverson (2009) in her work, clowning is therefore not only itself accessible, but it also renders the challenging tasks of witnessing and performing testimony more accessible: "This ability to fail and still try, not with resignation but with pleasure, is important to the context of witnessing testimony" (p. 37). Through the clowning approach, Salverson's students were therefore able to make

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witnessing (and their failures in witnessing) "lighter" for both themselves and their audiences.

In contrast, many have expressed concern over an increasing interest in clowning that is not paralleled by increased training and professionalization. Hospital clowning is one avenue where the question of clown's accessibility has sparked particular controversy. While some hospital clown programs are primarily made up of volunteers (who may or may not have any actual clown training), others are moving towards increased professionalization. *Pallapupas*, a Barcelona based group of hospital clowns, expresses that just as hospitals do not employ "volunteer doctors," there should be no "volunteer clowns" either: "The craft of clown is a profession which, like many others, requires many years of study" (2011). The concern in the hospital setting is that, whereas professional therapeutic clowns may be

> respected complimentary care providers who are able to articulate their role in the care of the patients as integral members of the health care team," well-intentioned volunteers "may be simply dressed-up people with little training and less understanding of the role and potential of the therapeutic clown. (Koller & Gryski, 2007)

While the context of care may elevate the stakes of this discussion for therapeutic clowns, this is far from the only area where conversations about clown training, accessibility, and professionalization have become significant.

In the context of art and performance, for example, Barnaby King (2013b) challenges Butler's "democratization of clowning as something that 'anyone, regardless of age or experience, is quite capable of participating in' (63)" by suggesting that this approach "deemphasizes the training and experience necessary to turn clowning from simply a playful state into a transformative social tool" (p. 123). He further argues that Butler's (2012) focus on the revelation of an "authentic" self "tends to reproduce the anti-theatrical prejudice that draws a value-laden distinction between the authentic and the artificial" (King, 2013b, p. 123), such as in the differentiation of "theatre" and "the real world." He continues to theorize that even that which is understood to be authentic can only come to be understood as such through "the performative reiterations of social behavior" (King, 2013b, p. 123), thereby calling the very possibility of the concept of "authenticity" into question. Fostering

recognition of these reiterations of social behaviours, Butler and King agree, is one of the central purviews of the clown. Thus, King suggests that the very practice of clowning is antithetical to Butler's depiction of an "authentic self" that makes clowning accessible.

In discussions about the accessibility of clowning as a practice I take a position that falls somewhere between Butler, Salverson, and King – and between those who call for professionalization and those who celebrate volunteerism in the therapeutic clowning context. In brief, it is my contention that we most readily learn to allow the clown energy to co-create (with) us, open (us) up to possibilities, and transform us through engagement with a clowning pedagogy – a pedagogy which may be approached in many ways and many places, rather than simply in explicit "clown training." Furthermore, there are several clarifications that I believe nuance this discussion in helpful ways. Firstly, I see a distinction between a) the accessibility of the *principles* that underlie clowning and b) the training and experience that are necessary to produce effective clown performances (or clown care, in the case of the therapeutic context). While the former can be accessed from many avenues without ever necessitating clown training specifically, the latter is necessary to elevate clowning as a unique and powerful practice beyond what King refers to as simply "a playful state." In other words, one can play without being a clown, but the ability to play is not tantamount to the ability to clown, though these abilities are relevant and enriching to one another.

Secondly, Butler seems to be speaking about the educational value that can be derived from the experience of clown training itself, regardless of whether participants ever perform as, or consider themselves to be, clowns. In contrast, King is speaking as a clown performer about the appreciable talent, dedication, skill, and experience required to engage with clowning as an artistic practice. This distinction is akin to recognizing that while all children may derive significant benefit from drawing and colouring with crayons, this activity is distinct from the training and experience that professional visual artists bring to their artwork. Finally, the relative accessibility of clowning may be impacted by the context in which such clowning is being used and/or for which it is ultimately intended. In the case of Salverson's (2009) work, there is a difference between her use of clown exercises in her in-

class explorations of witnessing and testimony with her students and the production of her "clown opera," which employed professional opera singers and clowns. That Salverson's students were able to connect with the challenging subject of the atomic bomb through clown exercises is a matter quite aside from the dedicated training and experience that were necessary for the professional performers to be able to present this subject in their opera. In the former cases, Salverson's students made use of clowning as an exploration, which allowed them to delve into difficult areas with creativity and openness that they were otherwise unable to access. The professional performers, too, made use of clowning as exploration in their preparations for their performance; however, they also had the skills, training, and experience necessary to translate these explorations into a polished piece of professional theatre.

In my work, I seek neither to offer clown training nor to ask students or teachers to perform as clowns. Instead, I seek to engage with the *principles of clowning* as a way of approaching educational/scholarly contexts. I therefore attempt to engage the accessible benefits that both Butler and Salverson appreciate in clown training and exercises within educational/scholarly contexts where "clown" and "clown training" need never be mentioned. I could never suggest that clown training is insignificant or that clowning as an art form is "easy," or that "anyone can do it." Indeed, it is only because of my own extensive training, experience, and dedication to clowning as an art form and a practice that I can speak about clowning as an approach to education/scholarly practice at all. However, I do believe that the foundational elements of clowning are broadly accessible and, furthermore, that these principles are not exclusively accessed through clown training. Many people reveal or connect with these principles through other forms of dedicated practice or training or simply through intense self-reflection/self-exploration. Therefore, while clown training is not merely dispensable, it also cannot be considered *essential* in order to facilitate connection with clowning *as an approach*. Instead, the importance of clown training is context-dependent. Clown training itself is the most succinct way to connect with *all* of the elements of clowning, together, and is, arguably, the most effective way to learn the art of clown performance (clown geniuses like Chaplin and Grimaldi notwithstanding). An approach to education/scholarly practice based in the principles of clowning, however, is likely more

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effective than clown training itself at fostering the kinds of educational/scholarly benefits that I have described.

