A Chest of Broken Toys

A Journal of Developmental Transformations



Published since 2015
Institute for Developmental Transformations
www.developmentaltransformations.com/journal

A Chest of Broken Toys: A Journal of Developmental Transformations

This Journal is an open access online journal for articles on Developmental Transformations, particularly those articles that may not fit well into the traditional formats and limits of other journals in the field. The Journal does not accept letters, blogs, poetry, or announcements. The Journal is published continuously as one volume, and can be accessed on the website: www.developmentaltransformations.com/journal. Articles that are well-written, engaging, evocative, animated, and self-reflective are welcome.

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Guidelines for Authors

A Chest of Broken Toys accepts submissions of manuscripts that explore any aspect of Developmental Transformations as a practice. The manuscripts must be well-written, but can be in any language and in any style, as long as these are consistent throughout the text. The manuscripts can be of any length and can be written in experimental and nontraditional formats. Copyrights will be maintained by the authors. Manuscripts are published continuously as they are accepted and edited. Authors must include a statement of up to 250 words that certifies the biases, incompleteness, inadequacies, and uncertainties of their article, including mentions of rejections by other journals. Authors are encouraged to first seek publication of their work in traditional journals before submitting to *A Chest of Broken Toys*. Articles are peer-reviewed and a member of the Editorial Board is invited to write a Commentary that will be published simultaneously with each article.

Glossary

DvT	DvT is an attitude and a practice regarding experience, based on playing with the discrepancy between experience and the representation of experience, which aims to lower one's fear of the instability that this discrepancy generates. DvT is applied in therapy, personal growth, education, performance, advocacy, and recreation, or it can be practiced outside of any of these social frames.
i	Experience is nonrepeating.
m´	The present moment has never been before.
!	The prime discrepancy: The representation of experience is not the same as experience. The primary affects of delight, awe, and alarm arise when the prime discrepancy is perceived.

R	The sum of repeating forms: the construction of reality (through difference, preference, territory, history).

The fundamental instabilities:

po´a	The representation of experience is always incomplete.
h´ish	The representation of experience is always inexact.
t´	The representation of experience is always inaccurate.
x´i	The representation of experience is always intermittent.

Playspace	The mutual agreement between the playor and player that their behaviors are playful: meaning that they are representations of experience and not their experience (principles of discrepancy and restraint from harm), and that these representations can be shared between them (principles of mutuality and reversibility).
Varielation	The playor's purposeful variations in response to, and around, the player's representations, or repeating forms (in congruent, faithful, emergent, divergent ways).
Dimensionalization	The resulting higher order reorganization of the player's representations that integrates the discrepant information created by the playor's varielations and the fundamental instabilities (through play of presence, passions, possessions, powers).
Conplay, n. Conplacious, adj.	Words denoting an attitude or action that criticizes, restricts, or prevents playful behavior. Prevalent in many societies, institutions, families, and people. DvT is the antidote to conplay.
Thth	A piece of experience with just enough extension to be perceived. It lies in between the flicker of the non-repeating element, *i,* and the fully formed percept with its qualities and contexts.

Zo!	Moments of contact between two people unfiltered by roles, representations, or frameworks.
Miami?	An act of double negation in which one is aware of acting as if I am Me.
Expressive Field	The physical and energetic field surrounding and emanating from a person, which contains emergent images, rejected images, and the actions of the adaptive shield.
Natural Acts	Natural, spontaneous physical actions of human beings, such as jumping, running, hiding, and holding.
Radical Presence	The principle that we do not need to justify our existence.

DvT Textual Notations

´	Indicates any unstable concept
:	Indicates "from my point of view," "my impression of," as in "I loved the :mountain." Not the actual thing.
^	Indicates alternate but less preferred names as in "You are a jealous^selfish person." Not a synonym.
~	Indicates word is only an approximation, as in "The man was insistent~ that I leave." Equivalent to adding "ish."
!´	Presence of the primary affect of delight
!`	Presence of the primary affect of alarm
!``´	Presence of the primary affect of awe
‡	The double dagger. Used as the 27th letter of the alphabet either replacing a letter or added to a word, to remind the reader of the arbitrary nature of written forms.

Texts for Practitioners

I	2005
II	2013
III	2025

Cover Art: Nuno de Matos, 2011

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Introductory Editorial

And so it begins. Our ongoing dialogue with repetition and repeating forms. Developmental Transformations is a practice of noticing, revealing, and animating the nonrepeating elements of the present moment, an effort that always fails. It is in that moment of failure, perhaps, as one falls, that one brushes or nearly brushes that elusive, unstable experience: presence with another.

This *Journal* is an open space for various recordings of these failed attempts through Developmental Transformations, though no doubt they will be ripe with familiar arguments and illustrations designed to establish credibility, gain recognition, and share knowledge. In addition, hopefully, there will be many examples of surprise: a new turn of phrase, a shocking insight, a disturbing proposition, and ideas so wrong they jolt us out of the comfort of our dearly constructed worldview.

The authors of articles in this *Journal* are tasked to articulate, ahead of time, their understanding of the limitations, biases, shortcuts, and outright inadequacies of their work. These reflections are included in the beginning of each article as an *Author's Certification of Brokenness.* From the point of view of Developmental Transformations, not to know these things deeply and be comfortable sharing them publicly is to be only at the beginning of the path.

Consistent with DvT principles, the *Journal* will be published as one continuous volume: The page numbers will simply continue on and not repeat, like life, mostly~.

David Read Johnson
New Haven Connecticut
March 1, 2015

Let me be your carried one...
A meditation on po'a, t', and h'ish[1]

David Read Johnson

Reflections by Bonnie Harnden, Joan Wittig, and Ann Smith

Author's Certification of Brokenness

This article was originally prepared as a performance, so much of the lyrical and rhythmic sound of the words is lost in its written form. The article reveals the poignant dream of the author to be a beat poet or modern rapper, borrowing blatantly from stream of consciousness writers such as James Joyce. The lack of punctuation is mostly for the delight of the author in frustrating readers, who, when they give up on this piece, will confirm the author's deeply held arrogance that few others can understand him. The weave of romance evoked in the back and forth reflections between the author and his three colleagues captures nicely the author's self-indulgence and grandiosity, but what else is new. Most significantly, the article is outdated, as it was written before the discovery of x'i, though one can discern hints of it in the text.

❖

Preface

Let me prepare you for what is to come, to set up the frame the context the situation beforehand so that you are not surprised pushed off balance or

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unnecessarily upset, god forbid we are upset enough as it is, and a solid framework even if it is constructed not given even *made up* will be greatly appreciated, the only problem being that the frame soon stands in for the experience, we confuse the map with the terrain, the concept with the reality, the idea of the relationship *with* the relationship, and so we become separated from what is and this separation is why all forms are turbulent and impermanent. So I desire to end *the wobble of the world* but I have found nothing to hold onto that is not itself moving so I will have to master it by outsmarting it through understanding, yes, ah ha! And I have come to an understanding: that the wobble of the world cannot be stopped and that my attempt to understand it is largely what I do to disturb myself. That's it. Any reasonable person would desist from this useless effort and just enjoy life the best they can, but I have tried this approach and have failed

po'a

I am going to begin with you, you who I seek, you who I love and desire, you who constantly eludes me with your layers of enticing behavior evoking the presence of things I cannot see or hear or smell. Let me find some stable ground to lie upon and hold you to stop this subtle spinning and swaying this constant newness and strangeness that causes me to find some form of adaptation in each moment this accommodation to your needs expressed and unexpressed visible and invisible which you require of me though I cannot hear the unexpressed cannot see the invisible, I should be able to guess I suppose and I do, guess, all the time but I no longer pride my performance at the game, I am tired I suppose of your needs and the surprises of the hidden side of you. Oh that I could take all of you in at once see both sides of you no all sides of you no inside and outside of you all at once so I can know and not have to keep turning you around touching you all over running my fingers or lips up and down every side of you to gather up the all of you, I am so dissatisfied with my singular location my unique perspective that really is just another word for a blocked sight line my one angle on life when there are so many others yes I see them all the time see that they gather up another side of you parts of you stolen from me, I want you *all*

You are like the dark side of the moon, I know it is there but have never seen it, I ask you to describe it to me and you do and I place that picture of it in my mind but it is too flimsy for me, I want to be there. What bothers me is that like the dark side of the moon the side of you that you do not show me is not dark

to others, the sun shines on that dark side too at the half or new moon because the sun lies at a different perspective and that is what bothers me because others can see that side of you from their perspective, it's not fair I should have all of you. They can see from their perspective things kept invisible to me which bothers me for you are mine all of you, right? Shall I say "I love you, for the *most* part?" Dare I say, "Will *much* of you be mine?" Can I say, "I give *some* of me to you?" it defeats the idea of our relationship I know it is an illusion but if life has to be an illusion let it not be a defeated illusion! Our relationship must not be like the moon and earth you must face me at all times with all sides of you I must have a three dimensional view of you, my sensors must be placed on all parts of your existence. I must have your smell your taste your sound your sight your touch your soul not this, your slipping away from me just slightly your turning to the side just so, eyes glazed just a little as you cling to an Elsewhere that I seem never able to reach

My singular location is the source of my longing to be elsewhere, upstairs at home Paris flying tomorrow or a long time ago far far away, not to escape but to not miss so much, I live in the land of the missing nearly everything is absent as if I am looking at life through a narrow tube. I *am* looking at life through a narrow tube which is why I must keep moving the tube up and down and all around but all I get is partial information so I need you to commit yourself to me to offer all of yourself to me to still your own movements and possibilities to come with me everywhere and not simply pass by, these brief meetings fill me with longing let me know you will be home when I return know what you will order in the restaurant know what your favorite color is and always will be, to announce a change before you make it so I am not surprised you think I am exaggerating no I am enraged I am saddened, I am afraid

Reflections – Bonnie Harnden

You told me to take you in and I did. I'm sorry if I'm a little dissociative I'm a little porous and you're a little intense. When the world trade center fell and I was working at the hospital on the crisis team and I was already fragile, exhausted, overworked, so many sad families…so many lost children….I remember running down the hall before the second tower fell…we went on code orange…we were told planes might be landing…be ready to receive more, receive more…sometimes when I leave my office now I have this feeling that a body is falling and is going to land on me. And it doesn't matter what kind of day I've

had - whether I feel sad or satisfied by work well done, there they are, those falling, falling bodies…all that night I was on those planes as they came into those buildings….I was sitting in the seat with all of us as we realized at the last second as the buildings came up close that we were never getting off…I am never getting off.

When I came home that night I reached for you ---but you put your hand up to stop me---I reached for you---unusually so—I never show you how afraid I really am - how unsure (you don't like that do you?) but you put your hand up.

Overwhelmed by terror I showed you, finally, how small I felt, that I feel we all are…you put your hand up to push me away. I know my fear scared you, overwhelmed you got you in touch with your own fear which I think you like to ignore, I also wasn't keeping that distance you like, that distance you need, where you can imagine me…perfect, whole

You say you love me but I fear you don't, I fear that you love the idea of me and love parts of me, the way I hold your feelings, the way I am soft, holding, you love the image of me that you like to create in your head what you've made me in your mind unlined mysterious other…other

You never see all of me up close wrinkled, frail, human, falling
I worry you love the idea of me.
LOVE ME
Catch me out of the air
Please
You say you want me to not be so mysterious
To see, to know, to be sure to not frighten you
So you could put down your narrow tube
But I think you like this view
I worry that it is when I become real, fleshed out, nuanced…hungry
That it trembles in your hands
I see how frightened you are
Of me

I'd like you to put me back into my body like the way you do sometimes when you're inside and you reach, reach my side of the moon and I stop falling and arrive. I'd like you to touch me harder, let go of your tunnel vision and walk to my side of the moon it's not that far…

I'm falling and I've been falling for a long time
You just don't see it

Because you don't want to
I know you can't save me but I wish you'd try
That is saving sometimes…trying
I am falling past you
You want to swallow me whole
You miss the fact that I am falling past and away from you
You never see
You never see
But perhaps it is I who am blinded
At moments I only see you through my own lens
Darkly…
Can I really say what I think you are doing – experiencing of me?
"Are you there"?

I'll be waiting for you
On the other side of the moon
My favorite color is…

t'

When I am with you I am aware that I have to work to hold on to the feelings that I have for you, that seems silly but truly I am beset a bit by the feelings I do not have for you but might have for you or did have for you or want to have for you, let me explain, when you ask me "do I love you" I say yes because I do but then you sometimes go further and ask me to tell you why and then I tell you and name all the wonderful things you are such as beautiful or smart but as these names roll off my tongue the taste of the rejected ideas is left behind which is that you used to be more beautiful or you are smart except in some areas or that someone else is more beautiful or that I used to feel these things more strongly than I do now, even though I do still feel them except that the weight of all the things that you are not narrows my response and I inevitably drift off somewhat to scatter these intrusions and you then ask me why and I feel you are accusing me of not being completely authentic and I use one of my ways of ending the inquiry, no doubt each of us is left thinking of *someone else*

And I do want to be thinking only of you but how can I get around the fact that you are a subset of all the others and in order to attend to you I must sweep all the others to the side which is quite a task and once in a while as I sweep them

to the side one of them catches my attention momentarily and how is it that you notice that flicker enough so that when I look in your eyes we are *three*? I cannot think of you without purposefully not thinking of them

I think you see my struggle and it upsets you - you misunderstand and become worried or angry which burdens me more I don't like this and strangely this makes the feelings I don't have for you stronger, I blame you for this I shouldn't it's just a misunderstanding though I've never been able to make you understand

Oh how I am burdened by thinking for every time I name a thing in my mind I so quickly go through the list of near-things that it is not and I am left not only with the name of the thing but really more so with the things that it is not and almost always I wish the thing it is, was one of the things I considered it was not, so I live in a vast territory of disappointment that I must ignore. It is not fair because there are so many more things that are not than that are, the chances are stacked against reality whatever that may be. Holding firm with what I think is true is an exhausting enterprise and I am tired not of you, heaven's no not of you, heaven's no not of you. So despite this fatigue we should celebrate yes celebrate because there is no reason to wait for what I will never have, and I can do this, not only declare that the glass is half full that is optimism but imagine the glass is completely full that is love

Reflections – Joan Wittig

As I listen to you tell me over and over and over that I am not enough, that when you turn your eyes to me your heart your mind really all you know is what I am not…I feel an opening in me. I know I will finally be free I can feel the freeness rising up in me. You set me free. I can stop now stop trying to be enough for you. No one is ever enough. I don't care that you find me lacking, that someone else is more beautiful or smarter. I don't care that all you know of me is what I am not. To think I will be free I can stop working I can stop worrying

Damn it! What do you want from me? I move forward, touching the heads of the others as I weep because they will understand they will never be enough either. I come back to my place and feel the twisting wringing frustration of this. Why aren't I enough? Why isn't what I offer to you enough? I see now that before I can be free I will have to face the grief the loss my sorrow at not being enough. You are right I do see your struggle and it does make me angry

I don't want to be tied up in this. I reach up, opening, feeling the space within myself. I feel the possibility of movement, the opposite of allowing myself to be dragged down into that, mired in that. I stay up, loose, remembering my days as a dancer. I can do this I can keep moving I can take this I can move through it come out the other side strong and free

But what of the one who tells me I am not enough? I seem to have left him far behind. So where is the relationship? How is it that he does not see me? That not enough – that is his, not mine. Had I ever truly been seen, I would be known to be enough. And you say you can imagine the glass is completely full. That is love

h'ish

I want you to tell me something. I need your advice. Please clarify for me. Say "yes." Not only am I forced to accept partial bits of experience and the wrong bits of experience but I am presented constantly with only approximations of experience, I do not understand why I cannot have exactly what I am expecting, say "yes I will" I know this seems audacious and entitled and I have been told not to expect this but why must the world only approximate what is in my mind? I do not have outrageous needs, always, and when you say "yes" I am pleased but only until you comply and then I discover that even with your best intentions your compliance produces only something *like* what I asked for and when you look at me and coyly ask "how was that?" and I say, always, "perfect" it was not really perfect, the moments that seem perfect are those moments we want to remember forever like when we both said that same word just about at the same time or that night at the lake with the nearly full moon or that day you showed up almost exactly at the time you said you would and I was there too, these moments I will never forget, I love you for that, tell me "yes," compare this to the vastness of the times the world including you are "way off" yes my whole world is way off from how I think about it all the time and I have learned to not tell you how off you are because it is not your fault – that took ten years to learn- and if I pointed it out I would end up yelling, god this angers me so, there is nothing I can do about it except say "perfect" a lot or "close enough" all the time until I cannot stand it any longer and erupt in "you don't understand me at all" and slam that door inside or outside leave the room and eventually depart from you

Every concept I hold I seek in the world and cannot find it exactly, there is always an exception there is always that slight hesitation in your response after I speak, there is always a building that slightly occludes the ocean view we were promised there is always a slight smudge of lipstick on your lower lip a tiny mark on your pristine shoe a section of your hair that needs to be stroked back into place I spend so much time altering you to match my inner concept of you and you do a fine job which is why we are together both struggling to maintain this coherence between our image of our relationship and our relationship, oh how this consumes us

I satisfy myself with these approximations these near-completions by saying to myself I have time to finish them in the future I carry the missing over into the next moment to seek it there, only of course to get most of it but not all of it which I then carry over again, I am constantly leaning into the next moment with my unfulfilled desires I guess that is *becoming,* indeed I am that carried one that unexpressed remainder from the stream of territories I leave behind, I am the next note or word or gesture that animates within just before I strike the key or speak or move, the untoned note the unspoken word rising up emergent from the last approximation, uncapturable, alive. *I am that carried one.* Oh that I would be carried! It feels like falling perhaps you will carry me come with me into the next moment yes you can be my falling angel I will fall with you, in that way I will be comforted

Thank you for listening to my complaining I do not mean to complain I am a happy person I have so much I am so lucky to have what I have, really I live a blessed life perhaps not perfect but close enough….it is just that this is the life I am leading and believing I am leading and will continue to lead until my dissatisfaction as undeserving as it is overcomes me, drives me to disrupt it just stop doing it and do something else, this dissatisfaction comes from the slow building up of what I am not experiencing what I am only imagining and what I am expecting and these things eventually will overtake me and I will break something as I already have too many times, I am so sorry about that, I know I disappoint you I cannot keep up with your needs I know how you want me to be and I try but I cannot do it I slip outside and around it and I see your lines of upset I see your shades of disappointment I see your stillness of anger and I am glad you do not say anything because I might say something I will regret and diminish your needs or views or ideas as silly or stupid or tiring or selfish, my god they are selfish, my god I am selfish my whole life is designed to please myself by getting

a couple of people to help me please myself or at least construct a world that is consistent with my ideas of the world and to shut out or demean those whose views are discrepant, on and on, no stillness to be found no fulcrum that does not move no center, all this means that there must not be a center or rather we believe there is a center, perhaps in Him yes He is the center but we cannot actually locate him in the world he is beyond our sensing, hidden, only partially visible like the beginning and ending of time, surely they exist but can never be found like demarcating the beginning of life or zero or infinity, these endpoints that stabilize our world but can never be located there for they are elsewhere these stabilities, they are *elsewhere* and *elsewhen* and *elsewhy* and so that is what I have to say to you my love, the me you believe you are with, who anchors your life cannot really be located I am not really here I exist to be sure but elsewhere and elsewhen and elsewhy, one step ahead of you into the next moment and that makes me feel sad because I do love you and desire you and want to have you even though you partially elude me all the time which is why I say to you, if I had you from the beginning of time to the end of time, for now and forever the untoned note would sound

Reflections – Ann Smith

When you say you want me to tell you something I think oh you are really going to ask and I tell myself that if you ever ask I will tell you, if you ask the right question maybe I can clarify for you, but you don't ask, you don't ask the right question because there is no question mark and it is so hard to know which question is the right question or even a question at all. You do go on about the shortness of the eternity we spend together our relationship that goes from then to now to elsewhen, you talk as you are wont to do about the richness of our crappy wonderful annoying blissful lacking full relationship, questioning whether our love making our time together is perfect. My heart aches from holding so much weight desire angst love always wanting more knowing I have enough. I want to tell you something it is perfect even if you left it would be perfect and even if you stay it is perfect. I tell myself we are complete in our incompleteness, and sometimes I feel the power of that and I am that wholeness. How do we stay in the moment rather than lean in, tell me, I'll write it down, I'll write it down on paper about this moment but then the moment would be gone wouldn't it, we carry ourselves and leave ourselves behind and follow each other and leave each other and follow ourselves and leave ourselves. Oh how I wish you could see me as

perfect as goddess like Durge who picks up the pieces by sucking the demons into her legs who carries Kali in her mind's eye and beckons her to lick up the blood, and then you could see that it is all perfect in its all-inclusive way in its wholeness and wouldn't be perfect without the imperfect. When you take the perfect from the perfect there is only perfect. When you take wholeness from wholeness there is only wholeness and the untoned note sounds, Om puurnnamadah puurnnamidam puurnnaat purnnamudacyate puurnnashya puurnnamaadaaya puurnnamevavashisyate Om shaantih shaantih shaantih

!

This is my dreaming, my life is, and my dreaming consoles me despite its being interrupted and smudged and adapted and I suppose I should be happy that I continue to dream as you dream as all of us dream these lives, imagining that they can be found in the world I know. I know all this would not be possible if the world were whole and complete and true and mine – no reaching for, no desiring no living and no suffering – I know that they all have told me this for years I just cannot tolerate struggling with it forever! I know all this, mystery that it remains

I know that the other side of the moon exists dark or not and that there is so much more of you too and one day I promise I will travel there I will reach the darkened side one day in fact this separation *is* my longing is the basis of my desire, gives rise to the tumble of my thoughts and the sway in my heart. There is no reason for any of this to be true or any of us to exist in the first place, perhaps there is a reason for all this but if so it is a mystery to me, unexplained, beyond, shrug of shoulder. Absence I can understand for it is the space left behind by the things I have lost, especially you, but *presence*…why? I think about asking each one of you to hold me tight, to declare your presence in spite of the mystery until all doubt is squeezed from me and if this fails then at least you will have muffled the wobble of the world with the warmth and presence of your arms your steadfast look your familiar smell, I'd love you for that, but I will not for we would be pretending, love though that it would be, pretending that you too were not seeking something so let me not burden you anymore I am done for now, I've said my piece and am not satisfied with it I missed the main point somehow I really wanted to get it across to you, I can see you don't fully comprehend my meaning I take responsibility for this I am left without you, you who are so close just an arm's length away I can see it in your eyes, I'm sorry, *I love you anyway*

A Chest of Broken Toys

Developmental Transformations and Playing with the Unplayable

Cecilia Dintino, Navah Steiner, Ann Smith, and Kim Carlucci Galway[1]

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

This paper and its authors have been collecting dust for years. Long ago the paper was rejected by the Arts in Psychotherapy. They wanted revisions, and revisions were made, but the paper was never resubmitted. What happened, you ask? In truth, life became unplayable for the authors. We have endured sickness, death, infertility, miscarriages and heartache. We have made major changes. One of us left New York for good. Another did analytic training. These challenges were easier, however, than putting this article in the mail. This paper was written before instability theory was even mentioned, and so is quite outdated, and – knowing now what real suffering is – touches only the surface of the issue of unplayability.

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Drama therapists often have difficulty sharing with other therapists the kinds of things we play with in our sessions. This is especially true for those of us who use Developmental Transformations as our guiding theory and method of treatment. The main work of the therapist in DvT is to establish and maintain a playspace, in which client and therapist improvise together. In a DvT session, client and therapist play with the salient clinical issues that emerge, including sexuality, death, abuse, violence, stigma, and/or psychosis. However, when discussing our work with colleagues or other mental health professionals, we are

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often met with confused looks or even outraged stares. Quite often the response a Developmental Transformations drama therapist receives from others is: "You're playing with what?"

It is as if there were an unspoken rule that we can only play with what is already playable, or better, palpable. Playing with topics that are unassimilated into our experience is quite another matter. Instead, these issues are suppressed, ignored, or pathologized. Yet, play is an act that includes accommodation, assimilation, internalization and transformation. Playing with initially unplayable ideas, wishes, and actions helps us feel they have become less of a threat to our integrity and existence. Playing with unplayable issues helps us to understand them more fully, control them more flexibly, and feel less overwhelmed by them. Play confronts the ramifications of our behaviors without danger. Through play we learn restraint.

Any method of therapy that engages in the rote re-enactment of horrors or trauma would be antithetical to healing. For DvT practitioners, re-enactment that really frightens, upsets or disengages a client is not a playful encounter. But we do not avoid dealing with issues that have the potential to frighten or upset our clients exactly because healing and growth take place by making the unplayable playable. By incorporating fearful experiences within play, the client can explore, confront, change and accept the previously intolerable.

This paper is an exploration of play's definition, properties, value, and challenges in what can be construed as unplayable situations in Developmental Transformations therapy. It is an attempt to explain and clarify the benefits of making playable the unplayable as a method of drama therapy treatment.

The Unplayable

Situations may be unplayable on three different levels: Cultural, institutional, and personal. Often, issues, feelings and situations are unplayable on all three levels. What is unplayable to the culture may constrain what is playable on the institutional and personal level. This paper will describe and discuss three Developmental Transformations case examples involving issues that are unplayable on all three levels. First, we will consider the theoretical and technical aspects of Developmental Transformations drama therapy, the properties of play, and the value of playing with the unplayable.

Developmental Transformations is a drama therapy method in which the drama therapist is a participant in dramatic improvisations with the client (Dintino

& Johnson, 1996; Galway, Hurd & Johnson, 2003; James, Forrester & Kim, 2005; Johnson, 1991, 1992, 2009; Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee, 1996; Johnson, Smith, & James, 2002; Smith, 2000). The overriding premise of the method involves the maintenance of a playspace, which is defined as the mutual agreement and understanding between therapist and client that what is occurring in the improvisation is pretend. This agreement is maintained even when what is being played with is real. The playspace contract permits both therapist and client to place the real into a pretend frame, and thereby become malleable to play.

Within the playspace, the therapist and client improvise in an embodied encounter, in which the therapist offers herself as a playobject to the client. The therapist attempts to encounter the client within his/her world with a primary goal to make playable all that is available, in the service of opening to that which is not yet available. In Developmental Transformations we subscribe to the notion that development occurs through differentiation and integration that comprises a recursive process of perception, affect and bodily expression. Simply stated, the individual notices something new (emergent rather than existent), responds to it by letting it impact the emotional system, and then conveys a response via purposeful bodily expression. It is this process of allowing something new, emergent and not yet assimilated into the playspace that brings forth new potential, and changes the organism. This is transformation. The therapist encourages this recursive process and developmental expansion by offering emergent or divergent material within the play. Encouraging the client to follow their own emerging feeling states revives this recursive developmental process and expands the client's capacity to be in the moment.

However, opening to the emergent experience and allowing for this developmental recursive process is often challenging, requiring a release of preconceived notions of the world and oneself. It challenges the defensive system the client has built as protection against harm or humiliation, leading to greater flexibility and comfort with momentary unknowns. DvT opens participants to this process by letting go of dramatic structures and storylines, and letting the play transform by shifting attention to the discrepant elements that are always emerging.

This process often gets stuck, and participants may lose the ability to play and be playful, becoming trapped for a time in a state of fear. When it is the client's fear, the therapist assists by offering dramatic structures and playful possibilities. But sometimes the therapist gets stuck in the unplayable. Therefore,

an essential part of DvT training is to work on opening ourselves to playing in worlds that challenge our own perspectives.

Play

> *"To play is to free ourselves from arbitrary restrictions and expand our field of action. Our play fosters richness of response and adaptive flexibility. This is the evolutionary value of play – play makes us flexible." (Nachmanovitch, 1990, p.43).*

Much has been written about the healing value of dramatic play (Blatner & Blatner, 1988; Cattanach, 1992, 1994; Courtney, 1968; Huizinga, 1950; Jennings, 1995; Johnson, 1999; Jones, 1996; Landy, 1986; Nachmanovitch, 1990; Piaget, 1951, 1962; Singer & Singer, 1990; Slade & Wolf, 1994; Stern, 1985; Way, 1967; Winnicott, 1971). For the sake of this paper, we will focus on the key aspects of play that are integral to the healing properties of DvT: paradox, saliency, and aesthetic distance.

The existence of paradox is the driving engine behind Developmental Transformations' use of play. Put simply, play requires the paradoxical intersection of real and not real. Paradox allows for otherness. Otherness is difference, newness, and change. Paradoxically, this newness emerges from the real and present moment. The playspace is necessary in order to risk giving over to the emergent, which is rooted in the present but reaches out to the future, the rising new moment.

The paradoxical property of the playspace is necessary to allow something new to exist, without the danger of real consequences. For example, in a game of peek-a-boo, a child plays at being left alone and then found. The play of peek-a-boo involves a dramatic act that is *not real.* It is a game that includes the excitement and anticipation of emergent possibilities. However, the experience is also real because it engages actual and immediately present bodily and emotional reactions. In fact, what the child experiences as the fun and engaging quality of peek-a-boo is the fact that it involves real physical and emotional reactions. Therefore, the physically experienced anticipation and joy of the surprise in peek-a-boo is the part of the game that the child commits to as real. She can experience the feelings of anticipation and joy specifically because the action is not real. For she is not really being left alone and then found. Still she plays with the experience fully and with bodily commitment. Therefore, play is where real

feelings are experienced - more fully and completely – in the moment, though the situation is not real.

In order for play to be truly engaging and satisfying (thereby involving our bodies, affects and cognitions) it must be meaningful and salient. Being left alone is a salient issue to the developing infant facing autonomy and separateness. Violence is salient to war veterans. Dying is salient to the elderly. Existing is salient to the schizophrenic. Humiliation and rejection is salient to the transgender teen. Engaged play always involves playing with issues that are salient and important. Anything else falls into compliance or acquiescence. Being forced to play with an issue one does not wish to play with, or is not interested in, results in the collapse of play in terms of spontaneity, flow, and paradox.

Other vital properties of play include catharsis and spontaneity. Catharsis and spontaneity represent physical and emotional states accompanying the fullness of the present moment and its emergent possibilities of being. However, catharsis and spontaneity are the products of freedom and do not occur when a person is overwhelmed with fear. As Robert Landy (1983, 1986) has eloquently articulated, catharsis and spontaneity in dramatic play require aesthetic distance (an inherent property of all play and drama). In aesthetic distance we are able to feel and think simultaneously (Landy, 1986). Aesthetic distance allows us to tolerate immediate states of being while allowing something new to emerge within and outside of our perception and experience. Extremely overdistanced and underdistanced states lead to a collapse of play (Landy, 1983).