Thus, when I say that I want to bring clowning as an approach into educational and scholarly contexts, I am not suggesting that we all need to wear red noses in our classrooms or as we pursue our research (though it could be fun to try for awhile). Nor am I suggesting that we all participate in clown training in order to improve our educational and scholarly practices (though I also wouldn't discourage it). What I *am* saying is that there is a particular approach connected to clowning (or, said differently, that clowning is a particular approach) that is accessible to everyone, whether or not one ever does clown training, wears a red nose, or performs onstage. This clown approach resonates with the calls that are being made (and have been being made since at least the early 1900s when John Dewey was writing his educational scholarship) by arts-based, self-reflective, transformative educational scholars and it can be fruitfully applied to our scholarly pursuits and our educational contexts, making it a form of clowning pedagogy. This clowning pedagogy is artistic, creative, personal, vulnerable, wide-awake, self-reflective, transgressive, and transformative. As an approach, clowning engages the personal and vulnerable as sources of power and connection to others. Through connection with others, it allows us to co-create and engage with complexity and multiplicity – encouraging us to see that within every answer lies more questions, making inquiry perpetual. Through such ongoing inquiry this approach allows us to get beyond ourselves, including where we have been and what we have known before. Each of these aspects of clowning as an approach is crucial to the kind of educational/scholarly landscape that I wish to see continuing to be fostered in our world. Furthermore, all of these aspects of clowning as an approach are accessible as they are sourced from within, rather than being imposed as an external system. This embodied, personal, self-reflective quality of clowning may not connect us to an "authentic" self, as Butler suggested, but that reality does nothing to diminish the value of her observation that, in its emphasis on sourcing from the inside, clowning can be experienced as both a self-reflexive and a broadly accessible creative practice.

So, we discover that the answers to the questions "who can clown?" and "who can apply clowning in education/scholarly practices?" may be quite different. While clowning requires dedication to training and commitment to practice in order to gain significant experience, approaching the educational/scholarly contexts through a clowning pedagogy requires only interest: interest in transforming ourselves and our educational/scholarly landscapes, interest in considering the underlying principles of clowning and how they relate to us in our teaching and learning practices, and interest in engaging in our teaching and learning practices with critical reflexivity. Who can clown? Those who commit themselves to the practice of clowning as an art form, whether on or offstage. Who can apply clowning in education/scholarly practices? Anyone who is interested in exploring what the principles of clowning may offer in realizing a transformational approach to education and to scholarly practice.

8.4.   So, When?

When can clowning be applied to educational/scholarly contexts?

I have focused throughout this dissertation on the context of post-secondary education and the scholar for the simple reason that these are the contexts with which I am most personally familiar and in which I am most personally invested. There is, however, another reason why I have chosen this focus: my understanding of clowning is that it is a practice that seeks to engage with innocence *after* experience. Here innocence and experience are not necessarily age-bound categories, though the two often correlate. Innocence is simple engagement with what King (2013b) refers to as "a playful state" (p. 123). In contrast, experience is *knowing* engagement with "a playful state" in such a way as to make this state "into a transformative social tool" (King, 2013b, p. 123). The playful actions taken in both cases may be identical. However, the awareness, intention, and implications behind each are entirely different. It is precisely the *return* to the playful/innocent state with the benefit of experience (or understanding or awareness) that allows for the transformation. In this way, clowning can become an expression not of stupidity but instead of profound wisdom. As Lecoq (2000) describes in the context of his own pedagogy,

I like this work [clowning] to be undertaken at the end of the course because you can only be a clown when you have built up an experience of life. In the circus tradition, the clowns are usually drawn from among the older artists. The young ones are working on such exploits as tightrope walking, trapeze or balancing acts which the older ones can no longer manage, so they become clowns, expressing their maturity, their wisdom! (p. 150)

Having a certain degree of life experience (which may or may not be coterminous with age) aids participants to receive the most benefits from a clowning practice. This criterion of *experience*, in addition to my personal investment and familiarity, is what makes post-secondary education and scholarly practices the most appropriate initial contexts for me to consider clowning as an approach. That being said, the principles of clowning can be effectively applied to teaching/learning situations with participants of all ages and levels of experience, so long as the application is done in ways that are responsibly age appropriate. There are no age restrictions on vulnerability, connection, engagement with multiplicity, or movement beyond in order see the world anew and transform. Indeed, as I have suggested, many of these things are inherent in the very act of learning and are organically enacted by students of all ages and even by the youngest infants as they learn about and explore the world in which they find themselves.

In considering the question of when clowning can/should be applied to the educational context, it is interesting to note that children sometimes unwittingly "clown" the adults in their lives. Let us recall Eagleton's (1990) observation that

Children make the best theorists, since they have not yet been educated into accepting our routine social practices as 'natural,' and so insist on posing to those practices the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten. Since they do not yet grasp our social practices as inevitable, they do not see why we might not do things differently. (p. 34)

In their "playful states" and their "embarrassingly general and fundamental questions," children often make those of us who are more experienced stop and reconsider something that we have taken for granted, such as an entrenched habit of behaviour. In such cases, children are simply being, exploring, and learning in and through their innocence. However, their actions can call those of us who can approach innocence after experience to move

beyond ourselves, our habits, and our assumptions and step into our possibilities, thereby transforming us. This childish capacity has led some to consider children as the ultimate experts in the clown approach, since they seem to naturally display a mastery that eludes many adults, despite (or perhaps because of) the adults' benefit of years of training and practice. Understanding clowning as an enactment of innocence *after* experience challenges this perspective by suggesting that clowning is not merely innocent action, but a complex combination of awareness *applied* to innocent action.

Regardless of whether one considers the child/innocent to be the "ultimate" clown, it is clear that clowning requires a re-kindling of the kind of innocence that allows us to gaze in wonder and to ask "embarrassingly general and fundamental questions" (Eagleton, 1990, p. 34). Some have considered it the mission of education to "teach" these qualities out of students, replacing wonder with knowledge and questions with answers. This approach is reinforced by an understanding of education as the system through which those with more experience pass along their wisdom and expertise to those with less experience. An approach to education steeped in clowning acknowledges that experience can teach innocence *and also* that innocence can teach experience. Therefore, through clowning as an approach, each of our "embarrassingly" unknowing, innocent, (perhaps) younger selves are "protected" (Meyer, 2010) and "loved enough" (Arendt, 1961) that they might act as our teachers and to call us into the multitude of possibilities that are our clown selves.

Clowning as an approach to education pushes us toward the seemingly paradoxical task of fostering innocence, while also providing opportunities to gain experience. The endless clown capacity to recognize multiplicity and "go for the unknown" makes this paradox possible, acknowledging as it does that in our complex world, there are no such things as singular answers and that all knowns open up into endless fields of unknowns (and not-yet-knowns). When clowning is applied in the educational context with younger (or more innocent) learners, the emphasis is on creating experience in ways that do not tarnish or diminish innocence. When clowning is applied in the educational context with older (or more experienced) learners, the emphasis is on rejuvenating and reconnecting with the innocence that we may think we have already "out-grown" or "left behind." Clowning as a

pedagogical approach is about re-kindling a wondering quality of attention and a particular kind of wholeness (which may also be called "innocence"). While I associated such "innocence" with playfulness above, it is important to note that this is not the lackadaisical playfulness that may typically be evoked in response to the word "innocence" (and, indeed, I would suggest that very little playfulness truly is). Instead, this is a lovingly serious (and seriously loving) kind of playful innocence: the kind of playful innocence that can re-kindle in us possibilities that may otherwise be lost or shut down, the brave kind of playfulness that allows us to step into the world, when all its unknown possibilities beckon.