In sum, play is the state of paradox necessary for the incorporation of new experiences and sensations. It is maintained by aesthetic distance, involves salient issues, and does not survive for long under conditions of compliance or acquiescence.

Why Play?

DvT is a therapy that utilizes play as its primary technique, method and theory, and therefore is based on an understanding of play's purpose and function in the development of mental health. Play is sometimes joyful, humorous and exciting. Play is also a way of confronting difficult feelings, facing evil, and expressing anger or grief. Developing children play both lost children and the mothers who mourn them, murderers and their victims, the fearful and the fearless, babies, elderly and countless other roles and variations of each role.

Through play we can experience our own pettiness and arrogance, and suffer humiliation and pride.

Those whose salient experiences and concerns lie within a realm of the unplayable have fewer opportunities to engage in the recursive developmental process that promotes flexible identifications and fosters transformation. Unable to play, they remain in painful, vicious cycles of encounter, persona, and being.

Play is the way that we develop into resilient, flexible, and adaptable persons. If we are able to play with an issue or a feeling, we are not overwhelmed by it. If we are able to play with something, we are also able to let it go, let it move us, change it, incorporate it, let it transform and let ourselves be transformed by it. We play not to laugh at or dilute our feelings and experiences of self and other, but rather to feel and experience more fully, without being annihilated by the cruel realities of life. We play in order to come closer to ourselves as human beings in all of our imperfect complexity.

Example. A drama therapist had been working with a Vietnam veteran for about one year. His misogynist attitudes and crass verbal put-downs were offensive and off-putting to the female drama therapist. In addition, the drama therapist knew of the client's violent history. Her ability to engage in the play was stymied due to feelings of disgust and fear that felt unplayable. However, eventually the therapist was able to play with some of the client's persistent criticisms and mocking of her. In one scene the therapist and the client met on a blind date. As the client laughed and deemed his date disappointing and ugly, the therapist was able to faithfully render the role of one who was ugly and deformed. This went on for some time with much energy and flow. Eventually, their encounter became more playful and the therapist began to tell the client that he was also a disappointment. The client playfully and broadly portrayed a smelly, retarded ogre with one-eye. The playfulness continued and eventually the therapist felt comfortable playing with her fear of the ogre/monster in the room. The client, as monster, began to chase the therapist around the room threatening to eat the therapist. Making the space for the fear and disgust arising within their real relationship and playing them over and over again, eventually gave way to transformation. The client was able to share his own experiences of humiliation and express feelings of horror and regret regarding his own violent behavior. The therapist was able to provide the space for this confession and felt genuine compassion for the client. Over the course of the sessions, the client was able to

move from projecting himself onto the therapist, to portraying himself as perpetrator and the disgusting one, to confronting himself as perpetrator and the disgusting one. He no longer needed to ward off the reality of his experiences and feelings. These were allowed to exist in the playspace created within the therapeutic encounter. The therapist, who had entered his world and made it playable for herself, was able to be there and provide the affection and forgiveness that her client needed in order to move on.

How Do We Know When We Are In Play?

DvT uses the playspace as a primary therapeutic medium. How does the therapist determine if the participants are in a playspace? The therapist notices tangible signs of behavior that are often overlooked without training. In Developmental Transformations, we attend to two major signals that indicate whether or not the client is in the playspace: energy flow and discrepant behavior.

When play is aesthetically distanced, and hovering around salient issues, it is usually marked by an energy surge. The energy flow indicates that the recursive process is in place, allowing for the paradoxical existence of new, emerging experiences to enter the playspace. This flow of energy is not necessarily raucous or humorous (although it certainly may be at times of true release). Instead, flow is sometimes sustained between two people through an affective link such as silent tears, or silence that is filled with a mutual, bodily-felt understanding between therapist and client.

The mutual agreement between therapist and client that they are in play is also indicated by the presence of discrepant or contradictory behaviors, recognized by both parties. Some examples of such discrepant behaviors are: placing a mask on one's face in a manner that is tilted, revealing the face beneath; playing at being an elephant while letting the other person know it's not really an elephant by talking or using hands to represent the trunk; crying with grief while simultaneously miming someone playing hop scotch. The signal that one is immediately and emotionally involved and not overwhelmed is understood through these discrepant behaviors. Playful behavior purposefully reveals this discrepancy, which is understood by all involved in the play. This is unlike playful teasing and mocking where the intention is to be genuinely mean or insulting under the guise of play. Here the mutuality between the players is broken. The distinction between harmful activity and play lies in the presence of a

mutual agreement between players about what is real and what is not real.

Discrepant behavior facilitates not only play but all cognitive, affective and interpersonal development. Daniel Stern (1985) asserts the necessity of purposeful misattunement in which a mother intuitively under-matches or over-matches an infant's expression, which serves to enhance the development of the autonomy and complexity of experience. Discrepant signals and behavior ignite the recursive developmental process of noticing, feeling, animating and accommodating to something new. The discrepant behavior, sound, role or movement is noticed because it is new. The new and old, or nonrepeating and repeating, elements must then be integrated into a more complex understanding of the world and self. In this way, play is able to increase the complexity and integration of one's inner and outer world.

The Importance of Play

An inability to play is the hallmark of disorders such as autism and trauma; it rises in states of crisis and acute stages of many disorders; it is correlated with incidents of violence and acting out behavior. Lack of play turns erotic art into pornography, film noir into snuff films, fantasy into action. (Note: movies and TV are not true examples of play because they do not involve bodily encounter with others, are not mutual interactions, and cannot produce new or emergent experiences because what is seen proceeds on its own without responding to the person watching.)

We live today in an overdistanced culture. Computers and television are the primary media of our communication and encounter. Consequently, theatrical conventions have become more self-revelatory and underdistanced. Drama therapy in general and DvT in particular therefore find themselves enrolled in the service of balancing the wider culture's distanced, cognitive orientation by emphasizing the need to engage in the unplayable areas left on the margins. Thus DvT can be viewed as another form of a more underdistanced, embodied experience of encounter that is addressing the imbalance within the overdistanced play prominent within current culture. This marginality may in fact offer an opportunity for DvT in helping people engage with the emergent, tolerate differences, and develop greater capacity for restraint from real harm.

Case 1

In this first case, the drama therapist uses DvT as a treatment for a

transgender young adult who is HIV positive. The drama therapist had been working as a caseworker with the client for six months. This is their fifth drama therapy session together. Some of the unplayable issues involved in this session include adolescence, HIV, sex, homosexuality, and transgender identity. Both personal and cultural stigma and avoidance of these issues impacted the play in this session. In this case, the therapist is able to personally play with such issues. She is able to tolerate and accommodate to individual diversity. In this case, the therapist is successful in creating a container and vehicle for her client to play with these unplayable issues.

Session Description. (The therapist, NJS, will use first person.) Samantha is a 20-year-old transgender female who was born male. She is HIV positive. Samantha is currently anxious about an upcoming visit from her father, with whom she has a very strained relationship and who has not seen her for years. Consequently, he has never seen her as a woman.

Samantha entered the playspace and started shaking her hands in the air. I said that she could shake out things that were brought in with her from the outside world. She nodded "yes" vigorously. Samantha and I both moved our hands and started pushing the stuff out. We ran to the side of the room and yelled for help, because the stuff was caving in. We attempted to hold it up. We ran about the room from side to side and tried to prevent the stuff from falling in on us. We tried to hold up the ceiling. We looked at each other with great intensity. I wondered, what it was that we were about to crumble under? Suddenly, breaking the intensity of the moment, Samantha looked out of the window and yelled to an imaginary person. I joined her, shouting, "You over there stop! Freeze!" Samantha took on the role of this person, and I accused her, "What are you doing here!" Samantha became somewhat challenging and refused to respond to my demands. I picked up on this. With an arrogant, authoritative manner, I accused her of being a prostitute, or even worse, a transvestite prostitute. There was much energy around this and Samantha immediately began to defend herself by claiming it had been her friends who participated in such criminal behavior. In the role of a policeman, I grabbed her and arrested her. Samantha became defiant and demanded a lawyer. I immediately transformed to the role of the lawyer. I told her that I couldn't help her, she knew the law and she should change her ways. Samantha defiantly announced that she could do whatever she wanted. We then began to run around the room like defiant children yelling, "I can," and "No you can't," over and over again. We then transformed to children on a

playground discussing the good and bad of being gay.

Samantha: (In child's voice.) My mommy says gay people are bad.

Therapist: (In child's voice.) Yes, they are disgusting. Yuck.

Samantha: They are dirty.

[I then became a mother asking her son if he had a girlfriend. Samantha, as little boy, claimed that she had a boyfriend. As the mother, I fell to the floor pretending to be shocked and disgusted. I screamed that I felt sick.]

Therapist: (In the role of mother.) Gay people are bad. I am going to throw up. This is making me so sick.

Samantha: (To mother, with much anger and emotion in voice.) Throw up and die why don't you.

Therapist: (Pretending to throw up very dramatically.) At least you're not one of those disgusting TRANSVESTITES!

Samantha: (Very confrontational.) Yes I am one!

Therapist: Oh my god. I am going to die. You are killing me.

Samantha: I am leaving you.

Therapist: (Begging on hands and knees.) No, please don't leave.

Samantha: I am going to my father's house. (She rang a doorbell, indicating that she had transformed the scene). Ding Dong.

Therapist: (In the role of the father and holding an imaginary beer bottle.) Come on in. Come sit with your old father.

Together we sat on the floor. Samantha asked where her father's wife was. She stated that she did not think his wife liked her. The energy was dropping. I (as therapist in the here and now) stated that something was making Samantha uncomfortable. Samantha agreed that she felt uncomfortable playing with issues related to her father. I playfully announced that we didn't have to stay here and could move on to somewhere else. Samantha announced that she would love to go to the Bahamas. Together we spread our arms and flew to the Bahamas. We played volleyball on the beach. But the energy dropped again. I went over to Samantha and whispered in her ear while pointing to the center of the room "something lingers there." Together we took on German-like accents and as two pseudo-Dr. Freuds, we discussed possible "dynamics with the father figure."

Therapist: I believe there is some avoidance.

Samantha: I think it became too real and the client shut down.

Therapist: (Impressed with Samantha's insight.) Hmmm. Very interesting indeed.

You are quite observant and insightful. Well, what do you think we should do, Dr. Freud?

Samantha: I think we have to confront the father. (There was much playful energy at this point.)

Therapist: (Very broadly and playfully.) Okay, Okay. Ladies and Gentlemen. It is time to CONFRONT! Together we will reach up and bring down that which we must confront. First, Ladies and Gentleman, we will confront a piece of apple pie and we will not eat it!

[We reached up and with a humming sound brought down a piece of delicious and tempting apple pie. We played for some time at wanting it and being tempted to eat it. Eventually we broke down and tasted it. Energy was dropping again.]

Therapist: Now for the showstopper! We will confront the FATHER! (With another humming sound we pulled down the father.)

Therapist: (Sensing tension and taking the lead.) You were never there for Samantha!

Samantha: Your wife was mean to me!

Therapist: You did not defend and protect your child.

Samantha: Yeah! And you beat my mother when I was a child. You worked and drank all the time.

Therapist: (Stepping into the role of the father.) I screwed up. I was a terrible father.

[Looking tense, Samantha began to pace around the room. She did not look at me. I left the role of the father and joined in the pacing. I handed Samantha a microphone (a distancing image used in past sessions) and asked for her comments about the session.]

Samantha: Yes, I do believe it is very hard to confront one's parents. But children should be able to confront their parents.

Therapist: So you heard it, Ladies and Gentlemen, sometimes it is necessary but often it is difficult to confront your feelings about your parents and your past. We will be back next week, same time, and same station. Thank you for joining us today. Take a minute (indicating the end of the session).

Discussion. Samantha periodically loses the playspace during moments of encounter with her feelings of shame and disgust, and feelings about the father. Generally, she is efficient in changing/transforming her role and the scenes.

Occasionally, however, when things seem too real, she becomes overwhelmed and therefore is unable to play.

The therapist provides bracketing and other theatrical devices (assuming foreign accents, giving character names, using microphones, confronting apple pies) in order to re-establish the playspace. These techniques serve as signals to Samantha that she and the therapist are in play. The discrepant cues are understood by Samantha as indicators that even though she is dealing with real, painful feelings and issues, she does not have to be really hurt or be abused in the session.

The therapist offers the play in the service of helping her client experience, make space for, and tolerate her feelings of humiliation, shame and rage. For Samantha, being close to these feelings requires an immense playspace. It also requires the client's capacity to let go. Resistance to engagement in drama therapy not only derives from discomfort with the art form, but more centrally with the challenge of loosening one's hold on the other, in order to allow room to play with and ultimately transform one's relationship to oneself and others. Transformation of real behavior into pretend behavior involves a restructuring of internalization, and in some cases may feel to a client like a total upset of her definition and story of self and other. Moving from real to pretend requires letting go of the concreteness of reality. Because this is threatening, and at present possibly fragmenting to this client, the therapist pulls back, and changes the focus and therapeutic goal from confrontation of the father to maintaining the playspace. She does this because it is clear that when she pushes, the client attempts to be compliant, but consistently the play collapses. Because the therapist is able to keep the play alive, her client gains some control over threatening and possibly fragmenting thoughts and feelings. This then allows her to begin to sort out some of the confusing messages and difficult issues she confronts as a transgender youth with HIV.

Case 2

The second case will consider a drama therapist's work with a group of frail elderly in a nursing home setting. The therapist had been working at the nursing home for three years and meeting with this particular group for two years. Our current culture has difficulty playing with death and physical and material loss. We are a youth-oriented, image-oriented, and materialistic society that shuns images of the nursing home. We have literally split the elderly off from

mainstream society and community involvement. Expressions of pain or anxiety by nursing home residents are more likely to be responded to with medication than listening.

Yet we all struggle to accept the finite aspect of life. Two days prior to this session, the therapist lost her grandfather. Because she was experiencing grief on a personal level, the therapist had initial resistance to facilitating this group. She feared losing herself in her own feelings of sadness and/or being unable to play or maintain the playspace for her clients who represented what she had just lost.

Session Description. (The therapist, AGS, will use first person.) After some initial sound and movement warm up, images and sounds of cackling witches surfaced. I recalled that these images were prominent in last week's session, when the group members became witches and made a stew out of ghastly things such as their own failing body parts. I pondered the meaning of this image. Thoughts of being old, craggy, with warts and all, came to mind. Also, the possibility of black magic and the wisdom that comes of old age.

Therapist: Here we are again as witches. This happened last week too.

Justine: We need a house to haunt.

Therapist: How can we haunt the house?

We thought out loud about many different ways to haunt the house. We talked about ghosts and spider webs. We acted these images out. We were dead, no longer part of the living. We were here to haunt others, burden others and scare others. We were frightening and frightening to look at. We haunted the young. We haunted ourselves.

One of the group members mentioned the image of Dracula. I went to the middle of the circle and took on the persona of Dracula. I acted it out for them. The group members cued me as to my persona's characteristics. They told me that I had long teeth. They said that I had no teeth. I took on the physical portrayal of the impotent ghoul. I was filled with the image of a vampire who could no longer suck blood. I felt like a sexual being that no longer touched or was touched. A free spirit stuck in a shackled body. I had a will to control, but no autonomy.

There was lots of laughter, as I acted out Dracula with no teeth. They continued to offer cues, now stating that I was a bat, a blind bat, taking away yet another of my senses. Now I was toothless and blind, groping my way helplessly around the room, asking for help from the group members. Some of the group

members responded to my neediness by laughing at me, others by pulling back when I reached for them, some by trying to guide me. There was much richness of affect and meaning in the room. The group members were fully engaged.

The group members began clapping while they laughed. The clapping turned to a rhythm.

Justine: Sounds like an old horse.

Walter: A bunch of horses.

[I took on the role of an old horse.]

Therapist: (While galloping in the center of the room and then faithfully rendering the aging aspect of the horse.) Oy, my back hurts.

Walter: You don't have a saddle.

Bob: (Who had expressive aphasia and has difficulty speaking,) NO. . . No. . . No. . . teeth!!! (There was much laughter, as I became a horse with no teeth.)

Armando: You have nothing in the world. I am like you.

Sally: You have a limp.

I faithfully rendered all of their commands. I was filled with feelings of loss, loss of body, senses, family and friends. I thought of my grandfather and my own personal loss. I was struck by the feeling of having something in common with them. I had never felt this so poignantly before. I thought of the phrase "rites of passage" and I was not so sure that I liked it.

Milty, Bob and Justine began singing: "The old gray mare she ain't what she used to be." Everyone joined in. There was laughter. I replied, "No, I'm not what I used to be. Are you what you used to be?"

I went to each member of the group. One at a time they answered, "no." I approached Manuel (a very guarded, proud man who often refuses drama group and all groups in general). Manuel looked me in the eye and said, "No, Miss, I am not what I am used to be," with much feeling and meaning. There fell a full silence upon the room.

As the old gray mare, I announced that I felt in good company with the group. I said that I felt at home. The group members supplied me with reassurance. They began to laugh again, offering me an apple that I couldn't chew. I announced that I lost my teeth in this apple. Suddenly, Bob pulled out his own actual false teeth and offered them to me. There was more uproarious laughter in the room. The laughter faded to a silence. The room felt full. There was buoyancy about us, as if we were floating in a special place together, as if no

one wished to break the spell that we had cast on each other. There seemed to be more to cover. They didn't want to end it yet. There was still a feeling of anticipation. I was aware that the group needed to end soon.

The group energy seemed to float as we enjoyed our special place together. The group members began to talk about their actual losses. Milty mentioned his eyesight. Another group member announced that there was not much left for him. Another stated that he still had humor and fun with others. They all acknowledged that it felt good to laugh and to be in this group together. There was a feeling of love in the room. I closed the group by having us all hold hands and breathe together. The group members left the room still laughing and interacting with each other.

Discussion. In this case, the therapist allows herself to be the subject and container of the losses and humiliations that her residents suffer silently. She becomes their playobject. They are free to watch her suffer. At the same time she provides enough discrepancy that they see they are not really killing or hurting her. The therapist's expansion of the playspace is also motivated by her own need to distance herself (through broad theatrical play) from the realities of being with the elderly, since she suffers from the recent loss of her grandfather. The therapist successfully creates enough playspace for herself and for the residents. It is because the playspace is so full and strong that they are able to say - this is me!! The paradox is fully realized, creating a space for their real feelings. They can explore their real feelings because they are so clearly not real in the moment. And by being in the real and present state of acknowledging their losses they are able to notice and experience the emerging hope and love between them as members of humanity, not merely nursing home residents.

Case 3

In this third case, the therapist presents her work of three years, playing with a formerly homeless man with schizophrenia, who was ostracized from society – literally having been driven out to live in the streets. He was unable to identify and express his emotions and thoughts - and was therefore deemed delusional and bizarre. We are often frightened of those whose ontological world is so far from our own. We sometimes see them as less than human and treat them accordingly. We recoil at the thought of being in a playspace with them. We fear their inability to recognize the discrepancy between the real and not real – the very premise of play and the signature deficit in psychosis.

Session Description. (The therapist, KCG, will use first person.) We began with movement. I mirrored his movements and he mirrored mine. An airplane-like movement arose, and we spun close to each other, silently. All of a sudden it was as if we were getting ready to dive, or jump. I asked if he had his parachute. We put on our parachutes and jumped, pulling the cords to release the chutes. We floated down for a while. He stopped, rather abruptly, and became rigid. I mirrored him. He did his "attention" and "at ease" poses (rigid, military-like poses that he often made during our sessions), which I joined.

We did this several times. I then stayed with the "attention" pose, rigid, my legs together, arms pressed to my sides. "I'm stuck," I said. He came over to me and put his hands on my shoulders, first trying to loosen me up by massaging the tops of my shoulders. When this did not work, he began to steer me across the room, moving my back down, up, to the side. He proclaimed me a robot, so I began talking in a robotic voice. He asked, "What planet are you from?" I replied, in a monotone voice, "Delbark." I asked him what planet he was from. He said "Mars." He was a Martian, he explained, not a robot.

He then asked if I had ever been to Krypton. I said no. He said Superman was from there, and asked if I knew if he could die from the Kryptonite. I said I didn't know. He said although he had heard of Krypton, he had never been there. We decided to go to Krypton, and he followed me there, stepping forward, to the right, forward again, to the right, and forward one last time. We turned to the right and we were on Krypton. We were faced with Kryptonite. We decided to destroy it, which we did. I followed his lead. After destroying the Kryptonite, we called for Superman. Superman could come down because the Kryptonite was no longer a danger, he explained. I said I'd love to have Superman come because maybe he could help me; I was tired of being a robot, I wanted to be human. He said he, too, wanted to be human. After a moment of silent impasse, he said that we were not human but that we are monsters. We acted as monsters and walked about the room. I was filled up with sadness, so much that tears sprung to my eyes as I said I did not want to be a monster anymore. I asked if he thought Superman could help us?

All of a sudden he began talking into his wrist, as if a special walkie-talkie watch. He was Superman, checking in. He said he could not come because the Kryptonite was too dangerous. I told him we had destroyed it, and he said he was on his way. He arrived and I told him of our dilemma. He said he could make me human, but I would be destroyed. I said, "So the only way for me to become

human is to be destroyed? To die?" "Yes," he said. I paused. Then I thanked him for his advice. He flew off.

At one point I lifted my chin up. All of a sudden, he acted on an image of me being royalty, and bowed. "Your Majesty," he said. I asked him to fix my crown, which he did. He said I was wearing a maroon velvet dress. He was in a tuxedo, and was serving sandwiches to the entire Kingdom. "For the bride and groom," he said. I began to hum, "Here comes the bride," as I took his arm. He put his arm around me and we marched forward in a procession. He reached his hands out in front of him, and I mirrored him.

"Do you take this woman to be your loyal wife?" he asked. I replied, "Do you?" and he said, "yes." He then asked, "Do you take this man to be your lawful husband?" I said "yes," and we are married and faced each other. "We are husband and wife," I said. "Yes," he replied, smiling, "We will go to the garden of Eden. Adam and Eve." We headed there, and there was some talk of the forbidden apple. I promised him I would not eat it, that I will stay with him forever. I began to pull back a bit, picking up on something else. He said, "If you leave, if you disappear, and I do not see you ever again…."

I reached out my hand to him, "if I disappear," I said twice, letting my voice fade as I slowly began to fold into the ground. He reached for his chest. "You are part of me," he said, "You were God's gift to me." He seemed to be saying that even if I was not there, he had taken a part of me inside. I repeated what he said, coming towards him. He said, "The tree of life," and we became trees, swaying in the wind, our branches intertwined via our arms.

We stopped and he clenched his fist. I mirrored this posture, and he slowly unclenched his fist and then made one again. We did this several times and began to move our bodies. He asked if he was alive. Then I touched his shoulders, head, and face, to make sure he was alive. He said he was, he "survives." There was much energy during this. Then, he said he felt different, like a different person, new, changed. He wanted me to go into the ocean with him, to swim, and to be cleansed. We did so, swooshing around the room. We came to a rest and shook it out. The session ended there.

Discussion. The therapist is working on making a playspace for two people from different ontological realms, two different takes on reality, two different states of embodiment, to meet and have an encounter. In this way her client can reclaim his humanity and reconnect to his emerging sense of being in the world. She provides a rich, sensory context for her client to enter the

playspace. She uses concrete symbolization such as being a robot, free falling with a parachute, encountering Krypton and forsaking forbidden apples to explore experiences of longing, danger, fear, disembodiment and betrayal. Together, they become a tree of life, and through embodied touch, play with connecting and intertwining. It is a kinesthetically embodied image, which helps the client to enter the playspace and opens a door to an encounter with the therapist. While he has great difficulty with abstract concepts such as love and relationships, he is able to engage his emotional life through their physical play. In the play, he is allowed to both move towards and away from levels of comfort in his encounter with the therapist. In this way he ventures towards an intimacy and self-integrity that he has not known as an adult man. The client transcends the rigidity and stereotypical behaviors common to his diagnosis in these moments; in play he explores his fears, hopes, and wishes simply and poignantly in connection with another human being. While this does not cure his schizophrenia, it offers him a sense of hope and humanity in a way that honors his own sense of being.

Conclusion

Play is the way in which we meet ourselves, welcome others, develop and grow emotionally, cognitively, and socially. In this way, play may provide a foundation for enhancing civilization and enlightenment. Still, the challenge remains to justify play as delivering therapeutic value when clients bring issues and experiences that are unplayable. In fact, re-enactment of unplayable issues, without the playspace as we define it, may be re-traumatizing and antithetical to healing. We postulate the following justifications for play as therapy, especially when play seems unplayable.

- Play allows for development and change through the recursive process of taking in and letting oneself be affected by something new.
- Because play occurs within a paradoxical space of real and not real (the playspace) the participants are allowed the opportunity to feel deeply and yet control frightening and threatening aspects of themselves.
- Play expands participants' capacities as emerging and spontaneous individuals.
- Playing with someone means entering into another's world and sharing experiences that define our humanity. Individuals who live in unplayable worlds have fewer opportunities to have their worlds entered and shared, and therefore have fewer opportunities to grow and expand themselves.

We as drama therapists and especially as DvT therapists have a duty to offer ourselves to our clients as playobjects in the service of their personal developmental growth. Through this forthright act, we can transform the unplayable into the playable.

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Commentary on

"Developmental Transformations and Playing with the Unplayable"

Jason D. Butler[1]

As a DvT playor the unplayable is often something I take for granted in my work. I talk about it frequently, I teach it, I encourage my clients and students to face and negotiate the unplayable - but I don't spend much time examining and experiencing the various manifestations of the unplayable in my play. Dintino, Steiner, Smith and Galway have given us an opportunity to reengage with the idea and to begin a closer examination of the unplayable and its role in DvT.

Sometimes we bump into our unplayable, solid and impenetrable, "you shall not pass" -- the unplayable, experienced as unplayable. Other times, we expertly swerve around it, our subconscious effortlessly gliding around what might be difficult or unpalatable, maintaining the illusion of repeating elements, all is the same, all is safe, all is known, all appears playable. Perhaps, on an odd occasion, we might catch a glimpse, a blip in the rearview mirror, of something, a fleeting moment in the periphery, fading before it has even manifest. Our relationship to the unplayable is complex.

Perhaps there are at least two layers of play: the play of comfort, of things that are already playable and palpable, and then the play of discomfort, the play that's clunky, that's scary, unpalatable and new. I can see potential reflections of my own unplayable, or rather, uncomfortable play, in each of the case studies presented by Dintino et al. I see my own relationship to shame, gender and transgenderism, my own experience of mortality, watching people close to me age, and my own relationship to sanity, home and isolation. Were I to work with the individuals presented here, I could lean in two different directions: I could take the path of least resistance and play where my comfort is – engaging with my own repetitions around these themes in ways that would still probably be helpful

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for the clients but that would be safe for me – or I could play at the edge of my discomfort and continue challenging my own playspace in the presence of my clients. True, this will raise questions of ethics and responsibility, but these questions have always been present. In fact, one of my favorite DvT chapters is "Playing with the Perpetrator: Gender Dynamics in Developmental Drama Therapy" by Dintino and Johnson (1997) that opens up much about this idea.

What is the responsibility of the DvT playor in relationship to his or her own playspace? In each case above, Dintino et al. reflect the clients' unplayable issues, but also point toward the unplayable, or uncomfortable play of the therapist. Entering the paradox, finding the saliency and utilizing the aesthetic distance puts us into a position to affect change in our clients. But is there also benefit in the playor's continual process of personal challenge and discomfort using the same tools? At the International DvT Conference in Maastricht in 2014, Marc Willemsen and I explored this topic in our workshop, "The Titanic and the Art of Going Down." If DvT ideas and concepts regarding power, reversibility and play are at our core, then it stands to reason that the ideas of unplayability and expansion of playspace will continue, perpetually, to apply to both player and playor (for are we ever exclusively one or the other?).

With all parties engaged in a sincere process of exploration it seems the potential for growth increases. While it is only alluded to in this article, the transformation expressed by the playors in the case examples above cannot have been small or insignificant, especially in the moments where all involved took steps into the new, uncomfortable places. Their examples can serve as reminders of the transactional nature of DvT and the potential within a truly mutual encounter.

On an even larger scale, the question mentioned by Dintino et al. at the beginning of the article, "You're playing with *what*?" seems more relevant now than ever as it points to the unplayable that exists beyond the personal level, within institutions and cultures. With recent terrorist attacks in France and the ever-present tensions of religion, belief, conviction and politics fueling real violence and harm, the idea of playing with the unplayable – unlocking the rigidity of ideas in order to enter a space of dialogue and transformation – seems more important than ever. As the authors eloquently state, "We play not to laugh at or dilute our feelings and experiences of self and other, but rather to feel and experience fully, without being annihilated by the cruel realities of life. We play in order to come closer to ourselves as human beings in all of our imperfect

complexity."

Is it too grandiose to suggest we have an obligation to play? A responsibility to engage with our own discomfort and unplayability within embodied encounters in the playspace in order to help ourselves, our clients and the ailing world stay in touch with our humanity?

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Tending to the Supervisory Relationship Through Developmental Transformations

Robert Miller, Sofia Vgenopoulou, and David Read Johnson[1]

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

This article was written 20 years ago and was promptly rejected by the Arts in Psychotherapy. It was then passed around, lost, found again, revised because DvT theory had changed, and finally submitted again to Arts in Psychotherapy, which asked for major revisions. The reviewers accurately saw that this article is really two articles: one that discusses supervisory dynamics in the creative arts therapies in general; and another that demonstrates the dynamics of DvT supervision and implicitly suggests it is superior to other forms of supervision. We found no way to repair this.

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Psychotherapy disciplines have established the supervisory relationship as the primary learning alliance for growth and continued efficacy of psychotherapeutic practice. Supervisory relationships influence the manner in which a psychotherapist will establish therapeutic relationships (Karon, 1990). To promote the growth of drama therapy as a profession it is important to understand the specific challenges of consolidating a professional identity as a drama therapist. The supervisory relationship is a central component of this process. In this paper we will focus on the challenges to the establishment of a secure

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supervisory relationship and then illustrate how Developmental Transformations can facilitate the achievement of that goal.

The primary context for the internal consolidation of a secure identity as a psychotherapist is the one-to-one personal transmission of learning between an individual supervisor and student. Research demonstrates that through the process of internalization the student develops a model of functional authority and a secure professional identity (Geller, 1987; Irwin, 1986; Orlinsky & Geller, 1991).