So, when can clowning be applied to educational/scholarly contexts? Right now and at all levels of teaching and learning. However, the focus and emphasis will differ based on the participants' relative levels of innocence and experience. Those who wish to apply clowning in an educational context must begin by considering the levels of innocence and experience of those with whom they work. These levels should not simply be assumed based on the ages of the participants because you know what they say about assumptions. In this case, making assumptions will likely result in a reductive understanding of both the participants and of innocence and experience as states of being.

8.5. So, Where?

Where can clowning be applied?

In her book *Serious Play: Modern Clown Performance* (2009) Louise Peacock establishes that contemporary clowning has been shifting its performance frame, moving from the circus to the traditional theatrical stage and from performance arenas into settings as diverse as hospitals, refugee camps, and churches. Throughout her discussion of clowning, she focuses on how these distinct venues shift the meaning and the interpretive significance of the clown's unique form of play. For the purposes of my study, the application of clowning in these diverse settings helps to establish the versatility of clowning as a practice and an approach. This versatility is further reinforced by the tremendous variety of clowning traditions that exist throughout human history, and the diversity of socio-cultural roles that

these traditions have played. Clowns – or, more precisely, figures who have been called clowns – have served as advisors, political agitators, social commentators, entertainers of both children and adults, healers, caregivers, storytellers, visionaries, shit-disturbers and "thorns-in-the-side," religious/spiritual figures, and more. Despite the tremendous differences between these various roles, each has a direct relationship to my broad question of how people/ communities/societies/cultures teach, learn, grow, and change. While there is very little that can be said definitively or with stability about clowns or clowning, it is my contention that clowns in the various roles that they play all have the potential to engage this question of growth and change. Indeed, this may be the noblest aspiration of the clown, wherever she is found, which is not to say that clowns always choose to engage this noble aspiration or that when they do that it is undertaken consciously. The deep educational implications of some clowning traditions and practices may be recognized more in retrospect and/or in interpretation than they ever were by the performing clowns themselves. However, the potential lack of interest and/or awareness amongst clowns themselves concerning their broad educational significance does not diminish this actual significance in any way.

The application of clowning as an approach to disciplines as diverse as healthcare, relief work, and the ministry reveal that clowning is a highly flexible and adaptable practice that can be engaged as an approach, even where its practice as a specific art form is not of particular interest or relevance. The broad relevance of the foundational principles of clowning encourage me to suggest that clowning has the potential to be fruitfully applied everywhere and anywhere. Furthermore, the historical relationship between traditions of clowning and movement towards learning, growth, and change (even where these are not discussed as specifically *educational*) encourage me to consider that clowning and education may actually share a specific affinity, perhaps even beyond the relevance of clowning in other settings where it is already being applied.

So, where can clowning be applied? Everywhere! Anywhere! What is crucial is not the specifics of setting or context, but rather an interest and investment in approaching the setting or context vulnerably, co-creatively, with awareness of and curiosity about multiplicity, and with a deep investment in moving beyond ourselves and where we have been/what we have known before. Clowning can be applied anywhere we can, should, or want to transform into all the possibilities that exist for us.

8.6. So, Why?

Why should clowning be applied to education/scholarly practices?

As mentioned above, there is an affinity between clowning and the educational/scholarly spheres (in terms of the broad context of people/communities/societies/cultures teaching, learning, growing, and changing if not necessarily in terms of specific educational/scholarly infrastructures) that is slowly beginning to be recognized in the scholarly study of clowning and, especially, clown training. Yet, despite the ways that the practice of clowning responds to the imperatives articulated by arts-based, self-reflective, transgressive, and transformational educational scholars/practitioners, the connection between clowning and education has yet to be recognized within the educational literature. This absence is likely simply due to a lack of familiarity with clowning as a practice. As a clown and as a scholar, I am therefore uniquely situated to draw attention to the affinity between clowning and the educational/scholarly contexts. My interest is not to demonstrate that clowning should be applied to/in the educational/scholarly contexts because it is *better* able to address educational imperatives than other arts-based, self-reflective, and/or transgressive/ transformational practices. However, it is my sense that our educational and scholarly landscapes can only be enriched by the incorporation of a diversity of practices and approaches. I therefore submit clowning as an approach to education and to scholarly practices that can be taken up alongside those proposed by other educational scholars.

These approaches are varied, diverse, and many and any listing of them is necessarily partially and (unintentionally) exclusionary. They include Greene's (1978) enthusiasm for literature, visual arts, and music as access points for critical awareness and self-creation; hooks' (1994) investment in a transformational, transgressive, and exciting dynamic of teaching and learning; Donald's (2012) conception of ethical relationality as a decolonizing methodological practice; Leggo's (2010) practice of poetic and autobiographical inquiry; Meyer's (2006) vision of a living inquiry that moves beyond methodology into an everyday quality of attention; Denton (2006) and Snowber's (2011) articulations of wounds and vulnerability as sources of strength, opening, and learning; Fels' (1998; 2012a) and Norris' (2009) (among others) articulations of performative inquiry and performance-based research; Snowber's (2011; 2012) and Springgay's (2008) (among others) vision of embodied inquiry; the a/r/tographical understanding of art, research, teaching, and writing as intertwining and mutually informing practices; Kelly (2010, 2012), Cajete (1994), Meyer (2003; 2008), Simpson (2011), Marshall (as discussed in Kelly, 2012 and Hogue & Bartlett, 2014), and Ermine's (2007) (among others) conceptualizations of Indigenous Knowledges, practices, and worldviews as broadly pedagogically significant; and, of course, many, many, many others. I return to Norris' (2009) articulation that, rather than offering a solo aria, his scholarship seeks to join "a polyphony of voices that employ theater as a form of inquiry and research" (p. 11). The breadth of existing educational inquiry, paired with the broad applicability and resonance of clowning as a practice, has made doing justice to the relationship between educational/scholarly contexts and clowning a particular challenge in this inquiry.[59]

While my interest is in joining the "polyphony of voices" seeking to enrich educational and scholarly practices, I am aware that, at times, I have risked simply singing the aria of the clown. Rather than an intention to discount the significance of existing educational literature, this emphasis on clowning demonstrates my deep personal investment in this practice. Furthermore, it reflects my awareness that this practice remains unfamiliar and, potentially, strange for many, including contemporary educational scholars, who may find deep benefits in the application of this practice in their educational and/or scholarly settings. I have chosen to focus the bulk of my attention on describing clowning due to the relative dearth (especially when compared with educational scholarship) of written materials

focused on the practice of clowning. This choice of focus resulted in a necessary reduction in the attention to paid to other, resonant educational, artistic, self-reflective, transgressive, and transformative practices. Please know, dear reader, this lack of attention is simply a reflection of what I was able to accomplish and acknowledge in this writing and not a commentary on the relevance or significance of these other practices.