Research on mentoring relationships strongly suggests that the most effective consolidation of professional identity occurs when the student is supervised by a person in the same profession and orientation, though additional supervision from supervisors of diverse backgrounds and perspectives is valuable (Johnson, 1999; Levinson, 1978).

Supervisory support for the drama therapy student in the professional setting means providing supervision, drama therapy, training, mentoring, and job advancement. Careful attention to individual supervisory relationships in the professional setting will benefit not only the student and supervisor directly, but will ensure the growth of the drama therapy profession (Johnson, 1984; Jones & Dokter, 2008). Two-year graduate school training prepares the student to practice drama therapy. Postgraduate practice and supervision over an extended period of time allows the student to consolidate an identity as a professional drama therapist. Unfortunately, professional norms concerning the supervisory relationship have not been sufficiently established.

A 1995 survey of members of the National Association for Drama Therapy documented that few graduates identified having supervisors who actually practice drama therapy. Compared with other psychotherapy disciplines that encourage the student to experience psychotherapy in their own discipline, few drama therapy students sought out drama therapy as their primary therapeutic experience. Publications in our professional journals and presentations at professional conferences were authored primarily by one person, rather than co-authored by mentor and mentees. There existed a not insignificant postgraduate dropout rate (giving up drama therapy practice or changing professions), explaining the modest overall growth in the membership of the drama therapy association since its founding in 1979. Though there is evidence that these trends have improved in the 19 years since the original survey, the importance of

sustained supervisory relationships for beginning drama therapists cannot be overestimated.

Three specific challenges for the supervisory relationship are the: 1) intrinsic power differential, 2) process of evaluation, and 3) management of defenses for internalized shame.

The Power Discourse

The supervisory relationship is a power differential based on levels of experience. This power differential may be denied or avoided through mutually supported defensive interactions. Supervisory relationships that evolve into peer-like arrangements with little evaluation or constructive criticism, or are conducted in a climate of pseudo-intimacy erode the authentic foundation for interaction between the student and the supervisor. Avoidance of power issues may invalidate the whole learning experience.

Supervisors need to inquire into a student's learning history to better provide new and optimal experiences to further growth. However, this is not to be confused with sharing intimate personal information. The guiding principle is to determine whether sharing of personal experience will be in the service of the student's learning, rather than in the service of the supervisor's intimacy needs.

Hypercritical supervisors tend to stimulate fear, shame, and insecurity in the student. Emotionally unavailable supervisors tend to stimulate anger, or feelings of abandonment. Critical, emotionally distant, or seductive styles in supervision will pass on poor models for leadership to younger generations of drama therapists. The supervisory style that is both influential and emotionally available is optimal for developing competence and confidence in the student.

Evaluation

One essential task of the supervisory relationship is evaluation of the student's growth. The drama therapy supervisor makes real (not just imagined) evaluations that will affect the student's academic grade (graduate level), professional reputation (postgraduate level) and overall competency. Evaluation impacts on the self-esteem of the student. Drama therapy students should be able to enter into a relationship with an experienced drama therapist and tolerate the process of evaluation in the service of growth. This is often a challenging task for the student and supervisor.

Internalized Shame

The intimacy that develops in supervision stimulates previously internalized schemas based on attachment experiences with parents, teachers, and other authorities. Internalized schemas may color perceptions of the drama therapy supervisor and guide the student's behavior in different ways (Bowlby, 1980; Geller, 1987; Singer & Salovey, 1991).

Students with internalized schemas of primarily positive learning experiences are likely to respond to supervision with enthusiasm, productivity, seriousness, and respect. However, some students may respond to the intimacy that develops in the supervisory relationship with anxiety. These students may evidence a constricted or rigid style of relating to their supervisor. If there was an abusive relationship in the student's past they might covertly expect the supervisor to be seductive or emotionally unavailable, and therefore the student may avoid entering into the learning relationship. The student may covertly recruit (through subtle and not so subtle behaviors) the supervisor to play that part from the past in their present relationship.

Intense emotional reactions and avoidance of the supervisor may be evidence that shame-based dynamics are influencing the learning process. Shame-based dynamics active in the student may be evidenced by 1) a lack of pleasure in drama therapy practice, 2) denigration of drama therapy practice, 3) denigration of the self or others, 4) confusion and inhibition, 5) intolerance of other professional disciplines, 6) chronic anger and difficulty with authority figures, 7) grandiosity, or 8) a sense of entitlement.

The student who was required to take on parental roles early in their life may have missed the opportunity for the gradual relinquishment of childhood concerns. The parentified student may have developed a surface persona of competency and yet feel fraudulent in their self-identity. Their persona is often fragile and may break down with even mild criticism or feedback. To fully engage in the process of self-growth requires tolerance of these challenges to one's self-esteem, even for the most secure of students.

Internalized shame may make it difficult for some students to consolidate a functional authoritative role in the clinical setting. Evidence for this difficulty may emerge as passivity in the student, insecurity, inability to set limits on abusive behavior by clients, or over-identification with client needs.

Drama Therapy Methods in the Supervisory Relationship

The efficacy of using drama therapy methods in supervisory relationships has been established in the education of drama therapists (Emunah, 1989; Jones & Dokter, 2008; Landy, 1982), but is not often described in detail. There is no basis for restricting supervisory communication to purely verbal exchanges. Embodied forms of supervision have also been explored in the field of dance movement psychotherapy (Meekums, 2006; Panhofer et al., 2011; Payne, 2008).

Case Study

In this paper, we will provide a case study of the use of drama therapy in the supervisory relationship, in this case, Developmental Transformations (DvT). DvT is an improvisational drama therapy method that allows for the playful working through of evoked internalized working models of power and intimacy relationships (Johnson, 2009). While there is not room in this paper for a full description of this form of drama therapy, it is important to highlight certain aspects of this method that relate directly to the issues of power and intimacy within the supervisory relationship. (For a theoretical explanation see Johnson, 2009; Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee, 1996).

What does it mean to improvise with your supervisor, and how might this impact on the student's learning? Working schemas when experienced in traditional didactic supervision tend to remain indirect, emotionally intense, and influence behavior covertly. DvT in supervision can bring schemas of relationship into the open. Playful engagement of internalized schemas of past negative learning experiences can ameliorate the painful effects of internalized shame. New effective models of power-sharing can guide the student in the creation of future therapeutic and professional relationships. Finally, the student is given direct access to the supervisor's application of drama therapy methods, which provides a strong modeling effect for the student.

The practice of DvT requires that the supervisor be available to the student as a living playobject. The supervisor does not guide the student through dramatic exercises or lead the student through experiences using projective techniques. The supervisor is emotionally present within the improvisational play and available to the scrutiny and the evaluation of the student. Both the supervisor and the student participate in the activity from within the playspace. The playspace is an embodied, improvisational and imaginative encounter between the supervisor and student. Their agreement is to improvise together in a flow of images, thoughts,

feelings, roles, gestures, movements, impulses, and silences. This provides the student an opportunity to interact with the supervisor in a zone of free play. The condition of the playspace provides the student with a transitional realm for the revision of internalized schemas through improvisational play and the deconstruction of rigid relational patterns (Derrida, 1978; Johnson et al., 1996; Nachmanovich, 1990). Within this process, dynamics of power differential, evaluation, and shame can be easily accessed and worked through.

The supervisor in the training session attempts to embody the improvisational flow (stream of consciousness) with the student. The supervisor follows the student's behavioral cues and attempts to engage the student's imaginative world. The supervisor attempts to a) faithfully render and b) join with the actions, images, and roles that the student wants to explore (Johnson, 1991). The student is invited to comment (through verbal processing during the play) on any aspect of the ongoing improvisation. Inhibitions in the student's freedom to play can be noticed by the supervisor and worked through. These inhibitions or impasses may be evidence of negative internalized schemas of power relationships.

The following session is taken from a supervisory relationship in the beginning stages. The developing intimacy in this supervisory relationship stimulated positive internalized schemas in the student related to parents, teachers, and her marital relationship. Affective states related to the current supervisory relationship were also encountered in the play. The supervisor also communicated his internalized schemas of his past positive supervisory experiences during the play. In this session, the power differential between this supervisor and student is atypical in the sense that the student, while less experienced in drama therapy, is a medical doctor with higher social status than her supervisor.

The present example is a training session that occurred during the student's (Sofia Vgenopolou) graduate internship at the Veterans Administration Medical Center. She is in her late twenties, married, and is a medical doctor. The supervisor in this session is a single male drama therapist (Robert Miller) in his late thirties.

This is the third session, three weeks into the student's internship. This session took place after the supervisor returned from vacation during which the student managed the patient drama therapy group alone. The student was evaluated by the supervisor, staff and patients at the medical center as having

functioned successfully in the absence of the supervisor. This session was the first meeting between the supervisor and the student since his returning from vacation.

The session was audiotaped and later transcribed. The supervisor and student were each asked to write personal reflections of the session, without knowledge of the other's reflections. These reflections, revealed in the indented commentary, were written after the end of the internship. Commentary in brackets [ ] are descriptions of actions that took place during the session.

[The supervisor and the student enter the room and spend a few minutes physically stretching, and warming up their voices. The two begin to move around the room at random, eventually developing punching and swinging movements. Sounds of growls and hissing are added. The movements transform to the image of wind blowing. The two are blown around the room by forceful winds. Sofia then transforms the scene by beginning to move in a heavy, slow, burdened manner, which Robert joins and follows.]

Robert: You seem to be enjoying your abandon, I can also see you are burdened by something.

Sofia: Oh…I just can't do this…. I feel so heavy, so much a stranger, I want something completely different than this… I want to start talking and never stop, and at the same time I am afraid to utter a single word for fear it will reveal too much…I feel so transparent.

[She adds facial expressions that are sad and directed to the supervisor. She makes sounds of clicks, hissing, and growling that develop into wringing and punching movements toward the supervisor]

Robert: Are you angry with me because I was on vacation, for leaving you alone?

[Both begin to laugh as they embody the slow wringing movements with growling sounds. She begins to laugh harder, and stumbles on a piece of carpet, which makes her laugh even more. He imitates this accident and continues to follow her lead by intensifying the clumsiness and stumbling movements.]

Sofia: Well, good, at least I am off the hook…Thank God he can be so ridiculous… I am relieved that he can put himself on the spot, relieved that I can hide behind his silliness…

Robert: We are both clumsy, off balance, not supervisor and student, just two clumsy oafs, it is a lot of fun to play with you in this way.

[Movements become more unstable, jerky, clumsy, out of balance, with distorted facial expressions, as if looking into a fun house mirror. Both begin mumbling. She transforms the scene into a personification of two drunks in a bar having an argument. They both begin to move as if drunk, with slurred speech and hiccups. She is the first to use words.]

She: (As a drunk.) Get away, you're drunk!

Sofia: Now I feel even safer! Never been drunk in my whole life…could never afford to lose control…and I would certainly never allow myself to get drunk with him for real. I am tempted however, to trust him and let go just a little bit…

Robert: (As a drunk.) So are you!

Sofia: So are you! [She enthusiastically points to a real spot on his shirt and comments with disgust.]

Sofia: Look what you did, you made a mess, you're really drunk.

Robert: You want me to be the messy one, and you the judge, as my supervisor, yes, to turn the tables on me!

Sofia: I am examining him carefully…every inch of his clothes, every expression on his face, every movement that he makes…I do not want to like him! I am looking for ways to attack him, I am searching for faults, I want to create distance…

Robert: [Looking at his shirt, and transforming to the real here and now relationship between them.] That's what you do, you want to catch me at something.

Sofia: I'm sorry, but it really is funny!

Robert: Yeah right, laugh at me, that's what you always do, show me how imperfect I am, the supervisor who makes a mess!

Sofia: I'm sorry, I'm bad, I know I can be very aggressive.

Sofia: What a sudden burst of guilt…I fear that I will push him away, I seem to attack when I really care.

Robert: You seem a little guilty! Do you think you can really hurt me with this play, do you think I left you because I had no interest in you?

Robert: That's right, find something to show me that I'm not the God you thought I was, whether it's spots or something else!

Sofia: (Laughing.) I'm sorry, I didn't think you would be hurt, it's only a spot after all, anybody could get a spot on their shirt (with exaggerated concern) you will always be my God, you know that....(after a pause, and

obviously enjoying his distress)...but you do indeed look funny with that spot!

Sofia: Oops! Lost control for a moment there…hide, go back! I am thinking how great it would be if I could simply tell him, listen, I do totally rely on you, I do feel lonely, I leave this place and I don't know what to do with myself, but if you are there I feel safer. So just promise me you will be there…around all the time, to observe me, to follow me, to support me, to like and admire me, but wholeheartedly, all the time…just take me on…and I can be loyal.

Robert: I can see you are relieved that I can play in this way, I do want to reassure you, to invite you to make fun of me, to knock me off my pedestal, this is fun for me too.

[He becomes indignant and throws his hands up in disgust as he moves toward the witnessing circle.]

Robert: I don't have to put up with this kind of humiliation...!

Sofia: Oh, come on, you don't have to go in there!

Robert: Now let's see how you feel when I abandon you!

[She tries to physically stop him from going into the witnessing circle. They run around the room as he tries to enter the circle.]

Robert: Yesssss, I will go in there!

Sofia: NNNOOHHHH!

Robert: Oh yes I will...I can go in there if I want to! It's my space, and I have the real power, I am the boss, the supervisor!

Sofia: No! I won't let you go in there!

Sofia: Oh, no!! I was about to tell you that I can't bear it when you leave…not another vacation!

[He breaks free of her grasp and leaps into the witnessing circle. She wanders aimlessly. She goes to the corner of the room where there are some pillows. She covers herself in a pile of pillows for a few minutes.]

Robert: You look like a little girl, a child, hiding, alone and vulnerable.

[There is a long pause. After a few minutes he re-enters from the witnessing circle transformed as a little boy who wants to play in the pillows too. Without hesitation, she becomes a little girl in the scene. They begin to hit each other with pillows.]

Robert: (As a little boy.) Ouch, you're so clumsy, that hurt!" [He snatches the

pillow from her and shakes it at her. She tries to grab for the pillow, but he holds it out of reach.]

Sofia: (As a little girl.) Give that to me! [Again he holds the pillow just out of her reach. She tries to grab it from him, but he runs away keeping it out of her reach, taunting her with the pillow.]

Robert: Oh!, so there is something that you want, underneath the mask of the child, you want something very important, I wonder what it is?

Sofia: I said, give that to me!

Sofia: I am so angry! I want you to be real! I like the playfulness, I like your presence. Your availability. Your sweet childish energy. But it doesn't last, it is not mine to have, it lasts for as long as this session lasts. You are acting!

Robert: No, you're not gettin it!

Sofia: I SAID, GIVE IT TO ME!

Robert: NO...! [He continues to play with the pillow, holding it away from her as she tries to snatch it back. After a few moments she transforms the scene and becomes a mother demanding that the little boy behave.]

Sofia: (As the mother.) Bring that back, you know it's the pillow my mother gave to me, I don't want you to mess around with it! Now, be a good boy and bring it back!

Robert: (As a little boy.) Ok, mommy, I won't do that again, I'll be a really good boy!

Robert: Now you are the mommy, the power player, who scolds me!

[He brings the pillow over and sits down next to her.]

Sofia: It feels good to be his mommy. Being his mother makes me need him less…the mother I want him to be, the mother I long for and I attack…I like this reversed situation here.

Sofia: And don't throw me in those pillows again, I'm growing older! What a thing to do to your own mother! I'm not the one you should play with anymore!

Robert: I'm sorry mommy, what should I do?

Sofia: I don't know! For God sake's go out and date...that should take care of things!

Robert: (As the little boy and the supervisor.) Dating? But... I'm only nine years

old!?

Sofia: (As the mother and supervisee.) So what!...in the year 2000, little boys of nine can date of course!

Robert: But...but.... I don't know what to do!

Sofia: Look...it's up to you! If you want to be dating age, you can. It's your choice. There is always so much choice in life! [She makes a box-like gesture with her index fingers, a specific gesture that he picks up and joins and transforms back to the here and now relationship.]

Robert: Anything is possible! I see your meaning now, you brought up dating, are you worried about the pleasure that we share in the play. I wonder what you will do now?

Robert: There is sooooo much choice in life!

Sofia: There is sooooo much choice in life! That's what they've always told me!

Robert: That's what they've always told you?

Sofia: That's what they've always told me! [Gradually, the box begins to shrink until it disappears. They have moved closer to each other in the room, and are face to face, inches apart.]

Robert: I can feel the intimacy and the pleasure of playing with you, we are face to face, and we are gazing into each other's eyes, this is dangerous!

Sofia: How did we get here? From "so little choice in life"? But right now I am here feeling hopeful… I have squeezed myself and my desires, and yet, right now the story changes…this choice, this prospect seems promising…He even seems real…

[The box has now disappeared, and both are bent over at the waist looking at a small point at the end of their fingers. The two look at each other with suspicion. Slowly, she transforms to becoming an old woman.]

Sofia: (As an old woman.) I'm fed up with you!

Robert: (As an old man.) Oh God! I can't take this anymore. I'm fed up with you!

Sofia: What about me? After 78 years, I'm more than fed up with you!

Robert: Look at you! You're so old, you look terrible, I can't even look at you anymore!

Sofia: And what do you think you look like?! [They look intently at each other. They smile.]

Robert: Would you like a cup of tea?

Sofia: Why, yes! [The two sit together sipping tea.]

Sofia: God, I want to just be able to enjoy this…but the words come out of my mouth and I don't have control over them, they just destroy the moment I treasure, but I have to test him.

Robert: Listen, I'm sorry. I know I haven't appreciated you enough lately.

Sofia: No, you haven't!

Robert: I really haven't shown you how much I appreciate and respect you...I'm sorry.

Sofia: Well no....you don't have to apologize...don't fill in because you think you have to...I never felt like I've had enough of that... but...you don't have to take care of me.

Robert: I see the little girl again, and the wife, and then my role shifts to supervisor again, perhaps you have never had enough of…what? Is it a risk for you to depend on me?

Sofia: Transparent, needy, anxious, depressed, now he knows it all! Yes, I do want someone to take me on, but not like this…! I want to be strong and powerful, and talented and self-sufficient!

Robert: No, let me apologize, you are absolutely right, let me take responsibility for what I've done wrong. I didn't thank you enough for taking on so much responsibility last week! You did a great job taking on the group by yourself....I thought of you on Tuesday and hoped it was going well.

Sofia: You did?

Robert: Yes! I thought: I wonder what she is doing with the group now, I hope she's okay. I was concerned, but confident. I didn't tell you how much I appreciated everything you did for the patients and for the unit. I heard from everyone that you did well, and that you handled everything very professionally.

Sofia: Yep I did!

Sofia: I feel very scared…I am thinking I have been asking for this all along… recognition, attention, appreciation. But I am just very scared…what will this mean?

[There is a pause between them as they sit silently, smiling at each other. After a short while the feeling tone seems to shift back into a more playful and aggressive climate.]

Sofia: In fact, the patients said that they enjoyed my group much more than yours!

Robert: Is this your secret desire? We have played this scene before, I can

take it, go for it!

Sofia: What a dilemma! Will my competence antagonize him, or make him admire me?

Robert: Is that so? So...that's what is going on here...not even two, three short weeks into your internship and already you want to throw me out and take over the unit!

Sofia: Yesssss!

Robert: Yeah, I see the way it is, get rid of him and take over! [Hurt, he stands to walk away and moves again to the witnessing circle.]

Sofia: No, NO, NOOO! I'm sorry, I should never have said that... PLEASE... forgive me... don't take me seriously!

Robert: No, no, it's too late, I see the way you are, I see the way you really are...enough, I'm leaving!

Sofia: No, No! Don't go! Forgive me, I feel so guilty. Of course my group is not better...I know the patients are just splitting, but I just wanted to tease you so badly...I only said it to take revenge on you, please DON'T GO!

Robert: No, I am going for good, how can I believe you? First you sabotage me and now you are trying to seduce me! Let go, I AM OUTTA HERE! [After a long struggle to wrestle free he makes a grand exit into the witnessing circle.]

Sofia: Oh no...I messed up again! Come on! This is not fair, you're placing yourself beyond my reach, I can't make up to you this way. I feel so damn guilty and bad, like a baby. [She lays on the floor for three to four minutes. He re-enters from the witnessing circle and makes a call to a senior supervisor.]

Robert: I don't believe you this time, you are far from a baby, you are a powerful competent woman.

Robert: Hello? Hi, it's me. I have to talk to you about our intern. You know, I really think we should get rid of her, I mean, she really is a baby, and she's very inappropriate, can't get it together, I'm telling you, she's a wacko, she is crazy....! [She, in the role of the senior supervisor picks up the phone and answers him.]

Sofia: (As the senior supervisor.) Come on, relax, she's just young and inexperienced, a little bit in a mess herself, you know, nothing terrible.

Robert: No!! I'm telling you, there's something verrrrryyy wrong with her, she's a

wacko, (screaming, out of control, falling on the floor and writhing) SHE'S A WACKO, I'M TELLING YOU!

Sofia: Listen, you are paranoid, you don't need to worry that much, I think you are losing it yourself...!

Robert: NOOOOO! SHE'S OUTTA CONTROL! SHE'S CRAZY! WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING! SHE WILL EMBARRASS US IF PEOPLE FIND OUT!

Sofia: LISTEN TO ME! Pull yourself together right away or you're fired. You're ridiculous! [He loses control completely, writhing on the floor. Eventually he regains control and puts his head down looking very sad.]

Robert: (As the student.) I'm sorry, I got so worried, I'm no good, I'm a failure, I'll never be good enough..... I'll never get this stuff, this work!

Sofia: (As the supervisor.) Of course you're good, you're fine. You're going to be fine. It's okay!

Robert: No, I can't do anything right, I am a failure, I just don't get it!

Sofia: That's nonsense. Think of all the things you've done right. You're doing well and you will continue to do well from here on in till the end of the internship.

Robert: How do you know?

Sofia: Because I do. I'll be here to support you like I always have. I believe in you.

Robert: You want to support me?

Sofia: Of course. I'll support you in whatever you want to do!

Sofia: Oh, I wish he needs me just as much as I do…maybe there is some truth to what he is saying. Maybe he is not so above it all anyway and there is something that I am needed for.

Robert: You really want to support me? But wait a minute, I'm here to support you!

Robert: Now it feels like it is just you and me, no roles.

Sofia: Oh no, you shouldn't have to do that.

Robert: But I want to, that's how it is supposed to work. Don't you trust me?

Sofia: No, it's not that I don't trust you, it's just that... I need so much support... it seems...that I want too much.

Robert: What are you afraid of?

Sofia: It's not me I'm afraid of... it's you that I'm afraid for...!

Robert: You're afraid for me?

Sofia: Yes!

Robert: What are you afraid might happen to me?

Sofia: Oh, I don't know, I'm such a baby, and a burden...!

Robert: Oh, I get it now. You're afraid you're a burden to me, is that it?

Sofia: YES!!

Robert: I'm fine, you don't need to worry about me, I can take care of myself. I have my own support system, a very strong one that I can rely on. Let me introduce them to you. [He puts his arm around her shoulder and helps her off the floor. He then leads her around the room introducing her to members of his support system.]

Sofia: For some strange reason this is not so comforting. I can't trust him… the only way I will ever trust him is if I make myself absolutely indispensable to him…I must be needed, I must be invaluable, this is the only way I can ever feel safe.

Robert: I'd like you to meet my supervisors, all three of them, my family, my colleagues at the institute, my friends and my support group. (Intensifying by getting on all fours on the floor.) Here, let me show you how strong I am. Get on my back!

Sofia: No way, I can't do that.

Robert: Listen, I'm strong, an experienced drama therapist, I've had many students in the past years, I have been through a lot in my career and in my life, I can take it. Get on my back!

Sofia: No way, I'm not getting up there. You don't know what you're taking on, I'm 125 pounds!

Robert: I can see your struggle, and your desire, I will remain solid in this moment for you, to let you see what this is like.

[Slowly she sits on his back, supporting her weight with her feet on the floor.]

Robert: Come on, lift your feet up, I can take it!

Sofia: No, you'll get smashed on the floor!

Robert: No I won't, go ahead, lift up your feet! [After a pause she lifts her feet off the floor, she is balanced on his back as neither of them move, and nothing happens.]

Robert: How does it feel up there?

Sofia: This is so great!

Robert: You deserve it.

Sofia: It is extremely tempting…and frightening…and sweet…and lovely… and absurd… and foreign…and surreal…and uncomfortable… God, why can't it be real? Why dip into this ocean inside of me… why open up this wound…Wake up! Take control! It doesn't last, it is not real!

Sofia: [Putting her feet down, still on his back.] That's enough.

Robert: What happened? You were comfortable up there.

Sofia: Well, I just can't let you support me all the time. I am able to give something back to you. You have to let me support you, so that I can let you support me, otherwise it's too much. I can't take it in, it doesn't feel right. I can't have it all to myself...

Robert: No, I guess none of us can ever have it all to ourselves. [They are out of time.]

Robert: Take a minute. [They nod to each other.]

Discussion. The mutual positive regard that developed between this supervisor and student was evident in this session, as they played with issues of intimacy, integrity, identification, and competition. Their reflections demonstrate that personal past familial relationships are quite present in supervision, and the capacity the play provided for raising, acknowledging, and clarifying these issues is indispensable to the consolidation of the student's professional identity. The transitional realm of the playspace allowed her to spontaneously revisit her schemas and find a place inside for this new relationship with her supervisor. The playspace also allowed her to express her desire for and fear of support, and to express her strivings for autonomy and competitive urges in a playful way. The effective therapeutic elements of drama therapy were present and contributed to an open and productive supervisory relationship in which alliance-building took place with acknowledgement of the difficult aspects of their relationship: the power differential, evaluation, and internalized shame. As a result, this session contributed to the integration of a secure supervisory relationship between them.

The supervisor's positive feelings toward the student called into play his own past schemas from his supervisors, bringing feelings of confidence, warmth, and generosity into the emotional climate of the session. Perhaps here is one example of how positive regard and learning between supervisor and student can be passed from one generation of drama therapists to the next. Learning about theory and technique is not enough. What each of us takes and holds inside is an image of our supervisor in their emotional and embodied form (Geller, 1987).

The vividness, proximity, and intimacy of dramatic play can only serve to deepen and nuance these associations.

The drama therapy community must continue to support the development of successful supervisory relationships, through which the profession will deepen and grow. We should not be fearful of engaging in the intimacy of clinical learning. We should not hesitate to use our own methodologies as drama therapists in supervision as well as treatment of clients. Through such embodied exploration we are likely to learn much more about the power of our work to enhance healing and learning.

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A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"Tending to the Supervisory Relationship through Developmental Transformations"

Navah Steiner[1]

When I thought about my commentary for this article, a line from the Declaration of Independence quite unexpectedly came to mind: "We hold these truths to be self-evident…" I found myself reflecting on what we perceive as obvious truths. Indeed, it is self-evident that all people on any position of the gender continuum are created equal, that climate change is in fact happening, that one should have the right to make decisions about one's own body and that a drama therapist should in the course of their training be supervised by a drama therapist, who feels comfortable utilizing dramatic techniques in supervision. Yet, I find that while all these matters should be taken as a given, they are sometimes, (as the authors clearly spell out with their statistics of drama therapists leaving the field) met with resistance in our own community and sometimes within us as well. It is interesting to reflect, many years after this article was originally written, on the ways we are showing up for those we mentor. What is it that we can offer those who come to train with us? Now, after being a supervisor and director of training for some time, I can say with fair certainty, that it is in fact, quite simple or self evident. It is ourselves that we offer, nothing more or less that that.

In fact, that is quite a lot. In a world where many are talking on social media about vulnerability, few seem to be able to truly model how to be in that state. The practice of emotional intimacy calls for greater openness and recognition of one's impact on the other's freedom and well-being. It is now, more then ever before, that I find a greater urgency and need for the playspace

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like the one so vividly portrayed by the authors. Power dynamics and the process of evaluation and shame so often challenge the supervisory relationship, which can hold much promise and potential. Supervisor and trainee can quickly head from the excitement of their creative flow into an impasse. How they emerge together, relationally, from that impasse is the subject of the article and the mission of our work.

I have a memory. I am in the music therapy room at my previous job, the Bellevue Men's Shelter where I worked as a drama therapist for seven years. In the playspace with me is my intern Rania, a woman in her mid 30's from the Middle East. I am pushed up against a door; playfully mock "screaming" as she is stabbing me in the abdomen as "the Palestinian terrorist." The tables turn and I am then oppressing her as "the Israeli." The power dynamics of supervisor/supervisee took on an urgent tone as we played with all aspects of our identities, the playspace providing a safe space for us to work through some of our most unplayable fears and discomfort. It allowed us to remain close colleagues and friends to this day, bearing witness to the very painful challenges of the region we both know intimately.

In writing this reflection and response, I wanted to collaborate with some of my former interns and supervisees, and invite them to comment via the lens of their own experiences on some of the key points brought up by the authors in this article. I asked them to reflect on a particularly salient quote from the article, regarding having an embodied learning experience. (Names have been changed to protect their privacy).

> *"Learning about theory and technique is not enough. What each of us takes and holds inside is an image of our supervisor in their emotional and embodied form. The vividness, proximity, and intimacy of dramatic play can only serve to deepen and nuance these associations."*

Amanda, my most recent intern, reflects: "I have a vivid memory of one of our DVT supervisions… I can't recall exactly what you were trying to initiate, but I recall refusing to do anything... just sitting down and disengaging and being totally thrilled by that. My memory is of watching you work very hard to engage me in some form of active play, and I felt incredibly playful (and now that I think about it, delightfully toddler-like) in refusing… I don't think I have ever in my life just sat down and refused to engage. But besides my own feelings of delight, what stands out to me upon reflection is how bold and unapologetic you were as

you continued to pester me to engage... how your frustration was slightly perceptible... but how simultaneously aware you seemed to be of the fact that I actually was boldly and unapologetically playing back. When I reflect on this in response to the question on how play deepens these associations, I am struck by the fact that I can't imagine a context or scenario in talk supervision in which I would have ever had the audacity or even a strong enough impulse to tell you "no" or to disengage or to protest or argue, yet, in play, I did all of those things with delight and abandon…"

James, a former intern, comments: "I find shapes of you inside my body; rhythms, patterns. Sometimes I summon you like a spirit when I feel like I need animating, when I worry I'm a little passive or too deep in my head. I do 'Navah Hands' or make a grotesque shrug. I remember an early group from the shelter where the men cast you into Hell -- the images were so rich, Grand Guignol, as you were first the victim, then a demon or a devil."

Micah reflects: "Within the playspace, I was scared because I did not understand it fully and being a person of color I was a bit suspicious about the information I was sharing especially with a 'white woman.' As we continued to play, week after week, I went through many emotions about you: attraction, fear, anger and guilt…"

These responses illuminate a key point that the authors drive home, particularly with their case example: that the embodied, playful encounter is what allows space for both a relational experience of growth and internalized form of learning that stays within the trainee long after their period of training. Rachel reflects on the sense of comfort she received with playing with her various drama therapy supervisors. She states that even to this day, years after graduation, when she feels challenged in her work as a drama therapist, she can call them "into being through the play at any time."

When there is an absence of play in supervision, the supervisor may be avoiding it or colluding with the trainee's resistance. Molly voices regret that we did not play together in supervision during our internship. This left her with the feeling of not fully knowing me as a supervisor and not reaping the full benefits of learning about the technique. In fact, I did engage in avoidance of play for various reasons, one being that I was in a new work environment and was not feeling very playful during the course of her internship. Katie reflects on my collusion with her fear of the play, clearly not helping her in this regard to support her in regulating her shame - as the authors recommend - *within* the playspace:

"We had limited play in supervision... I always thought it was perhaps that I was so guarded in our supervision play and likely in our verbal supervision also, guarded and sensitive. The shame stuff is so difficult."

The role that drama therapists play in mentoring the future generation of practitioners is crucial. This article reminds our community of the lasting effects of a positive, and at times corrective, learning experience, particularly for those who have experienced humiliation and shame at the hands of previous authority figures. Amanda recounts a past negative experience of interning in the theater with a supervisor who sexually and emotionally harassed her. She recalls that she arrived to her drama therapy internship full of shame and overall distrust in the supervisory relationship and internship process. She writes: "I would say that what faithfully chipped away at my shame and distrust was your commitment to our one hour of supervision, the day and time of which rarely wavered. When someone in power has time for someone else, the power dynamic seems to lessen." The steady, emotional availability of the supervisor is a key factor in a healthy supervisory relationship. My own mentors in the community have modeled this availability in my own internships, which has allowed me, as the authors indicate, to internalize a positive regard to mentorship and supervision and to want to offer it back to those I train.

I will end with Rachel's thoughts on what she feels is most important for training of drama therapists. She writes about the need for relationships of learning and play that allows for expression and transformation without repeated experience of shame or "badness:" "Drama therapists need to have mentors who are comfortable in their own humanity and vulnerability," she writes, "while offering mentoring from a place of knowledge and strength that comes from experience."

The reflections of my former interns and supervisees, not surprisingly, support the major points of this fine article. The authors recognize the immense potential for trainees to grow and heal through playful attachments, and that through power sharing and leveling the playing field, we all can become more open to the experiences of learning and growth.

Conversare:

Developmental Transformations and Social ~~Change~~ NS Delete: Justice[1]

David Read Johnson and Nisha Sajnani

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

This article is based on a performance presented at the 2010 DvT conference and therefore lacks most of the give and take of the live interaction between the authors that carries much of the meaning. Both authors are more invested in their comments in the margins than the primary text itself, which is now outdated. We also made a number of edits and changes to our comments but did not include these in the text so we have been selective in our openness, which is in contradiction to the unique thrust of the article, which is to include the dynamics of collaboration and competition inherent in any co-authored work. But we don't want you to know about these final negotiations.

❖

[Note to Reader: This article will include both the deletions and comments made by both co-authors using Track Changes function in Microsoft Word, so that you will be aware of the process of negotiation between the two authors while working on this article, which is in itself relevant to the content of the article.]

DJ Comment: I put myself as first author because I drafted the article first and therefore most of the ideas here are mine…well actually much of the latter parts have been taken

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from your dissertation, so, hmmm, you are first author for the Playback paper.

NS Comment: Yes, we will have to get to that one. This article is based on our conversations and I don't mind you being the first author…for the most part.

DJ Comment: So this is complicated: which ideas are mine, which are yours, which are ours, and which have we borrowed from others? Perhaps we should go through the entire text and label each sentence accordingly, so we don't get confused.

NS Comment: Noting our influences throughout will help us situate this conversation within a broader discourse.

DJ Comment: I'm usually more comfortable not revealing my sources.

Developmental Transformations (DvT) originated as a form of drama therapy within a psychotherapeutic frame, applicable to work with individuals, groups, and families. More recently, DvT has been redefined as a practice independent of a clinical context. "Developmental Transformations (DvT) is a practice involving the continuous transformation of embodied encounters in the playspace. As a practice, it may be applied as a form of psychotherapy, pedagogy, acting training, performance, spiritual practice, recreation or as an approach to social change. It may also be practiced without reference to one of these frames." This paper will describe the relationship between DvT theory, method, and social *justice*.

DJ Comment: And you and I.

NS Comment: And Us.

Theory

DvT is based on the proposition, or assumption, that Being is *unstable*. This instability arises out of the perception of *difference*, for with difference objects emerge with their separateness, or relation. This separation remains unstable and never completely definable. Once difference has occurred, *preference* arises and permeates these objects, and this preference is another name for desire, which brings into being longing and need and want and loss, all aspects of experience the Buddha tells us lead to turbulence and suffering. Suffering arises out of desire (preference), for desire presumes a lack. We generally respond to preference by bringing the preferred objects closer to us and pushing the

unpreferred away; or by moving closer to the preferred objects and further away from the unpreferred; that is, our being becomes animated and movement occurs.

NS Comment: We have to address what "pushing the unpreferred away" means in the context of social justice. Does this mean isolating, criminalizing, forced displacement, incarceration, etc. We also have to question who the 'we' is in this text.

DJ Comment: Yes, all of those and more. And perhaps it is best to use the term 'people' instead of we. Even that is questionable because of the tyranny of the generalization. Perhaps power dynamics are specific to each case; perhaps generalizing is a form of dominance or control over the unique and therefore autonomous nature of the particular?

NS Comment: Yes, there is something unsettling for me about this ontology. For one, a description is never neutral unless you're trying to perform what Donna Haraway has called "the forbidden God trick"…You are stating what you see and that is bound up with who you are in any given moment.

DJ: Comment: It seems that you are expressing discomfort with the starkness of these concepts, and wish that they were presented with more, shall I say, h'ish? If so, I don't disagree with that idea.

NS Comment: Yes, and more p'oa. This description can only ever be partially bound up with each of our own histories.

As we tend to collect the preferred and distance ourselves from the unpreferred, *territories* develop, and out of territories arise possession, identity, social classes, tribes, nations, ownership, categories, homes, and otherness in general. What is left over is often unclaimed territory, no man's land, or the wilderness.

DJ Comment: To develop a theory of power that does not engage with power seems impossible to me. We need many kinds of power: power to do good, power to protect, power to achieve peace. If you believe that once power is granted existence, in reality or theory, then peace is impossible,……then I think we are in trouble…..actually, we ARE in trouble, so maybe you are right!

NS Comment: Power needs to be balanced with humility. I am suggesting that we have the power to describe reality in different ways and that some ways of theorizing may be more

useful than others in both naming what is and naming what ought to be.

All of these territories are unstable, as the continuous changes in desire and the actions of others shift the contents of these territories back and forth, sometimes drastically and at great cost. Thus an urge may arise to stabilize these movements, and preserve those territories that are preferred, and push away attempts to alter the boundaries between them. For attempts to alter boundaries unilaterally produces ~~fear~~

DJ Delete: Comment: It may produce other affects such as anger or shame.

NS Comment: all of which may be responses to fear.

and disturbs or destabilizes the other, because a boundary is a property of both sides. In so doing, the shifting and oscillating areas among territories gains definition as borders, which can be defended, guarded, and gated. Still others may press against them, attempt to overrun them, seeking those preferred objects they desire, whether it be affiliation, or food, or oil, or land, or people, or credit, or money.

DJ Comment: The possession and control of women throughout history is a good example.

NS Comment: It's not just women who are caught up in the struggle. Children are also stolen from their parents, men are forcefully recruited. Everyone is caught up in the struggle. What about women? Do you think we'd be in the mess we're in if women were in charge?

DJ Comment: Ask Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, or Sarah Palin. I won't count Medea, because she only ate her own children, and did not go to war.

NS Comment: Well, our history is one where men have largely held power over women so it's fair to say that they were operating within a patriarchal system.

DJ Comment: I don't think you can extricate women from the dynamics of power. I presume that wish supports your own desire to place yourself outside of your own analysis of power.

NS Comment: No, I'm not absolving women of responsibility just saying that the trouble with describing what is at play…difference giving way to preference which leads to the

formation and preservation of territories… is that it is an old story. I suppose to get to a new story, we have to revisit and work through the old… that makes me think of cultural theorist Stuart Hall who talks about the inescapability of language both verbal and nonverbal – you have to get into language in order to get out of it.

DJ Comment: I just love how you invoke these male authorities to support your opinion.

NS Comment: And I just love how you invoke the Buddha to support yours. I mean, it's hard to argue with the Buddha! Really, where would any of us be without the support of wise, benevolent white men?

DJ Comment: Thank you. The Buddha was white?

To the extent that these borders become rigid and impermeable, they may be challenged, and these acts of challenge may spur new acts of retaliation and violence, and the desire to expand one's territory in order to protect oneself from incursion. One does so usually by advancing one's own boundaries, and in this process *history* emerges, as the definition, defense, and loss of territory is remembered, recorded, and memorialized, and this history comes to influence how differences are perceived, and what objects are preferred, and what territories are defended.

NS Comment: So far, this analysis is steeped in a fear of otherness like the kind mobilized to fuel xenophobic beliefs that 'They' want what 'We' have (our jobs, our land, our resources). Is there nothing generative that can come of our encounters with difference and our struggle to co-exist? Is DvT only about managing fear or can it also be about generating love in all of its forms?

DJ Comment: I agree with you and have added this section on more positive potential outcomes.

When boundaries are altered with mutual agreement among the parties, more positive outcomes emerge, such as trade, cooperation, collaboration, and intimacy. The back and forth of contents across the boundary between people, groups, and nations works especially well when what is preferred by one is unpreferred by the other. Even more positive outcomes arise when both parties

agree to share what they both view as unpreferred, relying less on expulsion as a means of maintaining stability.

In this analysis, *power* is defined as the energy directed to managing the boundaries of territories, whether to maintain, expand, or shed territory.

NS Comment: As we work on this, we should integrate Michel Foucault's thinking here about the bodies through which authority is expressed – religious, moral, civic, legal etc. and also talk about how our experiences of power influence our imaginations and our collective social memory. We should also integrate Gilles Deleuze and Judith Butler's ideas about repetition.

Power shapes how history is archived in social memory and is enforced through repetition.

DJ Comment: You have a habit of referencing all these other elite intellectuals, as if you hung out with them…I look forward to the time you might do the same with me! "This is Johnson's h'ish-stability conceptual arc…" or something, and you will have actually hung out with me.

NS Comment: Do you think that I don't care about you or your ideas? My perspectives on illness, anxiety, distress, behavior, human systems, and well-being have all been influenced by our conversations. Though, I suppose it is easier to accommodate the ideas of dead people! Maybe I could claim my DvT roots a little more – I don't know, I don't want to feel like my ideas and actions are but a branch off of your central tree. Then again, I am performing this paper with you.

DJ: I have known branches. You are no branch…..You have no idea what I think about you.

NS Comment: Did you want to tell me now?

DJ Comment: I am not sure…

NS Comment: That's a bit awkward. Alright. In the meantime, we were working out the problem of Negation. The Negation of the Other.

DJ Comment: When we begin with difference, we cannot eradicate negation. The amazing thing is that in the effort to do so, our world arises!

Agency is defined as the source of this power, and is identified as components of either Self or Other, whether these be individual persons, groups, or collective cultural entities.

NS Comment: Agency is not limited to the function of the individual, but also a historical and collective expression referring to the agency of social beings or social groups to make their own free choices.

DJ Comment: I agree. Change made.

Control is the enactment of power by an agent, be it an individual, group, or societal force. Control may be secured through various forms of threat to or consent by the populace. Those with the capital necessary ~~to territorialize the imagination and its material expression, to attribute meaning to form, and to secure the repetition of the preferred social, sexual, and political body through multiple forms of representation.~~

DJ Delete.

~~This constitutes the 'Me' that every social organization or human system inevitably creates and those who do not fit within the signification and organization of 'Me' become Other.~~

DJ Delete: Move to section below. Repetitive

NS Comment: You know, I liked that part there. You are moving my ideas around, deleting me, calling

me repetitive, forcing me to italicize! Is this your text or ours?

DJ Comment: You don't have to ask me for permission to edit this text. Do you feel this is mine?

NS Comment: Well, we are both working out this extension of DvT theory but yes, as you first articulated DvT, and because you run the Institute, and because you're my boss – I do feel, from time to time, that this is more yours than ours – that you may always want the final word.

Territories whose boundaries are under my control (power plus agency) are seen as my possession, such as self, ideas, etc. Territories controlled by others are viewed as their possessions.

NS Comment: Why this assumption about the drive to possess? Do you feel the drive to possess? To own?

DJ Comment: Of course! Because in this analysis territory is created out of a drive to stabilize desire, and this leads to holding, clutching, grasping, and defending, for to lose one's territory is to risk being open to the instability of desire and the difference underlying it. Buddha said it better. In other words, the very existence of territory reveals the act of power and control – really both Marx and Foucault say the same thing.

NS Comment: It is hard for me to argue with Buddha, Marx and Foucault, much easier with you. This is a good place to add in that deleted bit earlier.

Dominant control requires the capital necessary to territorialize the imagination and its material expression, to attribute meaning to form, and to secure the repetition of preferred social, sexual, and political bodies through

multiple forms of representation. Territory not under anyone's control ~~can be~~ termed ~~*unclaimed*, or *wilderness*~~.

NS Comment: Our history of indigenous colonization and cultural decimation hinged on this idea. Someone assumed that they inhabited the 'wilderness' and that this area was 'unclaimed' or 'not under any control.' Columbus suffered from this delusion that 'all that I see here is mine and shall be controlled by Me.' In fact, I think that this primary delusion is what gives rise to social anxiety…the fact that we are living on stolen territory and living off the backs of others. Are we bound to describing coexistence in this way? I'm thinking about Audre Lorde's essay 'The Master's Tools will Never Dismantle the Master's house'… Are we doomed to think of coexistence in this way?

DJ Comment: Distressed by the description of these base instincts, you appear to feel the urge to push them away, disidentify, unclaim them, finding them the unpreferred delusion, and thus seek out "not everyone," that is, someone who is other to this, in a territory you can go to feel safer, better, such as the Romantic notion of the Noble Savage, who eschews territory and is one with nature: Avatar, Pocahontas, aborigines. When you find this territory, let me know, and I will come. In this paper, are we describing what is or has been, or what we wish to be?

NS Comment: That is the greatest philosophical conundrum: to connect what is with what ought to be and I don't think we can really fully do either though that shouldn't stop us from trying. I mean, is there really a way to describe what IS in a way that isn't bound by the same rules we have always played by so that we don't end up repeating the same story? I'm not looking for an imaginary uncorrupted

paradise untouched by a history of abusive power relations but – I just feel the shortcomings in my own worldview and yours. Ideas about shared authority that I have learned from feminist, indigenous, and other scholars encourage me to avoid describing what IS by old colonial rules. For example, what do you think about the anti-Darwinian philosophy against natural selection that proposes that we have become better at collaborating over time? That too, could be the reality we describe, and in doing so, repeat it, and in repeating it, sustain it.

DJ Comment: I think that through this process we have embarked upon, you and I will come to a place like that, where we achieve a process of collaboration....but collaboration at what levels?....the written word?.....our comfort being in each other's presence?.....the ability to share our inner excitements?.....I personally do not know a way there without engaging with our fears, our competitions, our mutual invasions and missteps.....if you know how to avoid these, please show me the way.

NS Comment: I agree. We have to meet…and keep meeting…it is in the encounter that we change…anything.

Generally, boundaries or borders that I control can have the function of keeping the other *out*. However, every territory develops objects that become unpreferred. The first impulse is often to expel these objects into the environment, either others or the wilderness; or to destroy them or transform them into objects that are preferred. Some objects cannot be destroyed or expelled, and these are instead contained within one's territory, in a territory that I control but whose function is to keep the other in. Examples of these structures include prisons, ghettos, and mental hospitals. Much effort is spent by territories to find and round up and either destroy, imprison, contain, or expel objects that have become

unpreferred, whether they be insects, pests, criminals, terrorist cells, ~~Jews~~, or ~~Palestinians~~.

NS Delete: Palestinians.

DJ Delete: Jews.

Generally speaking, the larger and more organized a territory is, the more unpreferred objects are produced within it, requiring larger and larger areas around it to hold them, ~~such as New Jersey for Manhattan, or black ghettos surrounding an upscale downtown.~~ A very clean house produces more garbage.

DJ Comment: Associating New Jersey and black ghettos with garbage is really too strong. How come you didn't call me on this one? Bystander! I'm taking it out before you can.

NS Comment: This is not neutral philosophy. See my earlier comments. You and I are writing this. For you, as the first author, black ghettos are considered the unpreferred. Taking this out will only cover that up.

DJ Comment: Ouch…..I will prefer the cover-up to the revelation.

There is also Common Space, which tends to lie between territories that are at peace. ~~There is also Overlapping Space, such as the concepts of private property and eminent domain in the West.~~

NS Comment: I think this is getting somewhere but it needs to be developed more so we should remove it for the time being – are you thinking here of "international" waters or airspace?

DJ Comment: I agree. I would need to describe the principle of eminent domain, which is what you refer to as owning common property such as land or air or sea. Eminent domain is a legal concept in which the collective's needs are privileged over the individual's. Thus the government can force you to

sell your house to them so they can put in a railroad or highway. It places a limit on private property.

NS Comment: We would also need to discuss who determines collective versus individual needs.

Generally, violence or trauma (the intrusion of fear) induces a territory to become heavily bordered, and its border region to become more clearly demarcated. In contrast, peaceful relations among contiguous territories may lead to less guarded and more ambiguously defined border areas. In this sense, the dimensionality of the boundary is directly related to the openness, or ~~Love~~,

DJ Delete: Intimacy.

NS: This work is about love and fear.

intimacy established between neighboring territories. At its root, these dynamics of *fear and love* interact to produce the world we live in. Intimacy becomes the collateral damage or collateral gain in this eternal struggle to coexist.

DJ Comment: Love and Fear, yes, and our fear of love. I sense your fear of love is receding. What about my love and fear of you, and your love and fear of me? I actually do not fear you. Or perhaps I am not aware of my fear of you.

NS Comment: I don't think I fear you but I feel the necessary and inevitable sea of change in our relationship. Sometimes I fear the loss of you. The measure of love is loss.

DJ Comment: I lose you many times each day.

Territories may be defined in various ways, most often either by their borders, or by their Centers. Centers are produced and sustained by the repetition of preferences by those who have the means to do so over time, and are technically located at the conceptual level though they cloak themselves with material expressions such as buildings, objects, and monuments. Often a spatial location may symbolize this Center (such as London, Beirut, or Delhi), but in

many cases the Center has no location (Torah, Al-Qaeda, democracy). The more that a territories' Center is defined on the conceptual plane and not in the ~~sensory~~

NS Delete: material

material plane, the more impervious it is to invasion or ~~violence~~

DJ Delete: or transformation.

or transformation. The stronger the idea of center is, the greater ~~tolerance~~

NS Delete: Capacity

capacity the territory will have for ~~integrating~~

DJ Delete: assimilating

assimilating new members from diverse backgrounds.

NS Comment: The ideology has to be elastic in order to work. For example, policy instruments developed by the US government have not always reflected a tolerance for difference…immigration policies have assimilated difference by conflating preferred identities with freedom while simultaneously positioning the Other as a threat to this conceptual identity. This discursive elasticity is what allows this country to keep the unpreferred 'in' while still keeping Others 'out'.

DJ Comment: The US is not a sentient entity, so cannot tolerate or not tolerate anything. The issue is perhaps better phrased as which differences are tolerated and which ones are not within U.S. culture? Otherwise, I am in agreement.

Towards the Performance of a Just Society

What are the elements of a 'just' society? Surely there is no one definition. A Marxist perspective is likely to endorse "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need." A capitalist perspective: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his ability." A classist perspective: "from each, and to each, according to his station." A Buddhist perspective might view such differences as unnecessary or irrelevant.

NS Comment: If the Buddhist were hungry, he would care.

DJ Comment: To the Buddhist, hunger is an illusion.

NS Comment: Your version of the Buddhist seems to exist outside everyday relations of power and material needs – in that utopia you commented on earlier. We are trying to position DvT as a pragmatic response to social injustice.

For the time being, we will refer to an 'unjust' society as one that continues to privilege some desires over others at the cost of unnecessary suffering.

NS Comment: So here, the question becomes: "who defines what is 'unnecessary suffering'?" In Quebec, they had a version of this debate but framed around what constitutes a 'reasonable accommodation' to difference. I'm still not sure that we will be able to upset the object/subject, center/margin binary or the dominant/other duality because we have taken that as our starting point. I think we need to go back to the beginning and ask ourselves where we find the 'social.' I mean, how do we really internalize a sense of the social? Memes, traces, impressions… I think we need to keep this question open.

DJ Comment: Yes I like this point. But like DvT in general, my sentiment is not to imagine a transcendence over the given circumstances, but rather an acknowledgement of it and placing it under new conditions, that of the playspace.

Offering a world in which subject/object, center/margin, or dominant/oppressed polarities do not exist, is for utopian strategies that to me seem to avoid the problems that beset us. I think we need to put these polarities into play. What else can we do? Are there not to be employers and employees? Mentors and apprentices? People we look up to and down at? Where is equality except as a negation of difference?

NS Comment: Agreed. We need to address actual problems. Back to the question of who determines 'unnecessary suffering'...I'm reminded of the analogy of equality as a race. Is equality having everyone start at the same line in the race with the same running shoes or would it be would be fairer to give out specific kinds of shoes to best fit the runner, or have people start at different lines based on their advantages or privileges like giving a mother running with child a head start…or Switzerland's attempt to eradicate poverty by providing everyone with a basic minimum monthly income. Canada tried that too actually.

DJ Comment: Handicapping? Affirmative action? Yes, but do these changes eradicate difference? In what way are you and I completely equal? Our whole relationship is a dynamic teeter-totter of shifting power and control. If I am a white, older, male and you are a less-white,

NS Comment: Less white?

DJ Comment: More dark?, younger, female, if I am your employer, if I have more financial resources, if I have history behind me that empowers me and provides me with confidence, does that mean that what happens between us in our personal encounter is necessarily determined by these forces and facts?

Or does that make how we feel for each other and our desire to work together all the more amazing?

NS Comment: We are not completely equal or the same and that's not what we should strive for. Yes, our history influences our encounter but does not need to determine it. I probably make less than half of what you do, am always questioned about the spelling of my last name by the well-meaning child welfare workers, and am not a citizen in the country where I work and pay taxes. These things bother me but they do not completely interfere with our collaboration.

DJ Comment: Or are we kidding ourselves?...Perhaps you want to work with me because of these very background attributes of power that I bring with me, which you at times criticize, but secretly plan to acquire?

NS Comment: Of course, that's the plan! By the end of this paper, I will be an old, wealthy, white man. I can't help but wonder what you gain from working with me. What currency do you gain from positioning yourself in relation to me, your "less-white" colleague?

DJ Comment: Do you want something else from our relationship, from us, from me? Who am I outside of these territories of power? There is my form and there is my leakage. Which do you want? How much do these power dynamics interfere with our relationship and how much do they determine our relationship?

NS Comment: I want some intangible thing- some place that resides in the moment just before our roles interfere with what we can create together… the capacity to work closely with you with an awareness of our social identities yet with the

ability to suspend them to allow for new ideas and possibilities to arise.

DJ Comment: Yes, that is what I want also. And this is why I appreciate your willingness to place yourself in proximity to me; how else can we loosen ourselves from these boundaries, these territories, these fears? How can presence exist in a world infused by power differentials? You are brave to trust me.

A primary assumption within this paper is that society is a complex, living, interdependent social, economic, and material organism comprised of human beings who repeat patterns of interrelation towards maintaining survival and growth.

NS Comment: Ok, so let's bring back the idea of the Commons, the question of who has the right to decide who controls Air, Water, and Land? The idea that we have a Right to Own (property, people, etc) is so woven into the fabric of our society.

DJ Comment: Here is the rub: collective owning of the commons is a socialist idea, eminent domain. Too much power in the Collective has led to some really bad events, once the Collective is corrupted by a power elite. Giving ownership to individuals has been a balancing force in radical democracies to counter this tendency of collective will. This issue is a real problem, for power seeks expression within any form of social organization.

NS Comment: But we're not living in a true democracy so I'm not sure that we have actually let ourselves experience real shared authority.

~~From a human rights framework, detailed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulated and adopted Dec. 10, 1948 by the United Nations, there are 30 statements about what kinds of suffering should be avoided and about what guidelines would create a 'just' society including the right to self determination~~.

DJ Comment: I don't mind this, but in this paper I think it is better to stick within the boundaries of a DvT perspective if possible. Delete.

NS Comment: Certainly there are limitations to using a Human Rights Framework – it is modeled on the needs and desires of equal individuals devoid of historical relations of power but it reflects an ideal of how we might share authority while respecting the inherent dignity of all human beings so it's pretty relevant. That said, I'm fine with leaving it out for now.

The health and well-being of societies is connected, in large part, to its economic wealth and social resources as these assets determine the degree to which an individual or a society as a whole can evolve. However, a core requirement of a capitalist society is that a large portion of the population must not possess the resources of self-determination. Therefore, in order to survive, they are forced to undercut the sale of their own labor. Unfortunately, economic growth constantly appears to trump social welfare.

DJ Comment: So I hate to take this out, but it doesn't fit here for two reasons: one, our analysis is not limited only to capitalist societies, and two, we should not be presenting only a Marxist view of the issue. Our analysis should serve as a basis of analysis for numerous perspectives, each of which could benefit from the ideas presented from within a DvT perspective.

NS Comment: I know we still need to work this part out but I think its important to link DvT to other ideas about self and society rather than keeping it only to ourselves - only to those who have trained in it.

DJ Comment: I accept this point. Keep it in.

From our theoretical framework, there are several principles that form the basis of a just society: 1) the *permeability* of boundaries should be high; that is the capacity to tolerate co-existence; 2) *mobility* of people and social and material resources across territories should be

frequent and relatively unimpeded; 3) the *dispersion* of and *responsibility* for the unpreferred should be widely shared by all connected territories; 4) the relationship between the center and the margins should be *fluid*, meaning that the conceptual and spatial organization of territories will change over time; and 5) the agency of larger social territories should be determined by the agencies of smaller social territories (ultimately individuals) – meaning that individuals have *frequent and direct* means of controlling the power of the collectives within which they belong and the labor in which they engage. This will involve engendering the capacity for local governance.

NS Comment: Direct democracy is one way that we can express the DvT ethic and ideal of mutuality in society. This involves a willingness to assume shared responsibility…which is not something that everyone may want.

Ultimately, social injustice may be characterized by people becoming trapped in a highly bounded, marginalized spaces, with a preponderance of the unpreferred, and subject to the control of others.

DJ Comment: I am thinking of when this has happened to me.

NS Comment: Like when? I know that you don't like highly bounded, marginalized spaces where you are subject to the control of others…in fact, in some ways you have kept DvT marginalized as you have tried to protect it from dominant ideas about health, illness and change. Not writing a book and constantly changing the theory is a way of avoiding being scrutinized, judged, and trapped.

DJ Comment: You are right. That's why I want to write this paper with you, so that you can help free me from the marginalized space I place myself in. How about you?

NS Comment: Of course – that's why I care so much about it. Our work together on this has helped me to transform the idea of social justice from an intangible abstraction to an everyday intimate practice that has real implications for how we treat one another in our families, in our clinic team, with

those we work with, in the schools that we work in, and in other organizations of social life.

DJ Comment: And I so want to help you free yourself as much as can be imagined so that you can do even more amazing things than you have already accomplished.

NS Comment: You want to help me free myself? Well, I suppose I can accept this as you are my mentor and friend but it sounds a little pejorative.

DJ Comment: I do not want to control you but I do want to stay in proximity to you, so I think you probably sense it in me every time you do move away, which I officially support of course.

NS Comment: And unofficially? I like that you want me close.

DJ Comment: Happiness for me is being with someone who freely chooses to stay close to me and yet who doesn't feel that I am being controlling, no, who knows that they can remain secure even when I am controlling.

NS Comment: Well, you are a little controlling. For me, the feeling of security arises from the repetition of encounters like this. I'd miss you if I were to leave.

DJ Comment: Secure relationships take time to form. I know that you are on your own journey, a journey different than mine. You will move on, like the others.

NS Comment: I have struggled with feeling like I need to find my own voice- not because you are controlling me but because in order to stay close, I need to find my own distinct voice alongside yours.

DJ Comment: So, will you linger here for just a while?

NS Comment: For as long as I can before the next transformation.

DJ Comment: That all things are impermanent, tears me apart.

We believe that Developmental Transformations as a process and a practice deeply supports the permeability, mobility, dispersion, and fluidity of boundaries, territories, and histories, and thus can have a positive effect on the dynamics of power, control, and agency in human relations. ~~It is to this effort we now turn.~~

NS Comment: You know, we ought to end here. DvT and its effects on unsettling power dynamics might be explored in another paper.

DJ Comment: I agree, especially since we will have to provide a suggestion for improving the world and we haven't really figured that out yet. Are you willing to continue working on this with me?

It is to this effort we will turn in a companion article.

NS Comment: Yes. I am willing.

DJ Comment: Yes, but only if you are acting on your own free will?

NS Comment: My, own, will?

DJ Comment: Yes, are you acting on your own, free, will?

NS Comment: I am acting... Aren't you acting?

DJ Comment: Yes, I am acting.

NS Comment: Isn't this a performance?

DJ Comment: Of course. A performance of power.

NS Comment: That isn't the same as the use of power.

DJ Comment: I don't believe so.

NS Comment: So then we can Accept All Changes?

DJ Comment: Yes. Go ahead, push the button, and oh, delete the comments.

NS Comment: Comments deleted, and Track Changes has been turned off.

DJ Comment: At least for now.

NS Comment: At least for now.