So, why should clowning be applied to education/scholarly practices? Because it can join the many other creative, artistic, self-reflexive, transformational/transgressive approaches to education, which are all enriching our educational landscape. Because education is at its best when it is being informed by a "polyphony of voices" and practices and because clowning is a practice that resonates deeply with the creative and empowering vision of education that many scholars and practitioners have been articulating for decades. Because clowning offers vulnerability, co-creation, multiplicity, and transgression toward transformation as gifts to education in ways that some may not have previously considered, or may not have considered together. And because the context of education also has the capacity to enrich the practice of clowning, making us as clown practitioners more aware of our ability (and, perhaps, responsibility) to effect growth and change in people/ communities/societies/cultures.

8.7. A moment to look forward, together

I sit in anticipation of writing an ending, which in turn offers new possible beginnings, my fingers dancing, an awakening of desire, coming home to what matters. (Fels, 2014, p. 58)

Our endings break us open to our beginnings. (Snowber, 2012, p. 68)

both clowning and philosophizing are liminal phenomena in their respective sociocultural contexts: 'realms of pure possibility whence novel *configurations of ideas and relations may arise', involving 'the analysis of culture into factors and their free recombination in any and every possible pattern, however weird.' (Babcock-Abrahams, 1984, p. 103)*

This inquiry has focused on what has felt, on many occasions, like an impossible task: bringing together, in mutually informing ways, the practices of the clown and the scholar. This task has felt impossible for a few reasons, but the most important one is because I was living it, and so it was challenging to simultaneously inquire into, reflect upon, and write about it. It was in the living of this challenge, however, that I was able to experience the seeming impossibility as an invitation into new possibilities, an opportunity to put "impossibility aside." In his book *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004), Palmer explains that his work

> is not a theory in search of applications: the principles and practices explored here have been proven on the ground. Now they seek even wider use wherever people want to live undivided lives that are joined to the needs of the world. (p. 10-11)

The same is true of this work: I am interested in the relationship between the clown and the scholar not because the practices of either are in need of "proving," but because each has the potential to enrich the other through a connection that facilitates a mutual broadening of horizons.

I recognize that the culmination of this piece of writing is not a "conclusion," as in an ending place. Instead, I understand it as a sacred moment in which to dwell with what has come before: it is a pause, a stop, a moment of immanence. Understanding the moment in this way, I would like to take the opportunity to do two things: 1) to look around from my new standpoint and reflect on what I see and what I feel and 2) to ask "what if…"? So, to

take first things first, what visions do I see from this new perspective? I see a boundary that has shifted and is continuing to shift. I see an educational context that welcomes scholars who are filled with love and magic, who embrace their vulnerability as sources of strength, who actively seek out unknowns and play at the boundaries between knowns and unknowns, who revel in multiplicities and approach the simple and the singular with a sceptical curiosity; I see both clowns and scholars who live their practices; I see clowning as a quality of attention; I see clowns who understand that being serious is not necessarily the enemy of play and that humour doesn't mean having nothing important to say; I see the ethical relationality that bridges the Self and the Other; I see the opportunity to stretch out (within) the moment of immanence; I see the necessity of complexity and messiness and failures; I see magic spaces and co-creation, I see transgressions and transformations, and, perhaps most of all, I see never-ending possibilities: possibilities that lay hidden within impossibilities and possibilities that eagerly open themselves to even more possibilities.

There is one possibility in particular that dominates the view in this moment of pause, and that is the possibility of transformation. The practice of clowning begins with a transformation: the magical transformation of a human being into a clown that can only be facilitated through a shared openness, vulnerability, and willingness to play. This initial transformation is not so significant in and of itself, but, because it is a visible, visceral, shared transformation, it speaks to the wider possibility of transformation that exists for us all. The very fact that we human beings can do something as improbable and illogical as being transported into the clown's world of playful transgressions allows us to wonder what other transformations might be possible. And it is the clown's practice to seek out such possibilities and make them visible, if only temporarily. Even fleeting glimpses of previously unconsidered possibilities can inspire us to dream, to seek, to ask "what if...?"

What if we were excited to be transformed by our scholarly practices, even though transformation means change and change can be scary and painful?

                    What if we could share our vulnerability and share in the vulnerability of others?

What if these vulnerabilities were the true source of our strength and our ability to connect to one another?

            What if we could treat each other ethically?

What if we met the world with loving seriousness and with serious love?   *What then would be?*

What if we could engage with knowledge in ways that held space open for possibilities, rather than shutting down possibilities?

What if nothing was impossible?   *What if we could be portals of possibility?*

What if our scholarship could move…   *and shift…*   *and transform?*

What if we could prolong this moment –   *stay in it*

                              just a little longer?

What if the clown engaged in scholarly practice?   *What if the scholar was clowning?*

            What if we could get beyond (those) words?

Palmer (2004) says that there is a "painful gap between who we most truly are and the role we play in the so-called real world" (p. 15).

So, what if the "real" world didn't ask us to be fake?

> *What if there is no such thing as "the real world"?*

What if there are many multiplicities of real worlds into which we can step at any given moment?

What if we could replace our "painful gap" with multiplicities that could be played between?

What if we could live into our, vulnerable, selves?

> *What if being ourselves allowed us to get beyond ourselves?*

What if we didn't need anything that we don't already have?

What if…?

> *What if…?*

What if…?

By way of a conclusion, I would like to engage in two moments of show and tell. The first thing I have brought to show is a photograph from my first night at the Clown Farm (now the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance):

In this photo, Aurora and I are blowing on the campfire to help it get started. David MacMurray Smith explained that "clown is like the wind" because you cannot see it directly, but instead see only what it moves (D. MacMurray Smith, personal communication, May 2014). The same is true of fire, which is itself a transformational state: a how, a way, an energy, a momentum. It is my intention that the clown's quality of attention can be given to the educational and scholarly contexts in the same way that Aurora and I are giving our breath to the fire: our teaching, learning, research, and writing may not *look* any different, but they will *feel* different. Both the breathing and the fire are processes, both clowning and scholarly practices are processes, and each of these is a transformation, which can move us

from one state into another. These processes, these transformations, function well on their own. And yet, when they come together, we are able to find inspiration, to feel the flames of our passion being stoked, burning hotter and higher. We are moved and are capable of moving beyond ourselves, capable of transgression, capable of transformation.

My second item for show and tell is a poem by e.e. Cummings (2003) titled "one winter afternoon":

(at the magical hour
when is becomes if)

a bespangled clown
standing on eighth street
handed me a flower.

Nobody,it's safe
to say, observed him but

myself;and why?because

without any doubt he was
whatever(first and last)

mostpeople fear most:
a mystery for which i've
no word except alive

—that is,completely alert
and miraculously whole;

with not merely a mind
and a heart

but unquestionably a soul-
by no means funereally
hilarious

(or otherwise democratic)
but essentially poetic
or ethereally serious:

a fine not a coarse clown
(no mob, but a person)

and while never saying a
word

who was anything but
dumb;
since the silence of him

self sang like a bird.
Most people have been
heard
screaming for international

measures that render hell
rational
—i thank heaven
somebody's crazy

enough to give me a daisy

Many writers have made use of the evocative image of the clown in incredibly diverse ways. However, this poem convinces me that e.e. Cummings and I share an understanding of, and perhaps even a relationship with, clowning. Cummings' clown arrives at the "hour when is becomes if," an hour that is magical specifically because it replaces certainty with the open space of possibilities. Many people are not able to see this clown, however, because he stands outside of what is rational and recognizable. Furthermore, he is what many people fear, because he is what they cannot be for themselves: "completely alert and miraculously whole;" capable of acting crazy in a world that is desperate to rationalize everything; willing to reach out, vulnerably, into ethical relationality; able to give and eager to connect. It is this magical, wide-awake, crazy, whole, transformative, silent-yet-singing clown that I wish to bring into the world of the scholar and into the broader educational context because I believe that this clown – and, furthermore, clowning – has something to offer us. While it may simply be a daisy, it seems to me that such a small gift, in the circumstances of it being given, may represent much more.

Palmer (2004) has created an itemized list of the costs of denying our "hidden wholeness":

- We sense that something is missing in our lives and search the world for it, not understanding that what is missing is us.

- We feel fraudulent, even invisible, because we are not in the world as who we really are.

- The light that is within us cannot illuminate the world's darkness.

- The darkness that is within us cannot be illuminated by the world's light.

- We project our inner darkness on others, making 'enemies' of them and making the world a more dangerous place.

- Our inauthenticity and projections make real relationships impossible, leading to loneliness.

- Our contributions to the world – especially through the work we do – are tainted by duplicity and deprived of the life-giving energies of true self. (p. 15-16)

When Cummings' clown offers a daisy – a crazy act of vulnerable, ethical relationality – what is truly being offered is an invitation: an invitation into the magic space, an invitation into the possibilities of replacing "is" with "what if," an invitation into our own wholeness, which embraced, will allow us to sing out through our own silences. Clowning invites us into ourselves, including all that we are and all that we can be. This is a sacred invitation that sees, acknowledges, and encourages the wholeness of our learning spirits (Kelly, 2010, p. 83). Stepping into ourselves, into our learning spirits, is itself a deeply educational act. In this action, we learn from ourselves and also increase our capacity to connect, create, teach, and learn outwardly. What is the gift that the practice of clowning gives to us? The wholeness of ourselves. And this gift, in turn, shapes our ability to teach, learn, grow, and change within ourselves, within our communities, within our cultures, and within our societies.

At this pausing place in my journey – in this moment of sacred immanence – my deeply felt desire is to offer the magic space of co-creation that I have found between the clown and the scholar on to you, my dearest reader and fellow traveler. It is in this magic space – opened through the transgressive willingness to play of my scholar self and my clown self – that I have come to understand clowning as a quality of attention that allows us to dwell in the moment of immanence. It is through such dwelling that I have been able to engage with the multiple possibilities that exist in any given moment and in any given circumstance. Opening myself to and engaging vulnerably within this open space of possibilities has transformed me and this transformation has, in turn, allowed me to witness, connect with, and transform others. These possibilities are not simply clowning and they are not simply scholarly practice, instead, they arise from a wholeness that could only be created by the relationship between the clown and the scholar that I have come to embody over the course of this journey of inquiry. Now, my desire is to offer these possibilities for wholeness, vulnerability, and transformation on to you. What is it that you are seeking to reconcile in your life, in your work? What is it that is calling to you? What is it that feels impossible? Come, take this daisy and put impossibility aside. The moment of immanence is beckoning…   *It is upon us.*

Now.

I invite you, once again, to play.

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1 In addition to providing a welcome, this epigram is relevant to the dissertation as Willy Wonka is, himself, a clown or Trickster figure. Furthermore, the book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* by Roald Dahl (1973) played an important role in my childhood and it therefore reflects my personal investment in this dissertation, these words. The copy of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* that I read with my mom was the same copy that she was given by her dad when she in grade three, a year that she spent primarily in a hospital bed, in a body cast, after having been hit by a car. I remember distinctly my mom telling me that reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* was a significant part of her "education" for that year, since she was not actually able to attend school.

2 In using the term "grow," I acknowledge that people, communities, societies, and cultures are always in the process of transformation. Furthermore, transformation (changing, learning, growing) often occurs organically and subconsciously, in ways that are not specifically intended, sought, or even, at times, noticed. I use this term in order to move away from a perception of teaching, learning, and changing as always intentional and obvious activities and to move towards an understanding of the ever-present possibility of transformation.

3 By discussing clowning as something that can be applied to scholarly practice, I name it as, in a sense, a form of applied theatre or applied drama. Applied theatre and applied drama both take a variety of shapes and are found in a variety of contexts. However, they typically involve a clear and signalled use of dramatic exercises, activities, and approaches, which are then applied towards the goals of the particular community involved in the process. For a detailed and helpful discussion of applied drama – including its myriad possibilities – see Monica Prendergast and Juliana Sexton's *Applied Drama: A Facilitators Handbook for Working in Community* (2013). In my present discussion, some foundational principles of clowning are brought to light so that they may be applied and evoked within a scholarly context. This work may occur in ways that, to the outside eye, would not appear to be "clown" or even clown-like. In seeking to engage scholarly practice through my own clown-informed perspective, my work could also be understood as a particular form of performative inquiry (see Fels 1995; 1998; 2002; 2010; 2012a; 2012b; 2014; Fels & Belliveau, 2008).

4 Typically, this scholar publishes as Barbara Babcock-Abrahams. In the case of this book chapter; however, she is listed as Barbara A. Babcock. For the sake of both clarity and simplicity, I refer to her consistently as Babcock-Abrahams throughout this dissertation.