A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"Conversare: Developmental Transformations and Social ~~Change~~
NS Delete: Justice"

Christine Mayor[1]

My response requires my own kind of performance. I find myself torn by the multiplicity of possible scripts from which to act: an academic one, an activist one, a personal one. Perhaps this is the function of this piece – it intentionally makes plain the multiple layers and dynamics of the living, relational exchange underpinning the theory of difference, power, and social justice that the authors seek to explain. So in the spirit of this piece, I will produce my own three acts in response to David Johnson and Nisha Sajnani's work.

For my academic performance:

Judith Butler's (1988; 1990) distinction between performative (where norms are perpetuated through repetition and ritual in a way that proceed, constrain and exceed the performer; where discourse has the capacity to produce what it names) and performance (as the subject's potential for agency) is crucial in examining how particular versions of acceptable social roles and relational dynamics are (re)produced. This piece – which simultaneously (re)produces a dominant narrative and demonstrates two individuals' attempts at agency, independent thought and collaborative work – serves as a beautiful illustration of Butler's theory. Butler argues that performativity only appears natural to the extent that the illusion of agency is maintained. What I think this piece does brilliantly is reveal this tension, without resolving it for the reader. We are left to choose where we would place ourselves and whether we agree with the deletions, additions, and reformatting argued over by the authors. The format itself asks us

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to question the dominant theory proposed by the authors, and by extension, may evoke in the reader an interest in questioning other truths and narratives espoused in the founding myths of a nation, in the media, in our communities, in our most intimate relationships, and indeed even in DvT. The track changes dialogue pushes us to practice exactly what the theory purports to do.

Further, I found myself returning multiple times to the study of historiography; that is, the way that history is recorded and written tells you more about the author's own bias and the current events at the time of writing, than the actual historical event itself. Given my current profession, it is perhaps not surprising that as a history undergraduate major, that much of my research was focused on what was "leaking out" from under the supposedly objective narrative of history. While reading this piece, I was much more interested in the relational dynamic that increasingly encroached into the paper than I was the actual theoretical content. As a historian, I wonder how our experience of this piece might be altered if we were first presented with the final agreed upon version of the theory without the track changes, only to have a second version follow that presents the cracks, disagreements, fight for territory, and love for each other. This might have been a more powerful portrayal not only of their intended deconstruction of social injustice and power, but also the essence of a DvT session.

For my activist performance:

At first, I was excited at the potential for new theory and language to make social justice work translatable to DvT practitioners and to make DvT theory and practice understandable in the language of critical theory. Indeed, it was during rich moments of negotiation between Nisha and David that new thoughts emerged for me. This speaks to the theory articulated here; where the margins and the meeting places have simultaneous potential for new growth or destruction. The metaphor that came to mind is that of tectonic plates rubbing against each other, creating the friction and fault lines for volcanoes and earthquakes.

Yet, while reading the paper, I was aware of the limitations of such an approach to social justice. So often the work of social justice begins with awareness and attempting to articulate the problem, but becomes stuck in the articulation. The acknowledgement at the end of the piece that another paper will be needed in order to take this work further into the realm of practically addressing injustices was important, but also unsatisfying. Is this paper really

working towards creating justice, or is it simply producing theory? If there is never a move into action, what is the value?

Beyond simply finding a way to play with the power dynamics, what can DvT theory or practice offer the critical issues of racism, violence, poverty, or war? Is simply pointing to the ability of individuals or groups to continually create and re-create the conditions of the playspace enough? For whom is this not possible? Is it an easy way out? Or is this simply the performance of activism? The hope is that through this fault line, new space will be created in which the work may be done.

For my personal performance:

I remember witnessing this paper when it was performed as a plenary at the seventh DvT conference. I remember the twinkle and sense of play between the two of them. The moment of this performance has passed. Their relationship has transformed. The pain of impermanence that David articulates here echoes my own nostalgia. It is bittersweet.

On paper, this piece feels heavier, treacherous even. While there are moments that remain light or even tender, some of the playfulness of the original performance is stripped away. Without the physical bodies, the mutual improvisations, the in-performance leakage and varielation, the paper seems instead to make more painfully clear the power dynamics, rather than demonstrating the transformative impact of the ability to play with power inequalities.

To be honest, I wanted to insert myself into the paper. I wanted to make, take, steal, conquer my own territory in the piece, in their relationship. This isn't really surprising given that I was raised in a place where disagreement means you are intimately engaged with another. Perhaps I was missing the experience that comes with the meeting place of difference. Or perhaps my disagreement is simply another performance. If so, I hope it has evoked another layer of possession, power and preference, in you, the next reader.

Capoeira and Developmental Transformations

Mira Rozenberg[1]

Author's Certification of Brokenness

I have no authority to write an article on capoeira: I am not Brazilian, do not speak Portuguese, am not a descendant of oppressed slaves and have only been practicing for 10 years. I have achieved only the ranks of a low-level instructor in New Haven. I have been stuck at many plateaus in my training, slacked off, and have even given up capoeira for periods of time. However, I will never stop [exploring/enjoying/avoiding/hating/loving/ strengthening] playing and fighting (and play-fighting). I continue my practices to embody not-being-afraid of either fear or power, and to live in uncertainty with grace. And mostly just dance it out.

In both capoeira and DvT practices, I am trying to figure out how to put skill into action -- especially when I'm called upon to invoke my inner warrior in important real life situations. Sometimes a good kick in the face or a snappy take-down is a humble reminder to re-examine everything I thought I knew, especially whenever I thought I had life figured out. Such a kick in the face is probably more effective than reading a flawed and incomplete article like this one.

We are all dressed in uniform: white pants, white shirts, seated in a circle. The musicians holding instruments are elevated on a long bench at the head of the circle. Two of us squat down face to face close to the ground by the feet of the musicians. We briefly take one another in, perhaps an eye-to-eye glance, perhaps

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a smile. We wait for the rhythmic tone of the Berimbau (instrument) to cue us to answer the call, and respond to the song: "Iê viva meu deus, camará... Iê viva meu mestre camará...Iê volta do mundo... Iê é hora é hora... Iê a capoeira!" "Viva my God... Viva, my master... around the world... now is the time, here is the place... I call out Capoeira! my friend!" Reaching up with open arms, we touch hands, and eyeing the other carefully, we "aú" (cartwheel) into the center of the circle. In our personal encounter we are elevated by the energy of the others seated in the circle. So begins the dance; we play, kick, move, roll, tumble, fake, defend, get kicked, dodge the kick, move away, move in close. We are carried away inside of this circle created over 400 years ago; we play together in this *roda* where every other fight has happened before us. We honor the fight for freedom from not so distant history, and for us here right now. Lost in the trance of rhythm and movement we hear the Mestre cue the music to complete our game – for now. We come back to the foot of the instruments, shake hands, and are absorbed back into the circle to witness the next game.

Capoeira is a rich and complex Brazilian martial art form: It is a fight, a dance, a playful encounter, and an acrobatic performance of skill and wit. It is community (local and global) that shapes a sense of belonging and identity. Capoeira is about connection, strategy, deception, and history that is preserved in song, music and movement. Thousands of people around the world have had the opportunity to become immersed in this rigorous and challenging practice. People are drawn in by the rhythms of the music, the human connection, the sport, the art, the fight and Brazilian culture. The capoeirista's (capoeira practitioner's) perceived limitations are expanded both physically and psychologically through commitment and practice. Capoeira is inherently rich in individual and social growth opportunities and represents a paradigm for the potential use as an interactive or group therapeutic process. Being a martial art, capoeira is not a form of therapy, yet it is a body-based practice that improves several aspects of social and emotional functioning.

Developmental Transformations (DvT) is a modern existential body-based and playful practice of drama therapy that parallels many aspects of capoeira. DvT's origins include psychology, drama therapy and existentialism, in contrast to capoeira's origins in systematic oppression. Both practices share a commitment to transformation, growth, empowerment and healing. In this paper I will outline how capoeira aligns with the drama therapeutic model of DvT, whose fundamental goals are diversity, integrity, mutuality and mobility (Johnson,

2013). I will discuss the intricacies of the dynamic process of capoeira as a relevant model for a therapeutic intervention with any population, but specifically with populations for whom conventional Western psychotherapy practices are neither available nor effective.

History of Capoeira

Capoeira originated in Brazil in the 1600's, when African slaves disguised resistance fighting rehearsals by transforming them into dance. Most of the recorded evidence of the origins of capoeira has been lost or destroyed over the centuries, and as the art has prevailed, there have been countless attempts to revive it and link the current practice as accurately as possible to the original tradition of capoeira. It is believed that the slaves disguised their combat training as dance so that they could practice fighting techniques without arousing suspicion, and eventually revolt against their oppressors (Capoeira, 2002). Capoeira was essentially banned from the 1850's through the 1930's, when people were imprisoned for practicing. It is now the national sport of Brazil and has caught on internationally. It can be found in virtually every country in the world.

What is Capoeira?[1]

The roda (pronounced "ho-dah") is a circular playspace where the dance/fight/game ("jogo") takes place. The players and spectators form a circle with an orchestra of musicians, usually led by the Mestre (capoeira Master) who conducts the game. The symbol of capoeira is the berimbau, a rhythmic instrument with a long wooden stick, kept in a bow shape by a taut wire, and a hollow gourd shell that resonates the tone at the bottom of the bow. The wire is tapped by a small stick and touched with a stone to produce distinct tones that set the mood and rhythm for the game. The berimbau is the leader of the batteria (orchestra)[2] (Capoeira, 2002).

The musical component differentiates capoeira from other martial arts. The speed, rhythm and energy of the music dictates the axé (energy) of the game.

[1] The main forms of capoeira are Capoeira Angola, and Capoeira Regional. Although there are multiple styles and schools of capoeira, for the purposes of this paper I will not differentiate among styles, but speak about the general components that are common to all forms.

[2] Other instruments traditionally played are a conga-like drum (*atabaqué*), a tambourine (*panedeiro*), a grooved cylindrical wooden instrument rubbed with a stick (*reco-reco*), and a 2-toned bell (*agogo*).

As the musicians play and sing, participants of the roda contribute their energy to the game by clapping and singing with the music (Capoeira, 2002). All participants exchange roles throughout a roda, transitioning between singing/playing instruments in the batteria, playing the game, and being part of the circle that generates the axé of the game. The leader of the roda often sings songs that either reflect the games being played, or songs that will push the players to shift the speed or intention of the game. Most songs (sung in Brazilian Portuguese) are in a call-and-response style.

Jogo: Playing the Game of Capoeira

Joga - playing capoeira: A pair of capoeiristas crouch face to face at the foot of the batteria before entering the roda. They acknowledge the leader of the roda (usually the Mestre playing the berimbau) and the rest of the musicians, make eye contact, and then begin a back and forth jogo, communicating in embodied dialogue of attack and defense. The capoeiristas call and respond to one another, using skillful movement that reflects their structured training of learned forms, but they are completely spontaneous and improvise infinite combinations.

The ginga is the principal dance-step that a player first learns. It has a basic back-and-forth format, the player stepping to the side and back, blocking his face with his arm. The step is deceptively simple, but its performance, as individual in style as a person's walk, indicates a lot about the player. The unique nature of the ginga is part of the deception of the game: It hides the power of the attack within a dance step. Players practice a series of attacks, mostly in the form of kicks, and defenses to evade the attacks, such as crouching and lunging. Players also practice leg sweeps that are designed to take the opponent down, yet allow him to quickly re-compose and re-enter the game. Acrobatics (cartwheels, handstands, and fancy flips) are also part of the game, used either as attacks or defenses. These extra *florio* (fancy movements) add embellishments to the game that make it look more aesthetic and keep it interesting (Capoeira, 2002).

The capoeira game usually does not privilege defeating or knocking out the opponent, rather it emphasizes skill, connection and aesthetic form. The attacks are not intended to harm the other person: Kicks are often forewarned or perhaps slowed down before hitting the target, so a capoeirista can signal her dominance without actually injuring her opponent. Attaining dominance is often

achieved through *malícia*, which is the trickiness, or malice, of the game. Nestor Capoeira (2006) describes malícia as:

> the specific way the experienced player 'sees' and interacts with life, the world, and especially human beings....The capoeirista knows that...'the vulture doesn't eat leaves;' he knows that evil and falsity exist....This knowledge of certain realities about life and people when applied to the game is the mysterious malícia of the capoeira player. (Capoeira, 2006, pp. 79-80)

Capoeiristas know that the world isn't always what it seems, that it contains uncertain and unstable elements. *Malandragem*, based on the concept of malícia, is an attitude of ambiguity or trickery in the game, and has its origins in Afro-Brazilian culture (Robitaille, 2010). Maladragem means the ability to manage tough situations ingeniously - not always in a fair way. Mestres have described this as “Pretending you go and not go,” and “When you think that he's here, he's behind you” (Robitaille, 2010). It represents all potentials of the scenario that are possible, but which may or may not be expressed, similar to the notion of the *t’* space in DvT. Masters of effective malandragem astutely sense, observe and anticipate moves and effective responses. Their sly movements develop into a fluid dance of tactics and movements that threaten but don't actually harm the opponent (Young & Schlie, 2011). This is very close to the restraint against harm in DvT.

This deep and complex aspect of capoeira also differentiates it from other martial arts and keeps the game playful and unpredictable. The purpose is not just to control the game with constant attacks and take-downs, but to respond to the other player effectively. The game is played with those safety factors in place, as well as the deception, trickery and playfulness of never having full knowledge of the other's actions, knowing that at any moment you can wobble, fall, and potentially get hurt. The encounter is meant to push the players to perform according to their maximum potential. Capoeiristas restrain themselves from harming, but the potential certainly exists both to harm and be hurt. Perceiving what is real is challenged by the addition of discrepant movements representing the potential for what could be. This leads to greater range of possibilities for being in the world, or dimensionalization in DvT terms. Playing at the borders of safety and harm is what connects capoeira to the practice of therapy.

Being part of the roda often feels like a spiritual experience and evokes an acute mindfulness of being alert and present in all senses. The energy of the room

encourages the players to react and respond in a way that is true to themselves in that impermanent moment. Thoughts, feelings, and body sensations arise in the encounter and are played out with a specific person in a fleeting moment. For example, players may begin a friendly game with mutual agreement, allowing the other person to see the attacks and get out of the way. Then one player may either suddenly trick the other and throw a surprise kick or take them off balance. In that moment both players will react. One may feel invincible and become more aggressive, the other may feel victimized and withdraw. Or one may feel shame and then offer himself to be taken down, and the other may feel the desire for revenge. Each reaction should be true for that player: capoeira provides a mirror for the person to reflect their true personality, in all its beauty and roughness. The roda is not a competition between you and the other: The greatest opponent in the game is yourself (Capoeira, 2006). Capoeira pushes your personal limits beyond your comfort zone. Often people will practice a challenging movement over and over in training alone and find it impossible, and then suddenly, when coaxed by their opponent in the roda, it unexpectedly manifests in the heat of the game.

> Capoeiristas are by nature and by choice a different kind of individual who desire freedom at the deepest level of their being. A man once said: "if you want to be free, you just have to start being free." Freedom is a state of mind and not a state of the body. We are part of this society and we will continue being part of it. However, we will also continue to grow in our greatness within that same society. No system or society can swallow an individual's greatness once that individual has come to consciously acknowledge that greatness and uniqueness." Mestre Cobra Mansa (taken from http://www.wesleyan.edu/wsa/capoeira/articlemanifesto.html)

Therapeutic Applications

Because capoeira is rooted in liberation from oppression, it can be a gateway to empowerment for oppressed communities (Burt & Butler, 2011), or for others who are enslaved in rigid states of being as a result of attempting to conform to the dominant culture. Burt & Butler (2011) suggest that the embodied active movements of martial arts, combined with therapeutic principles, make a significant difference in changing negative patterns for marginalized adolescents. Because capoeira is not about winning or losing per se, it provides a rich opportunity for self-reflection on behavior and actions. Anger and aggression will not advance the practice. One must develop new methods for achieving a goal in a

high pressure situation, simultaneously engaging both higher level thinking and automatic body reactions. Burt & Butler (2011) cite the benefit of the interaction between the following elements of capoeira: the structured environment, the effect of interpersonal factors, the reduction in disconnection, the improvement in attachment, and the redirection of aggressive behaviors. Burt & Butler (2011) assert the effectiveness of capoeira as a form of therapy for adolescents from minority or marginalized communities who are resistant to traditional talk therapies.

Capoeira has already merged naturally with some perhaps lesser-known group therapy practices. Somatherapy, a form of anarchistic therapy, was originally conceptualized by Roberto Freire in the 1970's. It employs active and creative games to explore authority, power, oppression, freedom, and individual attitudes towards sociopolitical issues. Capoeira (specifically Capoeira Angola) is a significant component, intentionally integrated into this revolutionary therapy as a way to "transform the way we perceive the world, re-build the body, its dwelling and livelihood" (Jorge, 2008). This work aims to build consciousness between the body, emotions and social behavior.

Capoeira provides an atmosphere of inclusion, acceptance, flexibility, caring, support, mentorship, and acceptance, especially for culturally diverse groups. Age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, physical stature, and socio-economic status all become inconsequential in the training and the game. This makes it a safe place for balanced physical and emotional self-expression, while cultivating respect and self control (Burt & Butler, 2011). By reducing social isolation and forming a cohesive community, capoeira satisfies the need for adolescent affiliation in a gang that provides positive adult mentorship, and a feeling that they are doing something of value for themselves and the community (Burt & Butler, 2011). Witnessing the awe-inspiring ways experienced capoeiristas and mestres move, twist, jump, kick, spin and flip is incentive for people to gain new skills and improve their own game. The power of positive role models for youth (and people of all ages) in the capoeira community cannot be overestimated (Twemlow & Sacco, 1998).

Capoeira provides valuable principles that I have been infusing into my practice of DvT with traumatized children, including playfighting that does not result in actual harm, the physical call and response, spontaneity, re-engaging in play, trust and the physical challenge. As mentioned earlier, essential components of the capoeira game are the witnesses who not only watch the game, but also

provide the axé: energetic singing, clapping, and encouragement for players to engage in the game.

For the past 3 years, I have been training with a teenage boy in our academy who has a developmental disability and is basically nonverbal. He has supportive family members who bring him to practice three times a week. He gracefully interacts through his body with the practitioners and engages in the roda, understanding the ritual, the calls and responses, kicks and defenses. When he cartwheels in the roda, he jumps up with his arm in the air and shouts out "whoohoo!" with a huge grin on his face. When we sing, he opens his mouth wide and hums along when we clap he joins in with his own rhythm. He has far surpassed what any of us had expected of him and he continues to surprise us when he learns how to spin a new kick or performs the steps to a more complicated sequence. He has found his community.

The Principles of DvT in Capoeira

One of the key principles of DvT is the assumption that the world is unstable, and playing with the instability allows clients to grow and transform. However, the inevitable and universal instability of life is destabilizing for most of us, so we attempt to brace our lives by locking onto thoughts, behaviors, roles, beliefs and values that feel comfortable and safe.

Capoeira also plays with the instability between people and within the self. You can practice kicks and sequences, execute acrobatics beautifully and be in top athletic shape. But then you enter the roda with another person with his own formations, thoughts, body and freedom. Whether the other player is a beginner or most advanced, you never know how you will play until the moment you jump (or cartwheel, or flip) into the center of the circle. The instability mounts as your assumptions about the other are confronted; when you allow yourself to stop those thoughts (or not) and simply respond. You know all the while that you are in the playspace, but your friend can swipe you off your feet in the blink of an eye – whether that moment is your most vulnerable mistake, or your most confident kick. Of course you train with serious determination and intention to outsmart your friend and defend yourself, but the game is over if you lose your ability to remain in play.

DvT helps us understand that it is only in the encounter with another person that we are challenged to face ourselves (Johnson, 2009). The other has a physical and energetic presence that may fit with, or oppose, our particular

energy. In the encounter we can engage with the other from a place of rigid coping strategies, or we have the option to accept the other person's offer, adapt ourselves to new ways, and transform.

The encounter in the capoeira roda is a pivotal place. One can choose to play it safe and play out familiar patterns of movement, or reactions to the other. One can stay in the persona of the fighter, the trickster, the victim, or the care-taker. But with each new game, one's patterns are pushed and eventually broken down. Every game is not only a new opportunity to expand personal (physical and behavioral) boundaries, but when one remains in the practice, each game is like a continuation of the last. So essentially one plays an ongoing continuous game, mirroring the natural cycle of life and personal growth.

Capoeira puts people face to face in battle, in the safe container, boundaried by explicit and implicit rules. The encounter in a therapeutic milieu is the starting point for repair, for people to learn that intimate encounters are safe again, that harm is not inevitable. The encounter in capoeira teaches that negotiation is possible, and that you do have control over your response. Capoeira embodies a fine line between fight and dance and requires participants to engage in an "aesthetic means of negotiating" (Young & Schlie, 2011), as mutual partners in a physical negotiation; rather than in a power-based competition that ends in domination and subordination. As Young & Schlie (2011) write, "It is difficult to truly dislike those with whom we have shared a dance" (p. 203).

The boundaries of the DvT playspace open up endless possibilities for growth and change to occur. The DvT practitioner is trained to respond in the moment to the client to meet her in the stuck places, or else to challenge the client to push her boundaries to see the same situation from a new/discrepant perspective. The therapist pushes the client to go beyond the limits of her perceived body, mind, or familiar narrative. Similarly, in the capoeira, typically the Mestre or leader of the roda will guide the music to the speed or style of game. The role of the players is to regulate themselves through their conversation. But because any game can go over the line from playing to fighting (especially if egos or bodies get bruised), the Mestre is there as an external witness, to push the players to expand their limits, or end the game if he senses it has escalated beyond repair.

In the roda you play back and forth as both the player and the playobject. When you are kicked, outsmarted, or knocked down by the other player in

capoeira, you can choose to hit back harder, faster or throw fancy kicks to not appear weak. Alternatively, you can pretend to keep cool, and try to outsmart the other by taking him down in the next move with a sneaky swipe and get your revenge (in malandragem style). The goal is also not to be passive or polite, but to accept the given situation and play with it. You learn quickly to get over insecurities, and loosen rigidities of role or self-conceptualization. Poised on a humbling fine line, players must find the optimal balance to deal with arrogance, power, and anger in a playful and nonviolent way. This pulsating balance provides the space to expand in mental, physical and spiritual growth.

This is similar to the DvT concept of varielation, the "movement of the senses back and forth across a divide of difference" (Johnson, 2013) in the form of play. The constant exploration of repeating and non-repeating elements of movement/action motivates us to adapt to change, expands our perception, and dimensionalizes our consciousness, which ultimately results in a "more complex and dynamic representation of the world" (Johnson, 2013). Similarly, the ginga, the kicks and the defenses of capoeira are standard movements, but each person adds a slight variation on each movement, and the way the movements are combined is the unpredictable factor that brings a delightful sense of awe to the performative experience. Slowing down a game, breathing and adding the subtle playful gestures reminds the other person that this is the playspace.

Conclusion

The African slaves in Brazil over 400 years ago were seeking freedom and liberation - not only literal freedom from physical enslavement, but freedom of mind and spirit. Capoeira was born as a result. The history of capoeira as a subversive practice to overcome oppression is the basis for the potential use of capoeira as a therapeutic endeavor for marginalized populations. Capoeira is historically rooted in the large social, intergenerational, and historical traumatic event of slavery. Groups catalyzed their innate knowledge to work through the oppression and trauma via an embodied method that allowed for embodied release, sensory processing, physical and mental power, and ultimately transformation. It empowered otherwise helpless enslaved individuals to stand up for themselves and find truly creative survival and healing solutions for severely harmful conditions.

One of the most important teachings of capoeira, "not to be afraid of being afraid," is the same as the primary purpose of DvT, to decrease one's fear of the

instability of Being. Expanding the physical body and encountering the other in the game-fight are powerful factors that make capoeira a holistic and expansive experience. Safe expression of the fight strengthens the boundary between safety and danger and increases tolerance for instability. One's power lies in expecting the unexpected and preparing to be kicked, even if the kick never comes – then having the ability to let it all go. Moving and playing with others, whether in the roda or the DvT playspace, allows me to remember my potential and have a more tolerant and healthy understanding of myself in relation to others. And sometimes a foot to my face or a legitimate take-down to the ground is a humbling reminder to open my eyes, stay alert in the present moment and remember to awaken to the call of this life.

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A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"Capoeira and Developmental Transformations"

Adam Reynolds[1]

Mira's article about Capoeira and DvT powerfully evokes the issue of risk and harm in the playspace. Each time I have witnessed the capoeira troupe with their spinning, cartwheeling bodies I have felt the close and distant tremor of risk, consisting of both great desire and aversion to join in. The anxiety I felt about rolling my own cartwheels in the *roda* is reminiscent of that initial trembling when I entered the unfamiliar territory of the playspace for the first time. Within the DvT playspace I have had the chance to explore my own fears of, and desire for, violence with many bodies: the glee at playing out a vicious attack, the fear of running for your life, the sensation of pushing against a body for real and finding out who is stronger. I have taken on the roles of murderer, perpetrator, oppressor – and these roles press against the internalized shapes of my own sense of power and aggression: the ways in which I am hostile, defensive, competitive.

This risk when two bodies are thrown together is familiar to DvT play: the dance of feint and block, or faithful and divergent rendering, while we are both exposed and connected. And yes, accidents happen – in DvT and in capoeira – with bruises, rug-burns, sprains being the visible signs, and wounded pride, hurt feelings, unspoken truths being the hidden, inner scars. Isn't there always a dance, a *roda*, as the dramatic contact between playors determines who is faster, who is stronger, who is more clever? Thus I was curious to read about the concepts of *Malicia* and *Malandragem*, and the role that trickery and uncertainty occupy within capoeira– for in many ways DvT seeks to upend the client's tortured stability and ideas about relationships. Indeed varielation may be just another form of sleight of hand.

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Capoeira's roots are important: The rhythms and rituals of the *roda* carry the deep scars of oppression, slavery, and physical violence. The threat was real: practitioners of capoeira had to post lookouts to protect them from arrest and punishment. Capoeira puts practice into a social context, seeking humane ways to be in a community facing violence and injustice. At the same time, the game of capoeira embraces a repetition that challenges the comparison to DvT: Are the repeated forms of the game remnants of the power and privilege of the system that capoeira evolved to resist? Does capoeira seek to transform the self in relation to the society, or merely to overcome the oppression? Mira's article raises the question whether DvT may be more martial art than we have imagined, as playors literally fight for their freedom against a repressive society, through play. This is a profoundly different core image than "letting go." This tension between different perspectives is one benefit of comparing DvT with near-practices such as capoeira.

Opening Up Playback Theatre:

Perspectives from Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations

Nisha Sajnani and David Read Johnson[1]

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

We wrote this article out of both respect for and criticism of the playback form, almost five years ago, and when we passed it around to our playback colleagues, they were uniformly upset with the criticism part and did not seem to notice the respect part. This made us feel guilty and hesitant to publish it. The article is quite long and most journals would require a substantial reduction, but after several attempts we realized that our argument required this length, which makes this article both long and upsetting, clearly a problem. Many people have noted that the article is one-sided, examining playback from DvT and TO perspectives and we have promised to one day put the other two in the spotlight, but to be honest we probably don't plan on that anytime soon. Nevertheless, it is rare in our field for frank dialogue across modalities, which is why we are pleased that Jonathan Fox, the co-founder of playback, agreed to comment on the article, though in actuality we hope that he will say something nice about it so our playback colleagues won't be so upset with us.

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Playback Theatre is a widely used form of applied theatre that provides

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individuals and communities with an aesthetic framework within which to tell and listen to stories of human experience. This article will examine Playback Theatre through the lens of two other forms of applied theatre practice, Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations. Our aim is to lay the foundations for supportive, generative dialogue between applied theatre forms; dialogues that have generally been lacking in contemporary discourse. The function of story and testimony will be examined from the philosophical orientation and assumptions of each these approaches which may highlight potential options for all three forms and specific openings within Playback Theatre.

A central purpose of Playback Theatre (PT), a theatre based on the spontaneous enactment of human experience, is to "draw people closer as they see their common humanity".[1] Fox writes, "if oppression can be defined as having no one to tell their story to, our mission has been to provide a space for anyone and everyone to be heard" (1994, p. 6). Both Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and Developmental Transformations (DvT) also aim to facilitate the expression of human experience, reduce isolation, encourage dialogue, and attempt to disrupt oppression. All three forms are embedded in liberation strategies towards opening opportunities for free expression in individuals against the constraints of suppressive societal and cultural forces and institutions. Each utilizes improvisational, non-scripted theatre, evoking images, scenes, and stories from voluntary participants. In this sense, all three forms are a *theatre of the people.* The differences among these three forms vary in their relationship to time, perspective, personal story, psychotherapy, and social and political critique. They also differ with respect to the intellectual traditions, aesthetics choices, and historical and social contexts of their progenitors. Nevertheless, the impetus of this article arises from a gentle critique of Playback Theatre which, we believe, partially constrains its effort toward freedom and social cohesion due to its allegiance to individualism and personal testimony characteristic of the Romantic tradition. We hope that by viewing Playback from the perspectives of Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations, these constraints may be loosened.

[1] Center for Playback Theatre: www.playbackcentre.org

Playback Theatre

Playback Theatre is a genre of interactive non-scripted theatre developed by Jonathan Fox and Jo Salas in 1974 wherein stories shared by audience members are spontaneously enacted by a team of actors and musicians. Fox envisioned the form as a means of intervening in a *culture of separation* through the mutual sharing of lived experience in which aggregations of people might be transformed into *communities of memory* (1994, p. 212). Jo Salas writes that PT communicates a message of affirmation to ordinary people who are invited to share their personal stories in order to make meaning of human experience (Salas, 1996). Indeed, many practitioners share the conviction that "the characteristics of both a fully-realized human being and of an ideal culture include the capacity for connection with others, compassion and creativity" and that "people need stories in order to know who we are as individuals and as a society" (Salas, 2009, p. 447).

The aesthetic space of a PT performance requires an empty stage space with two chairs set to one side for the *Conductor*, the intermediary between the audience and the stage, and for the *Teller*, a member of the audience who chooses to share a story. Across the back of the stage are boxes or chairs for the actors and a musician's area to the other side, opposite the Conductor. The props traditionally used consist of a set of colored fabrics that can signify emotions, objects, and characters as needed. PT companies around the world have added other aesthetic signifiers such as NYC Playback, which draws on hip hop culture, and Japan's Playback A-Z, which draws on the aesthetics of Kabuki and Noh theatre.

Assumptions/Principles

The origins of PT are marked by a departure from the scripted theatre towards a return to an oral tradition of knowledge-gathering, translation, and transmission (Fox, 1994). In order to support acts of collective remembrance within a culture of separation, PT grounds its practice in a theatre whose currency is not well-rehearsed prose but the emergent narratives that comprise the cultural knowledge of a people.