5 Thank you to my partner and resident photographer, Hoang Do, for taking these photographs for me.

6 For a more thorough discussion of a/r/tography, see *Being with A/r/tography* (2008).

7 Throughout this section, I will bold the name of any practitioner who I discuss in more detail.

8 I use first names to refer to any clown practitioner/teacher with whom I have a personal relationship.

9 http://www.mumpandsmoot.com/index.php

10 http://www.pochsy.org/index.html

11 The introductory *Clown Through Mask* workshop is also frequently referred to as *Baby Clown* as it is through the participants' creation and wearing of masks that the clown is born. As such, at the end of the workshop, the participant has, through their mask explorations, become a baby clown. When I first did clown training, the course that I took was called *The Mask & Clown Intensive (Baby Clown). Baby Clown* is the colloquial name that many in (and wishing to enter) the clown community have come to associate with the introductory level of training, whether the name is used by their particular teacher or not.

12 Sometimes students refer to themselves as "Pochinko clowns" in order to signal the clown lineage in which they have trained. However, this appellation may indicate a misunderstanding of the significance of the work. The purpose of the clown training is to reveal aspects of yourself to you. Thus, the only "Pochinko clown" was Pochinko himself. Choosing to emphasize Pochinko as a guru or prototype misses the point of the clown training, which is about connecting with the "beautiful ridiculousness of *yourself.*"

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[13] All inter-views with John Turner were conducted at his home (and the location of the Manitoulin Conservatory for Creation and Performance, formerly the Clown Farm) on Manitoulin Island in Northern Ontario in the summer of 2012.

[14] "Amerindian" is a somewhat esoteric way to refer to "American Indians" or "Indigenous peoples of the Americas." It is a term primarily used by anthropologists and linguists and it has largely fallen out of usage with the wide-spread recognition that Indigenous peoples have a relationship with their territories that pre-dates the existence of "the Americas."

[15] Coburn and Morrison cite Lame Deer to support their suggestion that "although there is no one Native belief system, although there is no one Native deity, although there is no unity in the detail of what is sacred across all the tribes, there are universal concepts that are fundamental to all" (2013, p. 5). Lame Deer (2009) believes that "when it comes right down to it, all the Indian religions somehow are part of the same belief, the same mystery. Our unity, it's in there" (p. 260). In Coburn and Morrison's opinion, the concept of wholeness is "arguably the most important of these [universal] concepts [amongst Indigenous peoples]" (2013, p. 5). Although it is neither the focus of Coburn and Morrison's study nor my own, I feel that it is important to seek balance between the empowering connection that can be established through recognition of similarity between Indigenous belief systems, and the significance of nuances that resist cultural homogenization.

[16] Here, again, I feel that it is important to recognize that there is no such thing as a generic "Native" vision quest. As Joseph Campbell depicts in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), there are certain elements of "the quest" that are common across a tremendous diversity of human cultures. Furthermore, many Indigenous nations the world over have developed unique initiation rites and rituals, which are sometimes referred to as "vision quests." That being said, the specifics of such vision quest rituals are deeply nuanced in culturally specific ways.

[17] Mike and John frequently refer to the idea of finding freedom "through structure" rather than seeking "freedom from structure."

[18] http://www.fantasticspace.com/about.htm#bio

[19] http://www.fantasticspace.com/about.htm#bio

[20] http://www.fantasticspace.com/about.htm#bio

[21] For more information, see the Vancouver Foundation's reports on the results of the "Connections and Engagement" survey conducted in 2012: http://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/initiatives/connections-and-engagement.

[22] The panellists included David MacMurray Smith, Lisa Voth, Kendall Savage, Patrick Pennefather, Paul Hooson, and Christine Lesiak. For more information: http://injestfestival.com/panel/

[23] David MacMurray Smith, however, has a strong personal background in mime training: "He graduated from the Mime School Unlimited, in Toronto at the time, and worked as a member of the company Mime Unlimited, Ron East, director [….] [He] finished the advanced curriculum in Decroux Mime technique at the École Du Mime Corporeal. Du Quatsous in Montreal with Jean Asselin and Denise Boulanger, directors" (http://www.fantasticspace.com/about.htm#bio). That being said, mime training is not specifically discussed or focused on within the clown training courses that I have experienced with David.

[24] http://www.ecole-jacqueslecoq.com/en

[25] http://www.ecolephilippegaulier.com/

[26] Sue Morrison also trained with Gaulier and thus speaks from her own experiences with this form of training.

[27] As I understand it, "Fe" is used as a layer of abstraction in order to help move us away from our previous associations with the colours we are working with, associations that can go quite deep.

[28] Throughout the workshop John repeatedly emphasizes that, "it's okay to feel nothing." If a participant is "feeling nothing," he encourages them to simply "make it up" and reminds them that everyone is just "making it up anyway"… Here his catch phrase, "the degree to which you achieve this will be perfect," comes in quite handy.

[29] This exercise description was informed by my own experiences with walking a colour and also by the unpublished workshop materials that John Turner gives to participants in his "Baby Clown: The Teacher's Experience" workshop.

[30] There is an exercise in the *Mask & Clown Intensive* called "Looking for a Feeling" that involves feeling another's face while your eyes are closed and then embodying that feeling. John has reflected numerous times that he believes that the whole workshop could be called "Looking for a Feeling" as it is about sourcing from our feelings – the feelings in our bodies as well as our emotions – rather than giving primacy only to our thoughts and clever ideas. Furthermore, much of the "looking" that happens in the workshop is specifically looking inside ourselves, rather than looking to the external world to provide us with inspiration, creativity, and knowledge. A central focus of the workshop is on learning to trust the wealth that exists within ourselves and to go looking for it.

[31] I am grateful to my senior supervisor, Dr. Vicki Kelly, for reminding me to consider the seventh direction, which resonates with Tewa educator Gregory Cajete's (1994) understanding that "the majority of American Indian tribes recognize seven sacred or elemental directions. These directions include East, West, North, South, Zenith, Nadir, and the Center [….] By perceiving themselves in the *middle* of these directions, they oriented themselves to the multidimensional field of knowledge and the phenomena of their physical and spiritual worlds" (p. 37).

[32] See page 149 of this dissertation for a discussion of Fels' discovery of the etymology of the word performance as signifying a coming to action both through form and through the destruction of form (Fels, 1998, Fels & Belliveau, 2008, p. 30). Clearly, this revelation about the meaning of performance is significant to understanding freedom through structure as it relates to clowning. The clown rules represent what John calls a "structure to reject" (personal communication). In this way, the rules are a structure that, like performance, simultaneously creates and destroys itself, a reality that is perhaps made evident through the final rule: "break all the rules." Such a structure opens itself up to freedom in much the same way as a performance, which creates itself through its very ephemerality, enabling it to both be and not-be simultaneously.

[33] I use the word "shame" here to evoke Dr. Brené Brown's work on vulnerability and particularly her theorization of a "shame resilience theory" (2006).

[34] For a more detailed discussion of the ideas contained in this paragraph, see the chapter "A Clown in Search of Ethics" in the forthcoming publication on Levinas and humor edited by Dr. Brian Keith Bergen-Aurand. My deepest gratitude, also, to Dr. Bergen-Aurand for his mentorship and guidance as I have sought to learn more about Levinas and to draw connections between Levinasian ethics and clowning.

[35] Here my words are reminiscent of Fels' (2014) performative writing in "Catching my Breath: In Full Flight Over the Prairies." In this article, Fels unpacks her feelings of anxiety and apprehension related to the submission of her tenure application. Through her performative writing, she is born anew to the expanded possibilities that exist for her within her role in the academy. She writes, "I feel again the possibility, and yes, the impossibility of who I am and who I have yet to become" (Fels, 2014, p. 57). She anticipates academic critique and/or resistance to her playful reimagining of conventional scholarly research, theorizing, and performative representation. She fears rejection. She writes, "this too is possible" (Fels, 2014, p. 57). Fels' approach to performative writing, and her questions about the academy and identity, in this article overlap in interesting and powerful ways with the questions and methods of approach that I, too, uncovered in the writing of this dissertation. This too is possible…this too is clown…this too is scholarship.

[36] Fidyk is hardly the first to acknowledge this integral relationship between Self and Other. Indeed, she draws on the work of Young-Eisendrath (who in turn draws on Kopf) in order to reinforce her understanding. Furthermore, the recognition that the Self is reliant on the Other for its very existence is core to Levinas' perspective on ethics as first philosophy. I cite Fidyk here simply because I find her exploration of the relationship between Self and Other, and her connection of this relationship to the concept of ignorance, compelling.

[37] For his part, John seems to have picked up this phrase from Bouffon teacher Philippe Gaulier. In *The Pochsy Plays* (2004), Karen Hines includes this quotation from Gaulier: "*Bouffons* are the hunchbacks, the lepers, the syphilitics, everything humanity has rejected…but they come to tell us, God's beautiful children, that *all aspects of humanity belong to everyone* [emphasis added]. In the grotesqueness of the *bouffon* is a truth about humanity" (p. 19).

[38] In the chapter "'Fratello Arlecchino': Clowns, Kings, and Bombs in Bali" (2007), Ron Jenkins shares an anecdote concerning an encounter between the Harlequin clown Dario Fo and a Balinese masked clown. Apparently, after performing an improvised scene together at a theatre festival in Copenhagen, Fo "embraced the Asian artist and shouted, 'Fratello mio, Arlecchino!' ('My brother, Harlequin!')" (as quoted in Jenkins, 2007, p. 115). Jenkins' chapter continues to discuss both the performance techniques recognized by Fo as being kindred and also "the historic, literary, and political roots of Balinese clowning" that reinforce Fo's sense of a familial relationship between the archetypal Harlequin figure and the Balinese masked clown (Jenkins, 2007, p. 115).

See, also, the Introduction to Kimberly A. Christen's *Clowns & Tricksters: An Encyclopedia of Tradition and Culture* (1998) for a survey of the scholarly literature with a particular focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by considering clown and Trickster figures across traditions, cultures, and epochs.

[39] Julie Salverson (2008) uses this phrase to describe her interest in clowning: "I am interested in clown and the comedic as forms of theatrical representation but also as attitudes of approach, ways of being in relationship that move beyond a sociological approach to performances that witness stories of violence" (p. 245).

[40] The term "auguste" derives from Berlin slang for silly or stupid (Towsen, 1976, p. 208). The Auguste became the common stage partner of the white face clown in the circus. In contemporary parlance, clown duos are often referred to as "the Joey" (generally understood to refer to the famous circus clown Joseph Grimaldi) and "the Auguste."

[41] hooks contextualizes this difference in standpoints through the particular example of black history courses being taught by white professors: "I am disturbed when all the courses on black history or literature at some colleges and universities are taught solely by white people, *not because I think that they cannot know these realities but that they know them differently* [emphasis added]. Truthfully, if I had been given the opportunity to study African American critical thought from a progressive black professor instead of the progressive white woman with whom I studied as a first-year student, I would have chosen the black person. Although I learned a great deal from this white woman professor, I sincerely believe that I would have learned more from a progressive black professor, because this individual would have brought to the class that unique mixture of experiential and analytical ways of knowing – that is, a privileged standpoint. It cannot be acquired through books or even distanced observation and study of a particular reality. To me this privileged standpoint does not emerge from the 'authority of experience' but rather from the passion of experience, the passion of remembrance" (hooks, 1994, p. 90)

[42] In her tango with the question "What is performative writing?", Pollack (1998) suggests that performative writing moves away from the question "what if" (and "what is") to embrace the imaginative capacity of the "as if:" "It shifts the operative social paradigm from the scientific 'what if' (what *then*?) to its performative counterpart, 'as if' (what *now*?)" (p. 81). Applying both/and logic, clowning simultaneously embraces the "as if" and the "what if." The clown imaginatively performs "as if," embracing the open playing field of possibilities that this condition presents. The clown also perpetually asks "what if," embracing the forward momentum into play (what *then*? or, more accurately for the clown, what *next*?) presented by this question.

[43] This is not to suggest that there isn't such a thing as didactic clown performances. There certainly are. However, as Barnaby King has observed in his article *Carnivalesque Economies* (2013a), this is likely to speak to the possibility of clowning being co-opted by those in authority, rather than being a quality intrinsic to clowning itself.

[44] Here we see another connection with Levinasian ethics, as it is the ongoing maintenance of the reality of difference (which he refers to as "alterity") that Levinas sees as ethical.