The fact that Playback Theatre is an improvised, non-scripted form is of central importance to Fox who contrasts this form to a literary tradition and its conflation of aesthetics with "its tyranny of language, its culture of performance,

its social practices, [and] its recreational purpose" (1994, p.75). Instead, Fox wishes to position PT as a theatre form that privileged "action over words, collectivity over individuality and hierarchy, simplicity and environmental involvement over technological grandeur" (1994, p.75). These values are evident in the spare, mobile aesthetics of the Playback form, influenced in part by Fox's Quaker upbringing. Here, Playback mirrors values espoused in the Romantic tradition: celebrating the simple human being within one's natural surroundings as a reaction against the industrialization and codification of human experience that arose in the early 19th century (Berlin, 1999). In his writing, Fox evokes images of families sitting together and telling each other stories, of transmission of knowledge from one generation to the next; with simplicity, in each other's presence, ignoring for the moment the rush of the world that surrounds them. The gentle sounds of the musician(s) accompanying a Playback performance support the Romantic atmospheric of memory and innocence.

Fox delineates several other concepts that he sees as central to the philosophy and practice of PT. The first of these is *spontaneity,* which he defines as "that flow of sensory information, evaluation, and action that fuels our ability to adapt with creativity to a constantly changing environment" (1994, p. 215). He proposes that improvisational theatre provides a practicing ground for life, a means to simultaneously experience a moment and also gain perspective on it. In this way, he positions PT as a sophisticated form of play - a complex form of action and awareness within an intentional frame (1994, p. 154). Salas also describes PT as a theatre of the moment (1993, p. 44) in which meanings associated with everyday experiences can arise, become crystallized in the telling and offered enactment, and then disperse into the collective consciousness of the audience.

Service is also an ideal that is central to Playback, in contrast to a "self-indulgent, proud and hierarchical" theatre that tends to ignore its ethical responsibilities to address social needs (Fox 1994, p 75). Fox uses the term *citizen actor* to describe the task of the Playback actors who "perform as needed for the community [and] then melt back into the social fabric" (1994, p. 214). He also underscores the necessity of humility and grace that "does not seek for perfection so much as find the perfect in what is" (p. 214). He describes the implicit imperfection of non-scripted theatre and the audiences it performs for:

> A theatre of service will always be pulled down by the grubby realities of everyday life (the hall will be cold, the crowd unruly,

> the host frazzled); as performers we will always fail, trapped by our own anxieties and imperfections. It is not understanding alone that can help us cope with these imperfections—or better organization or higher performance standards. We must also believe in grace. (p. 215)

The sacredness conferred upon everyday human experience and the grace that arises from everyday human failure position PT as a force for social change against cultural activity that valorizes conformity and alignment with the dominant cultural narratives. In addition to these core elements of spontaneity, service and grace, the redressive function of PT lies in its being both an artistic and interactive social event (Salas, 1999). Both Fox and Salas write about the role of the Conductor as being central in cultivating an artful environment that is conducive to social interaction in that the Conductor occupies a liminal space between the actors and the audience, not separate from either but a conduit for feelings, images, and words. The Conductor leads the "actors and audience in the direction of …the 'illud tempus,' that locus of meaning and rejuvenation which we often think of as a paradisiacal Eden but whose actual rediscovery is fraught with uncertainty" (1994, p. 134). The Conductor's role is to encourage anyone to tell their story, as failure to do so "repeats the syndrome of [the isolated individual's] interaction with society" (Fox 1994, p. 136). Finally, Salas writes of the subversive potential in this form: "Playback theatre's commitment to subjective truth…is radically empowering…in political contexts where the official story does not acknowledge personal, subjective experience" (Salas 1993, p. 48). As we will explore later, this perspective assumes a tension between subjective experience and dominant social narratives, inherent in the Romantic tradition. If instead the Teller's story colludes with or reinforces the official story, being unable to revise, critique, or comment upon it may limit PT's ability to serve as a radically empowering force.

Fox resists modernist definitions of PT as a specialized form of educational theatre or therapy. Referring to the originator of psychodrama, he notes that "one reason why Moreno, despite his early appearance on the scene, always remained outside the establishment was his willingness to go all the way in terms of purging feelings…the result, consistently, was high drama and a jolt to our habits of emotional distance and rationality" (1994, p. 71). Instead, Fox favors an "adult exchange between actors and audience rather than one which invites a kind of infantilism- a theatre that does not try to seduce me of my thoughts at the

moment of termination, but has the confidence and courage to respect them" (p. 150). He gestures towards an open-mindedness and "a full acceptance of the variability of the moment" wherein both the absence of catharsis and a climactic emotional presence is possible yet not planned for.

Playback Theatre, in the writing of Fox and Salas, appears to embrace the axioms of modernity through its grounding of *truth* (epistemology) in the authentic, subjective experience of the individual, *beauty* (aesthetics) as arising from harmony with Nature, ideas associated with the Romantic era, and *morality* (ethics) as predicated on Enlightenment ideals wherein human beings are enrolled as reasonable and consistent beings who are able to tolerate differing narratives in public space.

Invariant Components of a Performance

Constraints within the Playback form are reflected in the components that are not allowed to vary. In Playback, these include 1) the role of the Conductor, who maintains an authoritative, benign, and central role; 2) the Teller's story, which is viewed as sacrosanct and owned by the Teller; and 3) a restriction against audience members sharing alternative perspectives on the Teller's story, in order to insure the protected, nonjudgmental environment of Playback.

A typical PT performance may begin with an introduction ritual in which company members enter the aesthetic space and introduce themselves by sharing a brief personal narrative that relates to the theme in question, if there is a theme. As a means of preparing the audience to share their own stories, the Conductor may invite audience members to greet one another and then to share a brief experience as it relates to the theme. These initial experiences are played back through a variety of *short forms* leading to longer poetic renderings of personal story. This prelude might serve the purpose of decreasing the anxiety associated with telling a personal story in a public space, as it reveals the form to be largely affirming of the stories shared. As the Teller describes their story, the Conductor asks them to pick specific actors to play the characters. When completed, the Conductor says, "Let's watch!" and the actors play out the story without rehearsal, usually with the accompaniment of a musician.

After the story is enacted by the actors, the Conductor turns to the Teller and asks if the performance matches their experience. If it does not, the actors usually will replay the revised version. Here is an example from Fox (1994):

(Actors turn to the audience. Applause.)

Conductor: Before you sit down, I'd like to ask you to comment. Did that fit in with the spirit, if not all the details, of what happened? You can comment.
Ben (Teller): Yes.
Conductor: It did?
Ben: (Nods.)
Conductor: Well, thank you very much. (Ben sits down.) (1994, p. 226)

More often than not, the Teller expresses gratitude and says that the actors portrayed their story faithfully, and sits down. The Conductor does not typically ask for commentary from the audience nor questions any aspect of the story but rather, elicits the next story. Finally, performances are often concluded by asking the audience to reflect aloud upon the stories shared and/or witnessing a culminating enactment or poetic gesture by the company.

Throughout the performance, an atmosphere of reverence and respect for an individual's personal experience and right to tell their story is maintained. At the end of each performed story, the actors reverently turn toward the Teller in silence, awaiting the Conductor's question whether they had faithfully portrayed the spirit or essence of the Teller's story. The troupe conveys the feeling of their obligation to perform *acts of service*, in which they attempt to match or capture the essence of the Teller's truth, rather than exploring any form of departure or commentary on it. The Conductor preserves a zone of protection around the Teller's experience that communicates, "nothing will interfere with the telling of this story."

Fox writes of an experience from which he learned the need to maintain this atmosphere of respect, having experimented with deconstructing and playing with Tellers' stories:

> Once at a residential workshop a few of us were fooling around at the end of the evening. We started doing Playback, but the goal was to violate, not honor the Teller. The scenes were hilarious and incredibly energetic, as we released tension from the burden of so much hard, constructive work during the day. Many people were involved, including myself, and the scenes got wilder, until finally, exhausted, we all went off to bed. But that was not to be the end of the story. Some people had been deeply hurt by what most of us

> saw as 'play' and it took a long time to clear up… I have thus learned first hand of the danger of such irreverent urges…The power of the liminal is so great that it cannot be played with lightly. (pp. 106-107).

Once subject to others' perspectives, the Teller is placed in a vulnerable position, which if allowed, may dissuade others from volunteering to be a Teller, critically interfering with Playback's primary function.

Critical Perspectives on Playback Theatre

These invariant components within Playback, which appear to be reasonable and necessary, nevertheless give rise to the following questions: 1) To what extent does the nonjudgmental atmosphere of PT allow implicit power dynamics, cultural biases, or collusions with oppression to remain hidden and unexamined? In protecting the Teller from criticism, what else is protected? 2) To what extent does locating the story within the Teller's territory, as their private property, prevent examination or revelation of the story as the result of *collective* processes; that is, as emerging from within the Teller's racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gendered and familial history and in relationship to their ideas about how the actors and the audience imagines them, and thus not wholly owned by the individual? 3) To what extent does the emphasis on reflecting the Teller's story prevent the actors from revealing and responding to their own associations to the story? 4) To what extent does the role of the Conductor sustain the illusion of the benign patriarch who, halfway between the Teller and the actors, remains charismatically neutral and above the fray, thus possibly avoiding examination or discussion of their use of power?

Fundamentally, our questions for Playback focus on its constraints against collective ownership, confronting the individual's collusion with power, and the decentering or questioning of authority, perspectives more fully expressed in Marxist and postmodern intellectual traditions. We turn now to two other forms of applied theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations, which represent these alternate traditions, respectively. Both forms disrupt the usual integrity of the leader, calling him the *Joker* and *difficultator* (TO) or the *playor*, *playobject* and *broken toy* (DvT). Both create an atmosphere where the stories/views of the person/Teller are subject to playful feedback, challenge, and scrutiny. Both acknowledge the social construction of behavior and focus on the choices available in challenging interpersonal encounters. Both encourage the

revealing and challenging (TO) or playing with (DvT) the cultural biases of the participants, as both assume that bias and indeed, error, are always present. In bringing these forms of applied theatre into dialogue with Playback, perhaps new possibilities can be imagined.

Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre of the Oppressed is a composite system of theatre-based exercises and performance strategies developed by Augusto Boal in the early 1960's in South America in response to the military dictatorship in Brazil and later, in Europe, in response to internalized oppression and its constellation of anxiety, depression, isolation, shame, and guilt that compromise human vitality and the possibility of change. At the core of Boal's practice is the belief that theatre can enable individuals, enrolled as *spect-actors*, to effect change in society through an active rehearsal of embodied reasoning. In his seminal volume, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), Boal describes four stages of transforming the spectator into the spect-actor beginning with *Knowing the Body* in which one becomes reacquainted with the limitations and possibilities of one's own body to "recognize its social distortions and possibilities for rehabilitation" (p. 126). The second stage is *Making the Body Expressive* in which games are used to expand what the body can express beyond its usual constraints. The third stage is *The Theatre as a Language* in which "one begins to practice theatre as a language that is living and present, not a finished product displaying images from the past" (p. 127). This stage occurs over three degrees: simultaneous dramaturgy, image theatre, and forum theatre in which "spectators intervene directly in the dramatic action and act" (p. 127). Finally, *Theatre as Discourse* is the stage in which the spect-actor creates spectacles, images and scenes that may be used to "discuss certain themes or rehearse certain actions" (p. 127). There have been many evolutions, adaptations, critiques, and context-specific development of Boal's work in theatre, education, therapy, and advocacy around the world (Boal, 2002, 2006; Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 1994, 2006; Sajnani, 2009)[1].

[1] Additional readings and resources on Theatre of the Oppressed may be found at www.theatreoftheoppressed.org

Assumptions/Principles

Poetics as Politics. Boal begins by intertwining poetics and politics. Departing from Aristotle, Boal suggests that the arts and sciences are not isolated but interrelated processes and that all that is in progress is subject to politics: "the laws that rule over the relations of all men in their totality" (1979, p. 11). He writes that "the poetics of Aristotle is the poetics of oppression: the world is known, perfect or about to be perfected, and all its values are imposed on the spectators, who passively delegate power to the characters to act and think in their place" (1979, p. 155). Central to his philosophy is an understanding of power, knowledge, and justice as socially stratified, constituted, interlocking, and politically reinforced. He joins Bertolt Brecht in a Marxist understanding of society as resulting from the conflict between social classes (e.g. bourgeoisie and proletariat), and between the forces of production (e.g., labor force and technology) and the relations of production (e.g., individuals and institutions). Accordingly, Boal views the person as subject to socio-political forces, and thus society's possible futures must be interpreted in terms of these conflicts. While the bourgeoisie have their truth reflected in the architecture and artifacts of society, the proletariat or working classes have not had the same means to claim social, political, or economic space and therefore, their truths are always in the process of becoming, always emergent and dependent on a struggle to disrupt or sustain the status quo. Therefore, Boal's theatre-based pedagogy emerges from an identification of one's relationship to current geopolitical expressions of a persistent, albeit increasingly complex, class conflict and embeds itself within this same conflict. TO therefore is not a neutral art. Further, this analysis also affords a socio-political perspective on how one understands trauma, isolation and fragmentation in individuals and communities. In his work on theatre and therapy, Boal suggests that isolation and other oppressive internal forces such as shame, depression, and anxiety arise from perverted social relations of power that are internally echoed, or introjected through a process he refers to as *osmosis* (Boal, 1995).

Dialectical Aesthetics. The aesthetics of the oppressed are embedded within an ongoing, evolving struggle; a dialectical embodied process of reasoning. In Boal's Marxist cosmology, human beings are produced out of their social interactions, are constantly changing, and do not have inherent virtues or flaws. Subjects are re/produced through encounters between differing and/or opposing forces. In his pedagogy, a theatrical work cannot begin nor end in equilibrium, but

rather "it must show the way society loses its equilibrium, which way society is moving, and how to hasten the transition…a theatre that attempts to change society cannot end in repose" (1979, p. 106). In opposition to the tranquilizing aesthetics proposed by philosophers like Aristotle and Hegel, Boal relies on Brecht's aesthetic equation. In this formulation, what ought to be staged is the disequilibrium, the instability of justice, a clear exposition of the contradiction of social needs. He writes, "Whereas proponents of an idealist poetics might inspire a quiet somnolence at the end of the spectacle; Brecht wanted the theatrical action to be the beginning of action: the equilibrium should be sought by transforming society, and not by purging the individual of his just demands or needs" (1979, p. 106). In this formulation, the social, political and economic forces that compel the dramatic action are laid bare for the audience to observe. It arouses the critical consciousness of the spectator and their capacity for action. Finally, the staged conflict must be left unresolved so that the fundamental contradictions of society emerge with greater clarity. The audience is left with a thirst for equilibrium, a desire for justice, and the palpability of the choices they have. The value of this aesthetic is the knowledge it affords the audience; a knowledge that demands action. What Boal adds to Brecht's equation is the possibility of direct action by inviting the spectator to the stage:

> The poetics of the oppressed focuses on the action itself: the spectator delegates no power to the character to either act or think in his place; on the contrary, he himself assumes the protagonist role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses plans for change—in short, trains himself for real action. In this case, perhaps the theatre is not revolutionary in itself, but it is surely a rehearsal for the revolution. (p. 122)

For Boal, then, oppression is not an untold story (as in Playback), but a story that stops short of redressive action. Thus, the clash and conflict of TO seems to be in sharp distinction to the quiet, satisfying moment of silence typical at the end of a Playback story. Instead of the attunement and mirroring of Playback, TO tends to highlight disjunction and lack of resolution.

An Attitude of Rehearsal. Change in TO is approached through an attitude of rehearsal. The stories of those disenfranchised from their land, labor, or capital are shared within rehearsal processes that lead to the development of images and public scenes that represent a collectively defined inequity or moment of

oppression. However, these stories are understood as narratives in process, not as finished works (1979, p. 142). Consequently, TO is a theatre of rehearsal wherein people are encouraged to break with the polite applause central to a bourgeoisie code of manners and instead to interrupt the action, "to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate," exploring all the variants and possibilities of addressing the inequities being staged. No assumption is made that the desired end is agreed upon by the assembled participants.

This attitude of rehearsal is sustained by an intermediary figure called the *Joker* who explicitly calls for an analysis of the scene and invites spectators to become *spect-actors* by moving their ideas into action on stage. Methodologically, Boal's Joker embraces interchangeability and multiplicity. The artistic predispositions of the Joker emphasize techniques that analytically deconstruct habits of thought, action, and time; they foster positive disorientation, the kind that demands new and/or deeper insight. Practically, the Joker establishes the rules of engagement. Through a process that Boal refers to as *analogical induction*, the Joker invites participants to relate their individual stories to larger social and political realities as a means of moving from singular accounts to identifying to the locations and mechanisms of oppression that repeat within the collective, plural, experience of the group (Boal, 1995). The Joker also establishes a dialogic method of improvisation wherein multiple possibilities can be enacted "within a structure that is absolutely flexible, so that it can absorb the new discoveries and remain at the same time unchanged and identical to itself" (Boal, 1979, p. 177). However, the Joker's role is also to interfere with simple solutions to the conflicts staged; their role is to *difficultate*, to stand outside the fictive reality staged, encouraging spect-actors to struggle with the complexities of injustice. In so doing, the Joker must understand to some degree the perspective of the dominant forces, and their inner dynamics and strengths, so as to present real challenges to the proposed solutions. This is especially important because the perpetrators of the oppression staged are often not present and the audiences' own collusions with injustice are not often voiced by audience members themselves.

Boal discovered this impulse for the rapid solution in many of his audiences. As theorist and practitioner Mady Shutzman stated, "the joker is a theorist…and a trickster who employs an aesthetic of ambiguity to obscure easy answers, to discourage heroism, and to deem submissiveness untenable" (1994, p. 147). The audience in TO therefore is not invited to *solve* the problem or to succeed. In fact, the majority of interventions offered in a Forum theatre

performance will fail to represent a practical or just outcome. Therefore, the focus is on inviting as many interventions as possible so as to rehearse acts of participation, to avoid pre-empting the audience's desires to act and then, after the performance, to encourage audiences to realize plausible interventions in their real contexts. In contrast to the idea in Playback that the Teller is the source and owner of the story, the story in TO is a collective possession, a work-in-progress that is altered, transformed, or abandoned as the group attempts to solve a social problem. No one in the room is given a privileged position regarding the story. This perspective of course is supported by the group rather than individual emphasis of TO.

Theatre of the Oppressed's Perspective on Playback

Similarly to Playback Theatre's departure from scripted sources of cultural knowledge, TO rejects the imposition of social and cultural values as defined by those who have the means to circulate and reinforce their ideas. However, whereas Playback is concerned with the identification and preservation of a community's truths, TO is concerned with the exposure of lies that sustain the hegemonic practices that continue to advantage some groups over others. Within TO, the revelation of these lies begins with the intentional shedding of habitual social mores. The identification and purging of coercive and restrictive lies is necessary to the survival of oppressed groups. TO will ask "what is at stake for those gathered?" Therefore, TO will question Playback's positioning itself within a decontextualized, neutral space: for remaining neutral may allow oppressive forces to continue unimpeded. For TO, each Teller's story, the Conductor, and the Actors are located within specific cultural spaces that bring with them unique investments, perspectives and biases.

Second, TO will be interested in examining the power dynamics influencing or living within the story, and particularly in identifying acts of passivity or collusion by the characters. Instead of viewing each story as the telling of a subjective experience, TO will view the story as a relationship between participants in an exchange of power, that may or may not constrain conditions of free choice and mutuality. TO will also encourage naming or locating the oppressors in each narrative in order to avoid the repetition of harm that comes with silencing or occluding the presence of perpetration. Each story shared will be understood as a complex interweaving of personal and political narratives. For Boal, a story is a call to action: it portrays a problem that must be

solved. A TO audience is not told, "Let us watch!" but "Let us do!" This difference is reflected in TO's orientation to time: a story is told in order for some change to occur, so TO's orientation is toward the future. Consistent with its Romantic roots, Playback seems oriented toward the past: a story is told to pass on experience, we are told what has happened, we are to listen, to receive.

Third, TO will seek to expand the field of who can pose questions, comment, and act upon the images and scenes created in a PT performance. TO will privilege an aesthetic of discrepant perspectives, pluralism and instability over a monocular presentation of subjective truth. The notion of private ownership of the Teller's story within Playback may be the most challenging to the collective sensibilities of TO.

Developmental Transformations

Developmental Transformations (DvT), originated by David Read Johnson, is a dynamic, embodied, relational practice involving the *continuous transformation of embodied encounters in a playspace*. Johnson originated his approach in the United States in the early 1980's as a form of clinical intervention. It has continued to evolve and has been articulated as a form of embodied meditation, performance, and as an approach to social change (Johnson, 1982, 2009; Johnson, Forrester, Dintino, James, & Schnee, 1996; Johnson & Sajnani, 2015; Landers, 2002; Mayor, 2009). Central to the practice of DvT is the use of improvised free play as a means of unsettling overly rigid patterns of being and relating towards a greater experience of presence, otherwise described as a responsiveness to change or what Johnson refers to as *instability*. Johnson traces the source of instability to the discrepancy between representations of experience (which by nature consist of repeating forms such as words or signs), and experience itself, which is by nature nonrepeating and arises spontaneously in each moment. DvT aims to lower the fear of instability as it is experienced in the body, in relationships, and in the world via a process of *varielation,* which involves the intentional representation of different perspectives on the same phenomenon through a recursive cycle of *noticing, feeling, animating,* and *expressing*. This deconstructive process tends to open up and soften encrusted layers of our constructed world: how we perceive difference, preference, territory, and history becomes more diverse, gradient, and dimensionalized. This, in turn opens up possibilities to acknowledge and make choices about the way one

constructs one's own identity and the world, including how one incorporates or resists constructions of reality supported by families, cultural and historical traditions, and media.

Johnson's approach to encouraging freedom amidst instability occurs within a flexible developmental framework in which participants (referred to as *players*), together with a facilitator (referred to as a *playor*), improvise movements, sounds, images and scenes that arise from their thoughts and feelings in the moment within the *playspace*, which is "a mutual agreement among the participants that everything that goes on between them is a representation or portrayal of real or imagined being" (Johnson, 2009, p. 93). The role of the playor is to encourage players to attune to differences that emerge in their encounters with images and scenes that are troubling, unpreferred, or unplayable, and then moving towards states of increasing freedom from the grip of painful experiences.

Johnson describes four intertwined arenas of play in which it is possible to identify areas of fear, rigid definitions of reality, and unexamined assumptions. The *Play of Powers* revolves around identity and social stereotypes. Here the player(s) might enter the playspace emphasizing the ways in which their bodies are conceived of in the eyes of the other (e.g., as short, old, male, white). Both the playor and the player may feel some pressure to present acceptable or preferred versions of themselves and perform socially prescribed ways of relating to each other. Issues of social, familial, and cultural power and disempowerment similar to those explored by TO are often addressed as players bring in issues, feelings and experiences related to race, gender identity, gender expression, age, and socioeconomic status into the play. "In the play of powers, demands for power relations to remain static or to be eliminated are replaced with a willing mobility and sharing in the exercise of power" (2013, p. 60). Here, it is possible to experience an expansion in one's capacity to negotiate relationships over time.

The *Play of Possessions* is characterized by references to the personal history of participants and is marked by an exploration of one's real and fictional roles (e.g., daughter, lover, leader, servant, father). Realistic and fantastical scenes about the participants' significant relationships to family members, friends, and intimates are repeated and played out in different ways. Personal stories not unlike those told in PT are revealed but here, the player experiments with giving up control, and thereby allowing the influence of others to penetrate their personal boundaries. Ideas about possession and neatly divided territories such as *mine and*

yours, good and bad, us and them are expanded to more fully embrace the complexity of shared experience.

The *Play of Passions* is characterized by players placing their thoughts and feelings in relation to the Other (especially the playor) into the play. The purpose of play is the discovery that to be human is to be passionate and alive without demanding that others fulfill one's needs. Johnson notes, "In the play of passions, demands for the fulfillment of needs, or the denial of needs, are replaced by the exuberance of desire, and the integrity that comes from its restraint. Greater patience is achieved" (2013, p. 61).

The *Play of Presence* emerges as the roles and stories of the previous play dissipate, and the play becomes comprised merely of each other's glances, sounds, gestures, and bodies. In the play of presence, "demands for unity and order recede, as diversity is embraced, and humility for not being whole is felt" (p. 62). Here, players have the opportunity to experience the intimacy and mystery of being in the present moment amidst the flow of their needs, demands, and desires.

DvT with groups adheres to these same principles. The challenge of social cohesion and co-existence is represented in the social microcosm of the group and amplified as the diverse impulses, desires, thoughts and feelings of group members are brought into an encounter with one another[1].

Assumptions/Principles

DvT has been influenced by and articulated through the philosophical prism of Buddhism, existentialism, postmodernism, psychoanalysis, critical race theory, performance theory, and client-centered approaches to psychotherapy (Johnson, 2009; Landers, 2002; Mayor, 2009; Sajnani, 2012). However, at its core, DvT is informed by Johnson's phenomenological inquiry into the nature of play, unencumbered by any intermediary concepts. The fundamental meditation in DvT is on the possibility of attaining a sense of freedom within an intimate relationship with another, to be in the world despite its lack of groundedness, its multiplicity, its irony, reflecting DvT's postmodern sensibility.

Developmental Transformations is aligned with the Buddhist axiom that all life is impermanent and turbulent. Human attempts to stabilize a self and a sense of coherence in society result in habitual repetitions that solidify into

[1] Additional publications on DvT may be found in the library section of www.developmentaltransformations.com.

overdetermined performances of being and relating that prevent intimacy and growth. Johnson suggests that the human struggle is to remain engaged with the turbulence of variable and unpredictable change as it gives rise to life-giving movement. In contrast to forms of applied theatre and psychotherapy that privilege linear narratives, consistent characters, and coherent story lines, this practice purposefully attempts to privilege that which is discrepant from the main story in order to clear a path for new and emergent ways of being to arise.

DvT assumes that stories serve to stabilize the author's experience of being, and, thus, unlike Playback, takes an ironic view of a person's story. From a DvT perspective, a Teller's story explains, justifies, blames, and comforts. The story can be more or less accurate, or a complete lie; it can serve to teach a moral lesson or can serve to demean or marginalize others. DvT instead attempts to play with each story presented from multiple perspectives, and resists privileging one telling over another.

In Johnson's argument, the anxiety that arises from the instability of Being is amplified exponentially when we are in proximity to another. Suddenly, our turbulence is met with the turbulence of an Other replete with their own impulses and desires. Just as our bodies are unstable and constantly changing, so too are our relationships with one another. The fear of being constrained and actual past experiences of being constrained can lead a person to restrict the degree of intimacy they allow with others. DvT attempts to address this existential challenge by bringing individuals into an encounter with one another so over time they can reduce their fears of being in proximity to others.

These existential encounters take place in the playspace, which is constituted by a restraint against harm, mutuality, honesty, and mobility in power relations. In this way, the conditions of the playspace are understood to define an ethical boundary around a moral space, which differentiates real actions from the desire for actions. These parameters of the playspace may contribute to decreasing the impulse for intimate and social violence as harmful enactments are allowed to be represented within a fictional frame (Johnson, 2009; Landers, 2002).

Whereas TO uses theatre as a rehearsal for real action in the world that will lead to substantive change, DvT's perspective is that the responsiveness to diversity, capacity for mutuality, and ability to tolerate multiple and differing perspectives that arises within and beyond the play is not only a means for social change, it is an end or goal of social change itself. In this sense, DvT's

orientation to time is that of the present, rather than the future orientation of TO: the goal is to achieve mutual understanding and restraint from harm among the participants here-and-now in the present moment, and then again in the next moment as these conditions are breached.

The DvT facilitator, as *playobject*, acts in a similar manner to Boal's Joker, in that s/he faithfully reflects back to the participant(s) how they appear to experience the world, and at other times, can portray various obstacles to the participant's views, challenging them to consider alternative perspectives. Here, the playor may at times disrupt the player's desire for the overt, linear coherence sought for in our everyday encounters and also in traditional therapies. These embodied acts of deconstruction allow the playor and player to inhabit their socially constructed gendered, racialized, and sexualized roles (among others) while simultaneously calling these same roles into question, a task greatly aided though playfulness, humor and irony. The playor, as playobject, also serves to highlight the many ways that they may both collude with, oppress, or hypocritically complain about others. In contrast to Playback, where it is extremely rare for the Conductor to reveal their own experience while facilitating a performance, or for the Teller to reveal a story in which they perpetrated on someone else or colluded with oppression, it is quite common in DvT. Similar to TO, DvT revels in our human fallibility and incompleteness, evident in both the playor and player. Johnson describes the facilitator/ playor as the player/participant's *broken toy* that the player must learn to play with despite its torn edges, worn surfaces, and missing parts. In this fashion, DvT intrinsically conceptualizes authority as imperfect, damaged, and relative.

Developmental Transformations' Perspective on Playback

Developmental Transformations views each story produced by a Teller as multi-authored, with contributions from the Teller, their family, their cultural traditions, their various perpetrators and enemies, and even the audience, for the Teller may shape their story in anticipation of how a particular audience will receive it. Consistent with its postmodern sensibilities, DvT thus de-centers authorship and raises questions about the sacredness of any story. Each story lives in a mutual space, and for the price of that mutuality comes a loss of control and possession. Similarly to TO, singular stories shared in DvT have collective significance and become shared territory; they are collages. For DvT, the imaginal space cannot be divided into private properties.

A DvT perspective allows for an acceptance of the self-serving nature of most storytelling: Tellers are less likely to tell stories that implicate their own deficits, abuses, and moral faults as this would most likely be unpalatable to them and to their audience. DvT forgives us, but does not ignore the fact that we are the star of our own show, the hero or heroine of our own journey. In order to maintain one's proximal territory as good, the bad is inevitably shifted into other territories of the story, typically enacted by the obstacles presented to the Teller. In DvT, through the active participation of the facilitator/playor, who often plays out these unpreferred roles, the Teller/player can be reminded that there are multiple perspectives, thus decentering the Teller from their own story.

In so doing, a DvT perspective on Playback will attempt to surface the hidden collusions of the Teller and Conductor with current stratifications of power, the subtle collective agreement to blame Others who are not represented by people present in the room. DvT will seek out and portray the Otherness set aside in the Teller's story, to give voice not only to the Teller, but also to the One to Blame implicit within that story. DvT will no doubt utilize its fundamentally comic stance to the world to buffer the effect on the Teller: we are all fools, we are all to blame! DvT will disrupt the tendency toward seriousness in a Playback performance, concerned that the quiet moments of respect are covering new acts of silencing otherness. This silence may sustain isolation and frustrate the possibility of social response/ability.