[45] While I do not have the space to significantly elaborate this point, it is worth considering that the negative relationship between vulnerability and professionalism in education is related to both a form of sexism and an express desire to maintain education as a realm of pure rationalism. Indeed, the very term "profession" is value laden in these ways. As De Bellaigue (2001) explains in her fascinating discussion of women in the teaching profession prior to 1870, "The term 'profession' was never simply descriptive. It conferred prestige and suggested moral superiority, intellectual ability, modernity, and efficiency" (p. 964). Of course, in the classic dualistic understanding of the world these qualities were all strongly associated with men, as is also reflected in the early male dominance of the learned "professions": "medicine, the law, and the clergy" (De Bellaigue, 2001, p. 964). Prior to the 1870s, women consciously styled their schools so that they fit within the domestic ideals generally associated with them: they "sought to compare their institutions to a family or home [….] [and] self-consciously 'mothered' their pupils, cultivating warm personal relationships with them" (De Bellaigue, 2001, p. 968). However, as schools began to shift and become singularly focused on "disciplining the mind" (De Bellaigue, 2001, p. 969), female educators began to "professionalize" by adapting to a male model of the professions (a model which they, themselves, helped to usher into the world of education) – one in which emotionalism (and vulnerability) were not welcome. The dominance of rationalism in many aspects of life, including education, has continued to be prevalent to today, with a significant number of contemporary educators now consciously dedicating themselves to re-embracing emotions, vulnerability, and "warm personal relationships" in their approach to teaching. As Brené Brown's research on vulnerability and shame reveals, however, such a "culture shift" can be particularly challenging in the world of the scholar. Brown (2012) writes, "I think emotional accessibility is a shame trigger for researchers and academics. Very early in our training, we are taught that a cool distance and inaccessibility contribute to prestige, and that if you're too relatable, your credentials come into question" (p. 6-7). Certainly this perception of vulnerability is not equally shared in all scholarly disciplines; however, it is significant to note that even as a researcher of vulnerability, Brown felt compelled to ask how she could "be vulnerable" without "sacrificing [her] legitimacy as a researcher" (2012, p. 6). The ties between professionalism and a "cool," removed, invulnerable veneer run deep and are, perhaps, especially felt by women who some continue to categorize as the "emotional" counterpart to the more dominant (and professional) male "rationalism."

[46] This image of the clown walking the wire between possibility and impossibility echoes performance theorist Peggy Phelan's (1993) understanding that "performance boldly and precariously declares that Being is performed (and made temporarily visible in that suspended in-between" (p. 167). The clown, too, is made temporarily visible (temporarily possible) in the performative moment of the magic space. The clown's walk on the high-wire further evokes Phelan's metaphorical vision of performance as that which occurs "in the suspension between the 'real' physical matter of the 'performing body' and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodied" (p.167); for Phelan this suspension is "like a rackety bridge swaying under too much weight" (p. 167), though it could perhaps equally be referred to as a tight-rope balancing between possibility and impossibility.

[47] For a more thorough discussion of tramp clowning, see Towsen's (1976) *Clowns*, particularly the pages in and around 282-294.

[48] My Master's thesis is titled "Embodying Environments: Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Possibilities for Environmental Education in Ontario" and it can be accessed though the Trent University library and Theses Canada.

[49] The Yaqui people are Indigenous to the Sonora desert.

[50] Coburn and Morrison are themselves citing from an interview that Flora Wellsman conducted with Richard Pochinko and Ian A. Wallace in 1987.

[51] I use both the terms "under-" and "inter-standing" based on my reading of Fels' work. For example, in their chapter *Intercultural Recognitions Through Performative Inquiry*, Fels and McGivern (2002) consistently use the term "interstanding" because they feel it "speaks to the learning that happens in the interrelational spaces of interaction" (p. 33, footnote 9). The term "interstanding" is drawn from Taylor and Saarinen's (1994) work, where it is employed to speak about what stands "between," rather than what stands "under" (which, they argue, is now nothing) (p. 2).

52 In October 2014 Ian gathered a group of approximately 10 clown students in Robson Square. He led us through a warm-up and then brought us, in red nose, on a clown excursion downtown. On this excursion, we tentatively explored Victoria Secret (this was short-lived as our clown group quickly found themselves overwhelmed by this atmosphere), engaged with curious tourists, and each found an item to purchase in Shopper's Drug Mart, using Ian's spare change. Ian also helped me extensively in my preparations for my doctoral defense in March 2016.

53 Many thanks to those scholars who have explored the concepts of writing as inquiry and performative writing before me, thereby inviting me to be playfully present in my research text. See, for example, the works of Ellis (1997), Fels (2014), Leggo (2008), Meyer (2006), Miller (2005), Neilson, Cole, & Knowles (2001), Norman (1999), Pelias (2005; 2014), Pollack (1998), Prendergrast (2009; 2015), Raspberry (1997), Richardson (1997), and Richardson & St. Pierre (2008).

54 This evocation of writing as action was inspired by Pollack's (1998) observation that "performative writing is not a genre or fixed form (as a textual model might suggest) but a way of describing what some good writing *does*" (p. 75).

55 In her chapter *Performing Writing* (1998), Della Pollack suggests that one of the many reasons why she is resistant to the question "what is it?" in relation to performative writing is that "performative writing is what it is not in itself" (p. 98).

56 See footnotes 5-7 on page 59 of Fels' article "Catching my breath: In full flight over the Prairies" (2014) for a detailed description of the concept of performative writing (see, also, the complete article for an example of performative writing in action). Fels contextualizes her performative writing by drawing on a number of scholars who offer both "invitation and permission to imagine scholarly writing differently" (2014, p. 59) by engaging with autobiographical, poetic, narrative, and performative forms. Like Fels (2014), I express gratitude for the opportunity to "write myself into the text" and to "joyfully and respectfully interrupt conventional academic writing" (p. 59).

See, also, my earlier, co-authored foray into the challenges and opportunities of performative writing: Dicecco, N. and Lane, J. (2014). Choose your own disruption: Clown, adaptation, and play. *Games and Culture*, *9*(6), 503-516.

57 Pollack (1998) lists these six terms as being foundational to the action of performative writing that she seeks to flesh out.

58 As a side note to the above discussion, the process of working on this dissertation has provided me with several opportunities to ponder all the elements of chance and context that are involved in "knowledge production." What I am reading at any given moment has a strong impact on my thinking and writing and a reading of Greene's *Releasing the Imagination* (1995) three months ago has a completely different impact than a reading that occurs simultaneous with my writing of this section. This observation has also allowed me to feel "lighter" in my approach to my scholarly practice as it has relieved any pressure I may have felt to articulate "answers" or even "knowledge" and has replaced this with an invitation to present musings, insights, and contingencies. Clowns are able to change even their most deeply held beliefs at the drop of a hat, if it serves the function of "keeping the conversation going with the audience." Reminders about the contingency of anything I might write here therefore help me to align more fully with the clown's approach to knowledge and belief, rather than feeling restrained by an approach that seems to make unspoken demands for a kind of truth that can remain.

59 In Norris I read a desire to engage in scholarly practices in ways that are additive and harmonious, rather than critical and aggressive. Pelias (2005) suggests that these qualities are definitive of the practice of scholarly performative writing: "Performative writing resists arguments that attempt to prove all other explanations inadequate or suspect. Performative writers do not believe that the world is one particular way. They do not believe that argument is an opportunity to win, to impose their logic on others, to colonize" (Pelias, 2005, p. 419). In my current work, I seek to join in a conversation (or better yet, a song) with others and choose to reject a scholarly practice that understands rigour as a practice of tearing others down. Any omissions or giving of short-shrift is the result of my own human limitations and the limitations of time that define a doctoral program, rather than any indication of a desire to be dismissive, competitive, or exclusionary.