Finally, a DvT perspective on Playback will join TO in encouraging the impulse to respond with one important difference. While in TO, the Joker may wish to see audience members on the edge of their seats ready to assert their versions of justice within a scene depicting oppression, DvT will seek out the generative impulse that allows one to remain in play, alive and responsive to each encounter, believing that this unending flow of curiosity and engagement is necessary in navigating the instability caused by internalized, relational, and systemic oppression.

Analysis of a Playback Theatre Performance

In order to illustrate the differences in perspective of Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations on Playback Theatre, we will examine an actual PT performance. The following is an excerpt from a PT

performance provided by Jonathan Fox in his book, *Acts of Service* (1994)[1]. The performance begins with a number of fluid sculptures reflecting brief anecdotes from the audience and then moves to a story by Ben about a fight between his two sons, a story by Gerald about ignoring his family when he buys a computer, then several sound sculptures, then a story by Tessa about having to give her dog away. Then Jonathan asks members of the audience to become actors. Their first story is by Barbara who tells a story about her obnoxious brother refusing to get off the phone. The next story, by Judy (a PT actor) follows:

Judy says it is a story about brothers and sisters. When she was ten, she and other children in her neighborhood put on a play about Till Eulenspiegel, a mischievous person who annoyed the townspeople so much, they hung him. She enrolled her 4 year old brother as Till, and devised a harness and tied a rope to it, and pulled him up in the air over a rafter, while he pretended to be dying. This was staged in her family's garage. Her father arrived and found his son hung up in the air, and Judy and the other children chanting, "Hang him, hang him!" Her father was shocked and outraged, but - to her - not understanding that this was just theatre and her brother was perfectly safe. When the PT actors played out the scene, the person playing the father was forgiving of her, unlike the real story, but Judy said she preferred it like that, because she had always felt her father had not appreciated her interest in theatre and she would have wanted him to be forgiving.

Conductor (to the Actors): Hold this for a second! (To Teller) Is that what happened?

Judy: I wish it had. I think after all those years, I finally got what I wanted.

Conductor: Uh, huh…Tell me what really happened when he came in.

Judy: I was punished very severely, and sent to my room, and not allowed to play with those friends for a long time.

Conductor: Now, as you know, sometimes in Playback Theatre we ask people, particularly when they tell a story that has been an unhappy one, because it's theatre we can redo it… because in a way that was…

Judy: That was it.

Conductor: Right.

[1] This session was selected because it was published in Fox's seminal volume on Playback and involved experienced Playback participants.

Judy: That was just great.

Conductor: Thank you very much Judy, and thank you audience actors. (They return to their seats. Applause.)

Now in this telling, the Teller casts her father as "not understanding" but is satisfied with the actors' rendition of the story in which he is understanding once informed that his son was only being hung from the rafters as part of a play. Here the Conductor offers the Teller to retell it in its original form, but she prefers not to. As one would hope in PT, the teller is satisfied with having her ideal version of the story acknowledged.

Now, is it possible that members of the audience might have had a similar unsympathetic reaction if their 10-year old daughter actually hung their 4-year old son up over a rafter as part of a play? Is it possible that some 4-year olds might have felt obligated or forced to cooperate with their older sister against their better sense? True, the play was pretend, but the rope and the rafter were not pretend. Clearly, other versions of the story might implicate the Teller as having not used her best judgment, but in this case are not explored.

From a TO perspective, the confrontation between father and daughter over the nature of harm in theatre is informed by cultural roles of family authority, the value given theatre in society, and also in the original story of Till Eulenspiegel. From a DvT perspective, there are a number of perspectives that have not been expressed: 1) the father's, who discovered his 4-year old son hanging on a rope in the garage without parental supervision; 2) the brother's, who might have felt forced to volunteer for the role; 3) the other children's, who were excited to engage in this type of activity; and 4) the mother's/partner's, if there was one, who was absent from the story. Finally, there was reference to prior "severe punishments" from the father, which may have been additional stories of the Teller.

Let us compare how the other two approaches might develop this story. A TO approach if presented with this story, might go something like this:

Joker: What kind of oppression is present in this story that is also present in our society?

P1: It is about absent and abusive parents. The parent is responsible for what went on in his house.

P2: It is about the suppression of children. They can be seen but not

heard.

P3: It's about the absence of community.

Joker: What do we know about the tale of Till Eulenspiegel?

P3: It's a medieval folk tale about a trickster, Till Eulenspiegel, whose name is a pun with two meanings: owl mirror, which means being a wise reflection on society; and "wipe the arse"; combined it means "wise ass." This trickster did hurtful tricks especially as a way of exposing the stupidity and corruption of officials and institutions in Germany. The operatta Judy remembers was Strauss' "tone poem" from around 1900, in which the trickster is beheaded by the town at the end.

Joker: So he is The Joker!

All: Laughter.

Joker: So perhaps I should play him!

All: Yes.

P2: But wasn't Judy being a prankster too? And she got punished as well!

Joker: Was this a moment that you (speaking to participants) can identify with?

P3: Yes, I can relate to the experience of not knowing how to explain myself to my father and being punished for it.

P1: I can relate to feeling disempowered in my own family where play was discouraged.

P2: I haven't experienced this but recognize it to be a problem in society especially given the lack of seriousness with which child abuse is treated in our country. It's like we're giving a free pass to abusive adults and not doing enough to protect our children.

Joker: So there are others missing from this moment of oppression between the father and daughter?

P1: Yes, the court, police officers, counselors who might make the daughter feel like she's to blame.

Joker: Can you create a scene that draws on elements of all of your experiences and which ends with the protagonist unable to realize their desired goal in a moment of oppression. (This might form the basis for further work through image theatre to explore visions of

the ideal outcome or forum theatre in which this scene would be presented to an audience to explore possibilities for action).

A DvT encounter, when playing out this story might go something like this:

Playor:	That was so unfair for your father to punish you!
Judy:	I'll say.
Playor:	After all, your brother was four years old, so he was completely capable of signing the informed consent form you gave him before hauling him up.
Judy:	Well, I didn't really have a form…
Playor:	Oh, why would you need one when, as his older sister, you only had his interests in mind? After all, I'm sure you did not enjoy seeing him playing the role of the scapegoat, being teased and harassed by the lynch mob below!
Judy:	It was entertaining.
Playor:	Entertaining?
Judy:	Yeah, fun.
Playor:	Yes, as is all good theatre! After all, it was…
Together:	ONLY THEATRE!
Playor:	You know, it is SO GOOD to be able to express one's urges for dominance and control SAFELY through theatre, isn't it!
Judy:	I'll say.
Playor:	That's why I became a drama therapist!
Judy:	Really, you have those kind of urges?
Playor:	(Darkly.) Well, actually, yes I do.
Judy:	Toward me?
Playor:	Now that you mention it…….let me take you over to the corner here!
Judy:	What are you doing?
Playor:	I'm going to dominate you.
Judy:	You're going to dominate me? I don't want to be dominated. That's what my father did!
Playor:	Excellent, that's perfect, it's no fun if my victims *want* to be dominated.

Judy: What are you going to do?
Playor: Don't worry, it's only pretend!
Judy: You're making fun of me.
Playor: Yes, just a little! You know, I love this story because it must be the reason you became interested in applied theatre.
Judy: You mean my father not understanding I was only playing…?
Playor: Yes, so from then on you said to yourself, "from now on I am going to try to show people that it is important to be able to tell their stories in a nonjudgmental atmosphere."
Judy: Playback!
Playor: Playback! The antidote!
Judy: Yes, my father…
Both: SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO JUDGMENTAL!
Playor: You weren't trying to hurt your brother!
Judy: That's right!
Playor: No matter how bad it looked when he came into the garage.
Judy: Right. I tied the knots real tight so he wouldn't fall.
Playor: (Referring to his tying her up.) Are the knots tight enough?
Judy: No, you can make them tighter. (laughs)
Playor: My pleasure. (He pretends to tie her knots very tightly as she squirms.)

These two variations might be how Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations would approach Judy's story. In Fox's analysis of this session, in *Acts of Service* (pp. 37-55), he makes no mention of alternate readings of Judy's story, accepting instead her view of her father's "misplaced rage." He emphasizes the inclusivity of Playback Theatre, its communal nature, its privileging of social relatedness, and the generally open-ended nature of PT. On the surface, it appears that Fox's fundamental assumption is in the well-meaning and goodness of people. Whereas TO may make the assumption that people will act in order to maximize their own power, and DvT may make the assumption that people will act in their own self-interest, PT may avoid presenting the Teller with these possibilities.

The challenge is clear: to open up the dialogue in what occurred in Fox's text is to reveal disturbing power dynamics, historical legacies, collective responsibility, and decenter the victim role, so that neither the Teller nor the

audience is protected from alternate readings of their story but rather brought closer through a more permeable, multifaceted yet gracefully flawed representation. How can this be done without placing the Teller in too vulnerable a position?

Imagining Opportunities for Playback Theatre

We must leave it to the practitioners of Playback Theatre to determine whether and how variations of technique suggested here can be integrated into the work. We will only point to a few moments during a Playback Theatre performance where TO and DvT perspectives present potential opportunities to open up the Playback form. Indeed, some of these suggestions are already quite familiar to PT practitioners.

The first moment is during the Introduction by the Conductor, as he/she is warming up the audience and communicating what the purpose of PT is and the nature of stories. The Conductor's task is to establish the frame of safety and communal purpose by emphasizing the respect each story will receive and the necessity for the suspension of judgment. However, here is an opportunity to encourage the audience to think about 1) how stories arise within one's cultural, ethnic, national, historical legacy, 2) that stories are often the record of a conflict among parties that differ in power and privilege, 3) that stories are told from the perspective of the Teller, and therefore are imbued with the Teller's biases, desires, and interests which may differ from the story as told by others, and 4) that stories may not be true.

The next opportunity arises when the PT actors introduce themselves through the sharing of their own personal anecdotes. Here, actors might model a range of stories highlighting their own mixed or discrepant experiences of being a target or agent of oppression and in so doing, expand the boundaries of what can be told and heard during a PT performance. Having a company of actors that physically resemble but also differ from the community gathered may also serve to elicit a broader range of experience. Providing this range of experiences may also allow diversely located audience members more opportunities to feel a sense of resonance and identification.

Another moment occurs when the Conductor asks the Teller to tell the story. It may be possible here for the Conductor to open up possibility simply by asking each Teller: "So you have a story?....(Yes)….Great. Is this a true story or

a made-up story? Is this your personal story or a story of your family, ethnic group, or other social group?" The Conductor might also directly invite stories about being targets or agents of oppression or change. After the Teller has told the story and has chosen the actors for the various roles, the Conductor might also ask: "So two more questions: From your point of view, who has the power in this story? Would the other people in the story tell the story the same way?" These questions, while remaining open-ended and neutral, help to keep the edges of the story open to new possibilities.

The next moment will be during the enactment wherein actors could symbolically, or through the use of narration, represent the internalized or systemic forces implicated in the story. A few of the actors might also take responsibility for oscillating between faithful and divergent renderings of the stories shared. In this way, actors avoid the trap of an overly literal reflection and can inhabit, as the Joker does, a playful commentary that might provide additional dimension and perspective. The actors might take a risk to notice each other's impulses and let their enactments transform in relation to what arises between them in the present moment without deviating too far from the Teller's story. This might communicate a sense of aliveness and, again, provide a sense of new possibilities in the story.

Another moment will be that at the end of the enactment by the actors, when the Conductor turns to the Teller. Clearly, asking the Teller whether the enactment "fit in with" or "expressed the essence of" their story is likely to bring closure to the process. Instead of this question, others may help to open up possibilities: "What is your reaction to this performance of your story?" "If they were to do the story again, what should they emphasize more?" "If the other people in your story were here, how would they react to this performance?" "Would they want to alter some part of this story?.....Which part?" "Is there a way you could change something in the story that would make it turn out better for you, without making it worse for somebody else?" These questions might serve to encourage a re-telling of the story that opens up and provides respect for alternative perspectives.

Other questions that might encourage expansive retellings might include: "Would you like to retell the story from your mother's point of view?" "Would you like to retell your story only emphasizing _____ more?" "Would you like to revise your story so that someone else in the story is at fault?" An even stronger set of questions might include: "Alright, so retell your story, only be a censor and

tell the actors which part they cannot include." "Is there anyone in your life who would object to this story? Could you retell it from their perspective?" These challenging questions nevertheless maintain the Teller's control over the story, true to Playback's fundamental rule.

After each enactment, the Conductor could also ask the audience to share stories or their reflections about the Teller's story as a means of extending the singular narrative to the collective, leading possibly to the selection of the next Teller.

These moments are especially ripe with possibility for integrating the perspectives of Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations into traditional Playback Theatre without departing from the form. We offer these ideas in the spirit of encouraging continued experimentation and exploration of the Playback Theatre form, and its powerful approach to communal storytelling.

Trends in Playback Theatre

Increasingly since 2000, Jonathan Fox and other PT practitioners have been emphasizing the need for Playback to attend to social justice issues. Hannah Fox (2007) has been experimenting with the intersections of PT and TO for several years. Hannah offers that TO-related exercises might precede a PT performance as a means of providing participants an opportunity to develop a collective analysis about salient themes prior to sharing personal stories. She has also suggested that the reverse has also been useful in that personal stories shared within PT might become a springboard for an investigation of social themes through TO-related approaches to inquiry and performance. Hutt and Hoskey (2004) and Weinblatt (2015) have also found ways to integrate TO with PT.

Armand Volkas' work in *Healing the Wounds of History* (Volkas, 2009) offers an approach to Playback Theatre that incorporates the influences of both TO and DvT, practices in which he has been trained. The important aspect of Volkas' work is in bringing members of polarized groups, such as Palestinians and Israelis, or Japanese and Koreans, into the same room together. Each group inevitably tells stories in which the other group is portrayed as the perpetrator. These conditions more fully satisfy the perspective of TO in identifying the biases and power dynamics embedded in one's cultural and historical context, and DvT's perspective of having the Other present and revealing the self-serving nature of each group's stories.

Finally, the Poetic Justice Theatre Ensemble in Port Townsend, WA[1], and the Living Histories Ensemble (LHE) [2] in Montreal, employ many of the ideas mentioned in this article (Sajnani 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Sajnani, Wong, Ndejuru, & Linds, 2013, Sajnani et al., 2014). These companies have sought to forge stronger social networks within cities, community agencies, and schools through the listening and telling of stories relating to the experience of displacement and belonging. By drawing upon two or all three of these forms as is the case with the LHE, these two companies are exploring an aesthetic that can reflect and tolerate the incomplete, inexact, and inaccurate narratives that emerge from their audiences.

However the main issue confronting attempts to integrate a social justice perspective into PT is how the Conductor and actors respond to a story that is imbued with dominant power dynamics, or even racist or sexist elements. Should they remain committed to representing the subjective experience of the Teller, or do they have an obligation to note, interpret, or transform these unjust aspects?

> "A starting point for playback theatre was respect for any teller's story. That original commitment remains. At the same time I feel it should be balanced with our sense of social justice. I feel we need to be aware of societal factors imbedded in tellers' stories..." (Fox, 2010, p. 34)

Ben Rivers (2015) extends this point in encouraging practitioners to apply PT to social activism and cultural resistance:

> "The Conductor must communicate their non-complicity in cases where the Teller's story condones a worldview that is racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise oppressive in some way. Actors can respond to such stories by recasting the oppressed party in a manner that questions the objectifying or stereotyped portrayals provided by the Teller." (p. 29)

The challenge here is that once the audience perceives the PT company implicitly or explicitly criticizing the Teller's story, especially from a social justice perspective, they may be more reluctant to volunteer to be the next Teller. The bedrock contract in PT that the Teller's story is to be heard and not challenged, arising from its Quaker roots (Reagan, 2014), may be fundamentally at odds with the dialogic structure of TO, DvT, and social justice models.

[1] www.mandalaforchange.com/
[2] www.livinghistoriesensemble.org

Perhaps with further encouragement from the founder and others within the PT community, PT companies will discover new ways of bridging this gap.

Conclusion

We believe that every major method of applied theatre has similarities and differences with each other and that an analysis of the assumptions underpinning our practices can provide a more nuanced understanding of the scope and opportunities that exist in this field. Typically, similarities are often minimized in the service of distinguishing the unique aspects of each approach, creating a false impression that the approaches are greatly different or in conflict with each other. Certainly that could be said about Playback, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Developmental Transformations, and indeed our thesis is based on the potential benefits to Playback of integrating some of these differences.

In fact, all three of these approaches have much to gain from the other and further investigation into the interstices between these forms will certainly be a contribution to the field and to the social goals of each form. For example, a TO perspective may initially find patience and tolerance for the unpreferred as less desirable goals given the urgency implied by social injustice. At the same time, what DvT shares with TO is the importance of dynamic equilibrium and the necessity of de-mechanizing the body towards a greater responsiveness to needed change.

All three of these important approaches to applied theatre are deeply embedded in their founders' and followers' beliefs in human freedom, happiness, and capacity to imagine and enact change. All three emerged out of the liberation sensibilities of their authors. Interestingly, each of these forms were created by white males who were educated in Ivy League institutions in New England: Boal (Columbia), Fox (Harvard), and Johnson (Yale). While Boal experienced significant constraints as a result of his theatre-based activism, all three had a certain cultural currency that provided them with the social capital necessary to define and circulate their philanthropic practices.

Though Playback was originally situated in theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed in politics, and Developmental Transformations in psychotherapy, all three have freedom in mind, meaning they intend to leave traces of the possible with each participant, and support an openness to emergent knowledge in society at large. Through their commitment to performance, these practices produce a

multiplicity of representations that displace, by the very process of proliferation, the hegemonic authority of conservative ideology sustained by its myths, stereotypes, rituals, and narrow aesthetic practices. Together, these approaches are evidence of the radical capacity of art to deconstruct, resist, and transform oppressive systems of representation and control and restore participation, potential, and dignity.

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A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"Opening Up Playback Theatre:

Perspectives from Theatre of the Oppressed and Developmental Transformations"

Jonathan Fox[1]

I am caught in a founder's dilemma. The purpose of Nisha and David's article is to provide a "gentle critique" of Playback Theatre, which Jo Salas and I founded 40 years ago in 1975. For anyone creating something new, public criticism is a kind of recognition, and I have certainly craved the recognition that comes from reviews and criticism. No question about it. And so I am glad they have put their time, experience, and momentous brain power to examine our approach.

But it also stings. After all, this is my life. They don't understand!

The main examples in the article are taken from my book *Acts of Service*, which was copyrighted in 1986. It included a transcript of a performance from 1981 from which a key quotation is taken. This was only six years after we started. We were still very much in a development stage. In retrospect, I regret I added that transcript to the written record, not imagining that our performance and workshop practice would become so much more sophisticated as the years progressed.

Actually the call sounded in this paper for more sophisticated power dynamics and greater interrogation of narratives was heard years and years ago. It is nothing new. We have been working on it!

But I have to admit, Nisha puts her finger on the key challenge that faces the Playback Theatre method: the tension between respect and justice, honoring a Teller's story vs. interrogating it. The standard example is the prejudiced teller. If

[1] Published February 10, 2016. Jonathan Fox, MA, TEP, D.Phil.h.c., is a founder of Playback Theatre and the author, most recently of *Beyond Theatre,* a memoir of his working life.

you follow the Playback maxim that everyone has the right to be heard, then what about the injury embedded in the prejudiced Teller's narrative? Even enacting such a story shows complicity with the Teller's view. In short, we have learned that we must balance respect with fairness. And as the authors suggest, one cannot even begin with this expanded purpose without paying close attention to one's own prejudices.

As a Playback Theatre practitioner, Nisha has been one of those helping us broaden our skills at bridging this tension. Wait! Nisha is only a co-author. David is the other. But I am not totally clear what his contribution was, especially since they refer to him in the article in the third person and his own method is held up as a comparison. I know that I have been so busy developing my own creation over all these years that I have spent scant days properly learning other methods. If my reaction to criticism of Playback Theatre is suspect, since I can't help taking it personally, then my comments about TO and DvT are even more suspect. I have less than a week's training in TO and only one conference workshop's exposure to DvT. I know nothing.

I do not know the difference between DvT practiced with "players," as described in pages 20-22, and DvT practiced "in groups" (p. 22). I do not see how the playor is not as susceptible to being a high status manipulator as the Playback Conductor (especially insofar as the founders of both approaches are Ivy League white males!).

How much training and how much practice is necessary for a person to legitimately critique a method? This has been, by the way, a pressing issue for the Playback community in response to academics, who generally take a position that they do not need to know an approach experientially to write about it. To those of us deep inside, we doubt that someone can really know our work without solid experience of it, without putting their bodies in the space. I imagine many of us have felt this concern as our interactive theatre methods are adopted into college syllabi and taught by interested but untrained professors. I support the right of academics to investigate a subject on their own terms. Again, it is a kind of recognition. But that does not diminish my concern about their ignorance.

I want to say something about stories. The co-authors (I'll be correct now) make reference to the "self-serving" nature of stories. There is no question that people tell stories to promote their own interests (see Michael Jackson's *The Politics of Storytelling*). In Nisha and David's view, Tellers are motivated to cover up their "deficits, abuses, and moral faults," which should be brought to the

light of day. This strikes me as a very unsavory view of human nature, and it is certainly in contrast to the concept of story in Playback Theatre. We think of individual stories in a Playback Theatre event as conveying valuable information and the sequence of stories as a meaningful dialogue between sincere individuals. Narratives are interrogated not only by means of what the performers ask and embody, but also by the next Teller offering to share an experience that shows a different perspective than the one before (accepting, as David and Nisha suggest, that it is also our responsibility to confront prejudice and embedded misuses of power as they crop up).

I have great respect for Antonin Artaud and Michel Foucault, two thinkers whom I imagine might resonate with the authors' views, with their desire to upend bourgeois complacency and institutional abuse. But the philosophy and practice of Playback Theatre does indeed rest on a concept of respect for the dignity of persons—more in the Martin Luther King, Jr. style. He held up the ideal of the "beloved community," but no one will say that he did not care for justice.

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Stop Kicking: The Story of Lucy and Tracey

Dolmen Domikles[1]

Author's Certification of Brokenness

My aim is to write something about the process of DvT and dramatherapy in language that anyone can understand and appreciate. A story that also contains the voice of the client and shows some clear positive outcome in the client's life. However, I have a feeling that this desire to be accessible may be an excuse for my reluctance to engage in research with academic rigor. I fear it may be no more than inverted snobbery. Though it will add nothing to the evidence base that is taken account of by commissioners when selecting preferred models of treatment, I delight in the knowledge that I cured the family in one session.

Of course it is better to choose cases to write about that show us in a good light, creating an illusory impression of our expertise, or the amazing efficacy of our method of treatment. I am afraid that this story is an extreme example of this practice: it purposefully leaves out all those times when this approach has not brought the desired change.

This is a true story, but a mere story, an anecdote, full of my own subjective comments. I do not acknowledge anyone else's ideas. I refer to no articles or books. I quote almost no DvT theory. By seeking publication in the Chest, I am admitting to my own inadequacy; an inadequacy that I seem to flaunt shamelessly. I admit it.

❖

I want to tell a story. It is based on something that happened and was important. There were four of us involved. There was me, Dolmen, a dramatherapist working for a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. There was Pauline, qualified as a play therapist, and working as a Family Support

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Keyworker. Then there was Tracey, a mother, and her daughter, Lucy. We had an experience together that was moving and amazing. Between us we managed to change a relationship between Lucy and her mother that had been full of pain, anger, shame, violence, and rejected love, into a new relationship where each felt and expressed some love for the other, and stopped hurting each other so much.

The story is worth telling simply as a celebration of their success, because it was hard work for all of us, which involved the risks of trusting each other, of facing up to painful feelings, and of possible, even probable, failure.

Many people do not have an idea of what happens when a family seeks professional help when their relationships get messy or abusive. In my experience families that seek help from a mental health service are anxious, and feel stigmatized because they have failed. They expect to be judged, and asked to do things that seem impossible. Each family's problems are unique, as is their experience of being helped. This is the story of one piece of therapeutic work with two people, who have both generously given their permission for this story to be told. Their names have been changed, of course, to maintain their privacy.

Tracey had been through so much as a little girl. Her mother seemed to hate her and her father was absent. Why did her parents see her brother as the golden boy, while she was the bad one? Over time, she began to live up to these expectations. As she talked to me twenty or so years later, as she neared 30, she recalled how horribly she behaved to her parents. As a result, she spent a lot of time in the care of her mother's parents. Her grandmother was strict, but her grandfather had "a soft touch." She told me she had been in a violent relationship with a boyfriend, Mike, from the age of 13 to 17. At 15 she became pregnant with his child, and was thrown out of the house by her parents. Her first child was removed by Social Services and adopted by another family. Mike was using heroin at this time. She had two more children with Mike, who were also removed. When she had her fourth child, Lucy, she was determined to keep her, and left Mike three weeks after Lucy was born.

Tracey felt that for the first six months she bonded well with Lucy. She began to build bridges with her parents. But then her grandfather died - the one person who had seemed to have a soft spot for her - and she went to pieces and, in her own words, "was a rubbish mum." At this time she met Rick, whom she described as a controlling man and a heroin addict. One day he took Lucy away from her, gave her to his parents, and restricted Tracey's access to her. Eventually when Lucy was four, Tracey managed to get Children's Services involved and

brought her home. Tracey was pregnant with Rick's child, and later had his son, Darren.

Tracey bonded closely with Darren, but her connection with Lucy had weakened. Lucy began to act out, and Tracey struggled with her. History seemed to be repeating itself: the son was wonderful, and the daughter a problem who spent time with her grandparents. Tracey became involved with Tony, another controlling man; he was helpful with Lucy, sure enough, but in a way that made Tracey feel useless. Eventually Tracey became violent with Lucy – "I even threw her against the wall" – so much so that she contacted Children's Services and begged them to help her with Lucy before she hurt her more. For two years Lucy was designated a Child at Risk. Tracey did not get on with the first social worker. Tony was seen as the responsible one, and was put in charge. Fortunately, Tracey felt she was able to accept help from the next social worker, Matt, and made progress in keeping calm with Lucy. Eventually she drew up enough courage to ask Tony to leave.

By this time Pauline, the Family Support Keyworker, had become involved, and she asked me if I could help, as she thought Tracey might now be at a point where she was open to change. Without a man in her life, Tracey recognized that her choice of partner had contributed to her problems connecting with Lucy. But Tracey still had no idea what was going on in Lucy's head. She could see the parallels between her own experiences and Lucy's, but that did not seem to help her empathize. Ever since that original separation from her baby daughter, their connection had been broken. Pauline's hope was that through dramatherapy, Tracey might be able to increase her attunement to Lucy. She had heard about my interventions with other families from her colleagues: Family Support Keyworkers who had invited me to use DvT with families who had traumatic breaks in parent/child relationships.

When I first met Tracey, with Pauline, she was able to talk quite openly about what she wanted. She was thoughtful and had a wry sense of humour. I was encouraged when Tracey told me that her main goal was "to understand Lucy and have a better relationship with her," rather than wanting Lucy to improve her angry and sometimes violent behaviour. Lucy had bonded with her grandmother, with whom she did activities like baking and crafts, while Tracey felt bonded to her son, Darren. The intergenerational patterns were remarkable.

I felt daunted when I heard Tracey's story. The history of traumatized children went back through the generations. When a young child's need for

feeling secure and loved has not been sufficiently met, the child can conclude that something is wrong with them, and that they do not deserve to be loved and valued. This feeling may have led to Tracey's repeated experiences of emotional, domestic, and substance abuse. Maybe these were what love looked like to her. How could she imagine anything else?

However there were also reasons for hopefulness: by asking Tony to leave, Tracey had given herself some space to think about Lucy and her needs. And amidst each of their dysfunctional attachment to their parents, both Tracey and Lucy had experienced some positive attachment with their grandparents. Tracey had become closer with her own parents to the point where she now phoned her mother every day, and asked for help from her father. She had been able to accept help from Matt, her social worker, and had shown herself capable of a secure attachment to Darren. Pauline and I both felt that Lucy's aggressive behaviour at home towards her mother was her response to feeling emotionally unsafe and misunderstood. If so, it seemed possible that her violent behaviour might decrease if their relationship improved.

First Session: Lucy Alone

Lucy was a lean, energetic girl, cheerful and friendly. She did not say a lot. When I asked her if there was anything that she would want to be different in her life, she said no. When asked again, she said she didn't like her mother, ever, but that she wanted to like her mother, and was willing to try dramatherapy. We agreed to try to work first with Lucy alone, and then to invite Tracey to join us. We started our first session with a story-making game. Lucy was immediately interested. In her story, a 13 year-old girl's mother had died. The girl visited her father to ask him to bring her mother back to life, but he wasn't home. Then her brother cast a spell to bring her mother back to life, for one hour. They all lived happily ever after.

I felt excited by this story. Sometimes a first story can beautifully encapsulate the young person's world, but it can be coded, somewhat like a dream. Even though I felt I had an idea what might be symbolized by Lucy's story – the dead mother could be a depressed mother who is not responsive to the child; the father is emotionally absent; only the son can bring some life back to the depressed mother. However I do not tend to try to interpret this symbolism to the child in my words, because I do not find that it is helpful. Instead I like to ask the young person which bit of their story grabs their attention the most. Often it is the

bit of the story that doesn't quite add up, where you want to say, "Hey, what was happening here?" In this case, Lucy was most interested in the part where the father wasn't home. And so was I. This surprised me. I thought Lucy's issues were all about mothers and daughters. This is another advantage in using creative methods: something unexpected tends to emerge that the family had not mentioned.

A little bit about the background of how I work. Developmental Transformations (DvT) is a practice of encouraging play in an artistic medium, such as drama, where a facilitator (playor) encourages a client (player) to begin to move, and the playor responds in action to what is evoked for them. The player then responds in turn. Thus an improvised series of movements, actions, sounds and words develops into a scene. The player will unconsciously bring into the scenes images, roles, and actions that explore and attempt to make sense of their traumatic experiences and dilemmas. The playor uses a range of techniques in responding with their own action, sometimes drawing on what they know about the player's background. The playor closely observes the player's reaction to their own dramatic "offer." If the player's enthusiasm to play seems to reduce, even slightly, the playor sees that another dramatic image may work better, and tries something different. If the player's energy level and involvement seems to increase, it is a sign to the playor to go deeper into that scene. The aim is to respond in the moment, even if it means transforming the scene into something new, rather than necessarily sticking with an existing storyline.

Using her story as a starting point, I suggested we begin a scene where Lucy calls on the father and he's out. Lucy goes to the front door and knocks. I decide to enact an absent father, so I hide behind the front door. I talk to Pauline in the role of my girlfriend, "Let's keep quiet. She'll go away." I noticed that Lucy's eyes got bigger. She looked involved. She walked away. The father and his girlfriend continued to talk. "What does she want? I can't deal with her when she's sad. I really can't handle her at the moment." Suddenly Lucy turned around, marched back and started to shout to be let in. Her father lets her in, they argue, he tries to get away, and she chases him around the house. She is enraged with her father's neglect, but in the play there is much pleasure and laughter.

Third Session: Lucy and Tracey

After two sessions of Lucy playing scenes with Pauline and me, she wanted to invite her mother to join us. Lucy enjoyed welcoming her mother in,

and confidently explained the rules of the playspace to her mother. She liked being the knowledgeable one. Lucy asked me to be her father, and Pauline to be her mother. We suggested that Tracey could watch the scene from the side. Lucy wanted me, as her father, to be in the pub, and for Lucy and Pauline as her mother to visit him. I decided to portray a dad who was drinking pint after pint, and getting drunk and irritable. Pauline picked up on this, and began to complain about the father's drunkenness. We argued. Tracey commented from the side, with a resigned look, "It's just like real life." Lucy then got angry with her dad, and began to hit him energetically with cushions. Her dad protested, and threw them back at her. There was a lot of shouting, a lot of laughter. Although we were dealing with topics of substance abuse, neglect and anger, the absurdity of us both whacking each other with cushions seemed to transform the tragedy into something farcical. This may have helped Lucy to feel witnessed, and allowed a healing process to enfold.

What is important about feeling witnessed? We know that when a child is treated abusively within their family, they make certain assumptions because that is all they have known. They may assume that this is normal behaviour within a family. Or, as they realize that other families are different, they may assume that they are bad themselves, and that they deserve to be badly treated. This is why these children often grow up to form family relationships where they themselves are re-abused, and where they mistreat their children.

Even if the abusive family behaviour has stopped, the traumatized child is still left feeling angry, empty, or worthless. What therapy can offer is a space for the child to show to another person they trust, "This is what my world is for me!" and the other person can say or show to them, "What happened to you wasn't okay, it wasn't your fault, and you deserve something better!" And it can help for a parent to be able to see that too, and to show them that they will protect them from now on.

Using creative methods, a child can communicate about their world symbolically, without even knowing consciously that they are doing it. So for Lucy, it may be that she had not realized that she was angry with the men in her life who neglected her needs, who "weren't there," and who never gave her the feeling that she was a wonderful, amazing and unique person, deserving to be loved. And what a chance for Tracey to see, played out before her, how bad that experience was for her daughter. This is what being witnessed means. The energy

of the physical engagement in DvT seems to amplify this process by bringing a directness and vividness to the scenes.

And what about all this whacking each other with cushions? Is this really serious therapy? I believe it can be. There is something about the playfighting with cushions that reminds me of games that parents play with their small children. Children really enjoy such fighting, which can be like a kind of cuddling, and where part of the pleasure is in the child feeling trust that the big, powerful adult, who could easily crush them, will protect them from getting hurt. Sometimes the adult will do the chasing and be the strong one, and sometimes this is reversed and the child overwhelms their parent with their immense, imaginary powers. They can play at being all-powerful, and vent their destructiveness on the world, without really hurting anyone. Perhaps Lucy benefited from going back to this missed early childhood experience.

Back in the session, I am now thinking about what is okay for Lucy in terms of physical contact, because she is not my daughter, and I am a man. I decide to pick up two large cushions, and going up to Lucy and squeezing her between the cushions, as part of the playfighting. She laughs, shouts in protest, but seems to enjoy the feeling of being held. I shout too, and by keeping the appearance of a fight, it makes the physical contact more acceptable for Lucy. She lets herself fall to the ground, and be squashed under the cushions. More laughter. Then she jumps up, and throws a cushion at Pauline. I sense that the scene is transforming. She's done with me, and I wonder if she wants a different kind of physical closeness with a mother figure. Pauline immediately senses what she wants, and starts to chase her. Lucy's level of enjoyment seems to go up even more. As I watch, it looks to me like a game that a mother would play with her small child.

Up until now, Tracey has been watching from the side. This is not an unusual beginning in the parent's first session. My hope is that Tracey will be able at some point to join the play.

Pauline is still chasing Lucy with two cushions, and suddenly Lucy falls over, clutching her ankle. The mood suddenly changes. The play stops. Lucy is crying, and says her ankle is hurt. Pauline and I settle down beside her to check her ankle. We both feel anxious. Tracey has not moved. We look over at Tracey, expecting she might intervene to check if her daughter is okay. She looks unmoved. We have left the playspace now, but I am aware that what is happening is important. Pauline and I both sense that Lucy would like to be looked after by

Tracey. So we pick her up, and gently carry her over to her mother. Tracey tells us that Lucy is putting it on, as she always does. Despite this, we ask her if she can cuddle Lucy. She does so. Lucy lets herself be cuddled.

After a while, Lucy gets up, and walks a few paces, cries out and falls again, this time holding her shoulder. Pauline and I go to pick her up again. A ritual seems to have formed, a symbol she is creating for her emotional hurt, as a sign of distress for her mother. Lucy says she does not want to be carried. Tracey doesn't move. Pauline asks Tracey to come over and cuddle her. Tracey moves over and cuddles Lucy. Tracey laughs, but continues with the cuddling. Lucy wriggles; she will not be comforted. I sense that this is difficult for Tracey, because her comforting is being rejected. We have reached the root of their attachment problem. Lucy desperately wants to be cared for by her mother, but rejects her; perhaps she does not trust that her mother will be able to do it, and she doesn't want to be let down again. Tracey does not want to risk caring for Lucy, because she sees that she will be rejected yet again, being a reminder of many painful experiences for her. Lucy feels her mother doesn't care, and Tracey feels that Lucy is not really hurting. They are both wrong.

I want to help Tracey find a way of successfully comforting Lucy. I remember singing to my children when they were upset. I ask if anyone knows a lullaby, hoping that Tracey knows one. Even though I could sing one, I know there's no point in my doing the comforting, because Lucy needs her mother. Lucy suggests the song "Michael Finnegan," and sings to us. Then silence. Tracey does not know the song. The lullaby idea does not work. Lucy says she wants to go to the hospital. She is letting us know that she is not getting what she wants here. Then she changes her mind, and tells us that she wants her grandmother to collect her and take her to the hospital. Tracey appears to be feeling rejected, again. The mood feels quite serious, but I decide to try bringing us all into the playspace again, so that we can find another way for Tracey to support Lucy. So I suggest Lucy pretend to phone her grandmother. She phones her, and Pauline picks up as her grandmother. "Sorry, Lucy, I can't come to help you, I'm at work. I'm sure your mum can sort it out. Ask her." Though Pauline is new to DvT, she understands exactly what is needed in the play. Tracey is looking worried, this is her first dramatherapy session, and she is in pretty deep. I say, "Tracey, you could try phoning a taxi to take her to hospital." Tracey rings the taxi company. The playspace seems to be just barely holding. Pauline and I arrive as taxi drivers. We study Lucy and her injured ankle, and say that it is very serious, and she needs an

ambulance. We turn into paramedics, and the three of us physically carry Lucy to the hospital. Then a doctor (that's me) asks Tracey for a history of Lucy's past injuries. I want to give Tracey a chance to show her concern as a mother for how her daughter has been emotionally hurt in the past. Tracey lists a number of accidents that Lucy has had. The doctor then asks about her emotional injuries. At this point Lucy reaches for her mother's tablet, she is detaching herself. I can see that my acknowledgement of Lucy's past psychological traumas has gone further than she can cope with at the moment. She has left the playspace. This is her safety net, so she can stay in control of what she is ready to process. At least we have been able to let her know that we know she has suffered traumatic events. It is time to end the session. They both say that they want to come again.

Follow Up

We had a break for the summer holidays, but I phoned Tracey to talk about the session. She said she found the dramatherapy strange, and out of her comfort zone, but she was happy to do it if it helped Lucy. We discussed what the drama might have meant, and she noted that Lucy's aggression towards her had diminished since the session.

At our first meeting after the break, about six weeks later, Tracey and Lucy told us about the changes they had noticed over the holidays. Lucy had been away a few days with a family friend, and for the first time in their memory, they had missed each other. There were no hitting or kicking episodes from Lucy – only one "big meltdown," where Lucy had become angry and went to her room. I asked Lucy how she had managed not to strike out against her mother. She said that she did not want to get angry with her mother any more, because it made her feel she hates her mother. Tracey said that she had begun to understand what was going on in Lucy's head some of the time. Lucy was beginning to understand that the family was now the three of them, and the grandparents were separate. Interestingly, Darren had been naughty sometimes, and Lucy had been in the good child role several times.

Therapists are wary of miracle cures, flights into health that can be a way of avoiding difficult issues. Pauline and I were delighted to hear of these changes, but we felt cautious. After this session, Lucy told her mother that she did not need any more dramatherapy. We had a short meeting with Lucy, where she told us that she rated her relationship with her mother an 8 out of 10, where before it had been at a 1; and that now she loved her mother an 8 out of 10, where before it had

been a 0. She thought the dramatherapy had helped. We agreed to meet again in two months time. Would these changes hold?

Well, they did. When we met again, even though Tracey said she felt like "crap" most of the time, being depressed, crying a lot, and missing Tony, she still felt that she had a better understanding of her daughter, and their relationship had significantly improved. I asked about how they sorted out their differences. They had an argument about once a week, with raised voices, but no hitting or shouting. When asked what had helped, Tracey said, "I watched her with you. I had to take that on board and be a stronger person, and not to be scared of her."

For me working with the family was a moving experience. Lucy had a wonderful spirit and a sense of fun. Tracey also had a sense of humour, and great courage to take on something unfamiliar and challenging. I felt that they both had a lot of love for each other despite all that had happened. I am grateful to Pauline for having the imagination to call me in, as a kind of emotional plumber. Although Pauline had never worked with me before, or used this method, she intervened with sensitivity and accuracy.

I think about all four of us having had our own personal life experiences that had brought us to this moment when our lives intersected. We joined together with our various skills and strengths to help each other with generosity and humour. We found a way to create change, instead of succumbing to fear, shame, embarrassment, and failure.

This kind of work can often be effective, but it is rare for deep change to happen as quickly as it did for Tracey and Lucy. Usually the work takes a lot longer. I was surprised, and I wonder if somehow Tracey was ready for change, as a result of work she had already done herself, with Matt her social worker, and with Pauline. I hope that this story has been able to demonstrate and explain something of the benefits of creative therapies, dramatherapy and DvT in particular. I am grateful to Lucy and Tracey for allowing me to share their story with you.

A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"Stop Kicking: The Story of Lucy and Tracey"

Renée Pitre[1]

I begin my response, as Dolmen has done, with a story: "The toy box in the blue room had been broken for many years. The lid had snapped open and was slivered and exposed. There was a discarded jagged piece with a yellow post it note on it that stated: 'Please fix.' This was shuffled from office to office. It was announced in staff meeting. And still, the toy box remained broken. The jagged piece with the post it note was left in the closet right outside the blue room door. With all the other broken chairs, vacuums, and dreams. There it stayed. For a very long time. The blue room continued to serve its purpose; the clinicians taking extra care with their clients to – 'watch out for the toy box – that really could hurt.' It was even suggested to get rid of the entire box itself. 'Just get it out of there, David.' Then, one day, it was fixed. There were sounds coming from the blue room that sounded real. Real banging and clanging and perhaps a curse word or two. The toy box was fixed. Fixed, but not without any scars or hinges. Fixed to be at least somewhat functional. A broken toy box – somewhat fixed – mostly. Mostly functional. Mostly serving its purpose, but especially so when it came to holding toys. And it turns out that's just what a toy box is meant to do…"

Dolmen writes about a family – one with a long history of trauma and chaos. He writes about a mother and daughter – filled up with many feelings about each other. Dolmen writes about how he (and another colleague) work together in three sessions to help a mother hold her daughter. To help a little girl dramatize just what it is that she needs. All within a playspace. There are cushions and fighting and a drunk dad in a pub – but there is an amazing little part in

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Dolmen's story where a hush falls over the audience and we all lean in to see just what is about to happen:

The little girl is injured. Injured and *playing at* being injured. She holds both the real and not real at the same time – a nod to Dolmen's work with her and her own imaginal capacity. She calls for her mother who doesn't really respond and it seems that the old tired story is about to happen. Some of us are already looking at our watches to see when the show is over, some of us are asleep – but some of us – the select few – hang in there to observe the intervention. Dolmen suggests to the mother to hold the little girl. To hang in, to hang on. Regardless of what the content really was – Dolmen suggests to the mother to be there for her daughter. He doesn't ask her to stop being depressed, to snap out of it, to stop worrying about Tony – he asks her simply to hold her.

I am impressed with this story that Dolmen recounts for us. I am impressed because it's not glitzy and glamorous. It's not the typical story that we, as amazing^sometimes narcissistic^often narcissistic DvT playors tend to tell about clients and our work with them. Dolmen tells a story that is important for us to hear. He is saying: there is much one could do with this family – but I am going to give this little girl the chance to be held by her mother. Not rescued. Not saved. Not even apologized to for all the other things that have happened in her young life already. But just to perform the one thing that seems to be manageable and mostly functional – to hold. Dolmen seems to be saying: "Find the basic need of the client – and try to meet that need – even though there are a million other needs from a million other people and an untold number of layers in which they can exist in relation to each other – just try that one thing." This seems to be the underbelly of what Dolmen's article is saying and I hope that Dolmen himself agrees. It is a miracle story that seems quite ordinary.

Perhaps it is his humility. Or simply meeting a client's needs based on observations. Having something simple in the song change - not the entire melody - but rather one chord that is being misplayed within the family and reverberates throughout – turns out might be one of the best songs you can sing; one of the best stories to be told.

The Direct Transmission of DvT

Stephen Legari [1]

Author's Certification of Brokenness

This paper should not be confused with (or by) scholarship. All of this reflects my own experience and may be not generalizable beyond the tip of my nose. I have continued on my DvT path for more than eight years now. I left the martial arts behind some time ago and I have never been a practicing Buddhist. In reading this back I see that I have tried to be clever rather than serious. Yet I am making strong^serious claims about how DvT is transmitted. In my own case it came through the complexity of my deep friendship with my trainer. Having both a personal and professional relationship with my training director requires some balancing to be sure, and certainly biases my perspective on what I conceive to be an effective DvT education.

❖

Developmental Transformations and Direct Transmission

Is Developmental Transformations (DvT) taught? How do you learn it? When you think of all the instruction you have received as a trainee^therapist^playor^practitioner, who are the trainers^presenters^therapists that influenced you the most? Do you know why? The trajectory of a DvT therapist^playor^practitioner can take many forms. I believe that I learned^internalized^received DvT from having an intense and committed relationship with my trainer. I further believe that DvT is not taught but transmitted from trainer to trainee. This dynamic is unlike the traditional instructor/student relationship found in most therapeutic training programs in that in DvT, 1) the power differential between trainer and trainee is made available for exploration (and potentially transformation) and, 2) a trainee's material is welcomed as grist for development.

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DvT theory is, paradoxically, ever evolving in complexity while becoming more parsimonious (Johnson, 2005; Johnson, 2013). It can be obtuse to even the most advanced playor/player. Likewise, the foundational literature that informs DvT theory, while essential, is broad in scope and dense in substance. It has been said that the way to some measure of mastery in DvT is not through the words that are used to describe it. What then is the process by which the trainee develops the necessary competencies to become a capable DvT therapist^ playor^ practitioner?

I will explore the trainer/trainee relationship in its various stages of development, which, for convenience, I operationalize as: novice, intermediate, advanced, and graduate. I will discuss multiple potential manifestations of trainer/trainee relationship and their diverse contexts (e.g., institute, conference, playspace, training therapy, social gatherings). I will weave my own memories, dreams, and reflections into the paper. I am both fond and guilty of employing the heuristic voice (Legari, 2011) and hope that I will reveal something to myself as I attempt to tie things together.

To confuse matters, I will frame this discussion using the intersection of the Chinese school of Ch'an Buddhism (Hershock, 2005; Order of Shaolin, 2006) and DvT practice and theory. This is a personal fascination that stems from a cursory exposure to Chinese Buddhist history, Kung Fu cinema, and fervent practice in dojos. I use this point of reference for several purposes. First, the Ch'an school, historically, developed a unique set of training methods for its clergy that resemble our modern DvT training institutes. Second, DvT theory employs some basic tenets of Buddhist thought as its *a priori*, most significantly that Being is unstable. However, despite the importance placed on Buddhist principles, references to Buddhist literature are mostly left out of the DvT training canon. I propose that the Ch'an school is a vibrant point of reference both philosophically and practically. Lastly, the martial branch of Ch'an, while steeped in legend, provides an excellent point of reference in the ongoing discussion of DvT's resemblance to a martial art (D.R. Johnson, personal communication, April 19, 2015; Johnson, 2013; Rozenberg, 2015).

Definition

Direct transmission is a form^style^approach of teaching^instruction ^modeling that seeks to faithfully render the essential spirit of a method^theory^tradition through embodied^phenomenological, rather than text-

based, technique and communication. The student-instructor relation is emphasized as the point of transmission. Lineage is arguably important insomuch as it retains a connection through each succession of teacher to the teaching's origins.

Situating Myself

Much has changed since I first wrote this paper. It is spring now in Montreal and our institute is has just finished its 8th training year. Where the original voice of this paper was that of a graduating DvT-er, I now find myself in the position of doing my own transmitting. This has brought to the surface more questions than I anticipated. I am now anxiously preoccupied with the state of my own playspace, the health of our trainees, and the po'a that resulted from the departure of my trainer^friend^colleague who left Montreal last year.

DvT, particularly DvT theory, has changed a lot since I first encountered it. I can only imagine what the first cohorts make of their precious method. Developmental Transformations is no longer confined to its previous territories. It is no longer a drama therapy, no longer even necessarily a therapy much of the time. There is no more Source. The leader is a playor. The interventions have all be re-imagined according to variations of varielations and there is a playfully inventive vernacular to indicate the presence of instability (Johnson, 2013). But a great deal of it still looks the same: we warm up, do unison sound and movement, images arise and fall, transformations occur, we move toward ever increasing degrees of complexity, and finally close the session. However, what is happening has changed. Or at least how I appreciate what is happening has shifted dramatically. *Po'a, h'ish, x'i*, and *t'*, which arrived like a foreboding taxonomy of stuttered isms, have since unfolded like a tattered blossom.

When I reflect on how DvT became a practice for me, it appears as a kind of nebulous force that infiltrated the porous membrane of my education. Indeed, the inception of the Montreal Institute for Developmental Transformations coincided with my own well-timed identity crisis as an art therapist in training. My journey with DvT is far from unique. I have heard versions of my own story re-told many times by other playors near and far. DvT has become for me what it does for many, a plumbline upon which theory, practice and education come to rest, an ironic image perhaps, given the groundless premise of its theory.

But of course, it wasn't DvT per se. DvT doesn't really exist on its own. There is no published book^bible^template. As well developed, researched, and

instructed as DvT is as a modality^form^practice, it has no material form outside of those whom embody it. When I graduated it was from what and where exactly? From my own Institute, or that of the Institute for the Arts in Psychotherapy? From New York, New Haven, San Francisco, Taiwan, Israel, Czech Republic, China…? Where is DvT located exactly?

My tangent has a purpose: to illustrate that the relationship between trainer and trainee locates DvT for the trainee, gives it form, purpose, and practice. Fellow players are integral, essential, and they assist with the fostering of growth. But the real soil is the trainer. We are all children of our trainers, and training therapists, and the success of our development as trainees has little to do with what is written down. It has to do with the sustained encounter with the Other, with the Playor. How is this different from therapy? I defer to my own trainer's research to answer that question (Butler, 2014).

A final declaratory note before proceeding: my trainer is my friend. I have thoroughly touched upon this multi-dimensional relationship in a previous paper, a transcripted session of my own training therapy. But it needs to be stated again here for transparency. This personal and professional relationship with my training director has blurred what otherwise might have been a more discrete training trajectory. Nevertheless, I maintain that my experience still serves as a valuable representation of trainee development; a development that unfolds within the sphere of one's special relationship with one's trainer and that employs the mechanism of direct transmission as its vehicle.

If You meet a Playor on the Road, Kill Him!

Seventh Century China is perhaps an odd place to begin a discussion on the effective training methods of a postmodern, existential practice^ therapy^philosophy. The Ch'an school of Chinese Buddhism is not referenced, even once, in any DvT literature that I know of. Why would it? Buddhism is at once a major world religion, a westernized health practice, and a subject of intense scholarship. In many ways, it is a can of worms that does not require opening. Rather, in DvT we are content to borrow from that most essential of its tenets: Being is unstable. What we need from Buddhism is synthesized and thoroughly boiled down:

> The essentials of these theoretical ideas follow those of the Buddha, who first noted that suffering (conflict or turbulence) follows attachment (possession), which follows desire which flows

> from distinction. In mainstream Buddhism, the process of enlightenment seeks to extinguish suffering, attachment, desire, and distinction in the attainment of nirvana. (Johnson, 2013)

Notice that the Buddha is not cited. That's because he never actually wrote anything down. This tidbit will become important later on. Also noteworthy, and specific to this discussion, the "which" Buddhism is not identified in DvT theory. By this I mean Zen vs. Pureland vs. Shambala vs. New Kadampa vs. Tibetan. Each school of Buddhism has its proper lineage and subsequent line of transmission of the Dharma. It is perhaps with good reason that we do not explore Buddhist literature in DvT. It could be easily distracting. The student could find themself bogged down by the various manifestations of Buddhist thought, or worse, entranced. More importantly, if not urgently, DvT playfully critiques the middle path as being inefficient (not ineffective) at dealing with the dilemma of the premise:

> DvT does not attempt to eliminate the exercise of power, or construction of territories, or reduction of desires, or attaining one-ness. This process takes much too long, too many lifetimes, too much hard work, and not enough fun, for people interested in DvT, who remain steadfastly screwed up. (Johnson, 2013)

I appreciate this reality check. For those who have maintained both a Buddhist and DvT practice, I sincerely commend you, though it has not been my path. Nevertheless, I believe Ch'an's historical example serves to illuminate the mechanism of transmission.

A Special Transmission Outside of Scripture

A second disclaimer is in order. Ch'an Buddhist history in China is fraught with invention, opportunistic publication, and mystical legend (McRae, 2003). During the Tang Dynasty there were several schools of Buddhism that were competing for dominant orthodoxy, including those lineages within Ch'an itself (Faure, 1997). There are, for example, yarns that tell of years of wall-staring and sacrificial arms that weave the origin story of what we commonly know as Zen. Modern scholarship has done a noble job of picking the literary bones to discern fact from the fantastic, but for our purposes we need not be overly preoccupied with what did and did not occur. The examination of Ch'an's elements and qualities is presented as a rich source of resonance and a working example of what transmission means.

Ch'an, or Zen as it came to be known in Japan, means meditation, or meditation practice. Practice is perhaps the most invested feature of the Ch'an school and that which is most relevant to our discussion of DvT training. A thorough discussion of Ch'an history is not only beyond the scope of this paper, it threatens to unravel the fine thread that connects it to DvT here in 2018. Nevertheless, there are several important qualities to the Ch'an story that I wish to bring to the fore, namely: lineage and literature, immediacy, including the gong'an (koan), the master-student relationship, and finally the martial branch of Shaolin Ch'an.

Patriarchs and Literature

The grand patriarch and Dharma master of Ch'an, Bodhidharma (Chinese name, Tamo) is credited with arriving in China sometime between the 5th and 6th century (Order of Shaolin, 2006). Bodhidharma was a meditation master and taught through practice as opposed to text-based teaching - a tenet that survives today despite the wealth of Zen publishing. Ch'an was renowned for its eschewing of the use of text. A famous brushwork shows the 6th century patriarch Huineng tearing up a Sutra. This aggressive stance toward the written word remained a hallmark of Ch'an for centuries to come.

The Ch'an school championed the direct teaching of Buddhist practice with an emphasis on the teacher-student relationship and a relentless commitment to immediacy, hence its designation of a "special transmission outside of scripture" (Hershock, 2005). As Hershock (2005) notes: "This confidence led some Chan masters to go so far as to disparage Buddhist sutras and commentaries as 'hitching posts for donkeys' – fixed points of reference for those incapable of appreciative and contributory virtuosity" (p. 70). This throw-down not only positions Ch'an practice as superior to its contemporaries but also warns of the fallibility of text.

This feature of Ch'an history and teaching is reminiscent of the DvT stance on theory and absence of a formally published guide for practitioners. While DvT falls short of denouncing literature - indeed DvT has produced a rich pool of publication - it maintains a complex stance of emphasizing action over intellectualization while assigning a canon of study. This paradox is exemplified in the precept: "The main purpose of theory in DvT is to help the playor empty themselves of restrictive theoretical thoughts that will interfere with their open response to the player" (Johnson, 2013, p. 11). Perhaps it is better to conceive of

theory as being released into the *t'* space, rather than being eliminated. Theory remains, but awaiting animation in the air surrounding the players, like connective tissue – continuous, without beginning or end, wrapping and supporting the structures at play.

Patriarchy and lineage are also relevant themes to DvT history and practice. Each training director is the student of their own director and carries with them the unique teaching transmission of their master. Thus embodied, the training director is connected to the patriarch through either direct teaching or lineage. In principle, reversibility and play of powers allow for playing with this power dynamic. In principle.

Skillful Means

The gongan, or koan, is a distinctive feature of the Ch'an school that has attained popular cultural status. The gongan is a recorded saying of a Ch'an master who employs a mixture of absurdity, ambiguity, and poetry to confound his student. The gongan, as McRae explains:

> …refers to a particular style of behaviour displayed by Chan masters. Rather than explaining the Dharma in straightforward expository language… by means of paradoxical replies and inexplicable counterquestions, gestures and physical demonstrations, and even the shocking and painful tactics of shouts and blows. (p.76)

One of Ch'an's most lyrically colourful masters and patriarchs was Linji (died 866) who was famous for his abrupt, aggressive, and confrontational teaching methods - these included shouting and hitting (Fuller Sasaki, 2009). Compiled long after his death, Linji's sayings, *Linji lu,* became the designated compendium that later defined Zen Rinzai orthodoxy. Perhaps his most famous of paradoxes was the gongan: "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!" An excerpt from the *lu* illustrates his teaching method:

> A monk asked, "Master, of what house is the tune you sing? To whose 120 style of Chan do you succeed?" The master said, "When I was staying with Huangbo I questioned him three times and was hit three times." The monk hesitated. The master gave a shout and then struck him, saying, "You can't drive a stake into the empty sky." (Fuller Sasaki, 2009, p. 3)

This story illustrates several features of gongan practice. First, Linji is the decendent of his master Huangbo who employed similar methods in transmission. Second, the abrupt and divergent style of response. Third, the absurd quality of the gongan itself that is intended to drive out duality in the student. Linji's school was renowned for its commitment to immediacy and the bringing about of enlightenment suddenly and spontaneously (Hershock, 2005; McRae, 2004).

Within the animated stories of gongan are encounter dialogues, certain practices that invite comparison to DvT interventions and training. When read in this context the gongan appear nearly comical in their application, just as the use of paradox, absurdity, and ambiguity are nascent to DvT practice and teaching. Interventions such as spill^wrench^pollock^monk, mist^turner^smudge, and merge^picasso all employ some measure of disruption, distraction, interruption, or deviation and effectively increase the tolerance of ambiguity in the player(s). When employed in training, these sometimes confounding and paradoxical interventions assist the trainee with the expansion of their playspace and help transform their attempts to solidify their understanding of DvT. Johnson (2013) elaborates:

> The generally deconstructive, destabilizing function of the playor leads them toward this function, as if “I am coming for you, do something with me!” This evokes the player’s natural protective behaviors that typically have become a problem for them, allowing new ones to be explored. (pp. 48-49)

Finally, the mention of strikes and blows in Chan teaching is, of course, contradictory to DvT’s restraint against harm. Nevertheless, there is an often (playfully) confrontational physicality to DvT that includes assertive touch. Pushing, pulling, lifting, being sat on, are all forms of encounter that the trainee may be invited to deal with - within the ethical sphere of the playspace. This dimension of encounter often serves to liberate the trainee from habitual constructs of learned experience. The playor’s “strikes and blows” towards the player then can be seen as attempts to drive the player towards an increasingly expanded playspace. When employed in the service of action interpretation and/or transforming to the here-and-now, the playor’s engagement with the player’s issues with either extra- or intra-playspace material is decidedly confrontational.

Immediacy

There is an important connection to be made between the Ch'an notion of immediacy and DvT notion of presence. Ch'an's orthodoxy was defined by the characteristics of adaptation, spontaneity, and immediacy. The Ch'an ideal is expressed through the following: "Practice is not carried out in order to achieve something, but must be seen as opening up an unhesitating and unhindered responsiveness" (Hershock, p. 96). In DvT we strive towards increasing capacities for presence with the Other. To do this we employ noticing. Presence, as I conceive of it, is the oscillation (varielation) between moments of noticing. Noticing one's breath, heartbeat, sweat, anxiety, desire, desire to not notice, and, well, not-noticing (which arguably has its own presence though assigned to some other realm of presence that isn't here and now). All skills in DvT begin with noticing. Through noticing, emergents are given attention and possible form. Noticing what is manifest, latent, leaking, and absent. Thus, noticing, in the Ch'an sense, is the commitment to immediacy.

The Martial Art

No discussion of Ch'an Buddhism can forgo mention of its martial branch, Shaolin Ch'an. The word Shaolin, literally referring to the young forests of Shaoshi Mountain, conjures many images, most of them involving high-kicking monks in the cinema. Despite these entertaining associations, Shaolin Ch'an's underlying philosophy and practice - the combination of meditation and martial practice is an important piece of this discussion (Order of Shaolin, 2006).

As the legend goes, when Bodhidharma became the abbot of Shaolin monastery in the 5th century he integrated movement and stances (yoga) along with seated meditation into the training curriculum of the monks who were mostly accustomed to copying and translating scripture (Order of Shaolin, 2006). These embodied practices formed the basis of what eventually became globally recognized as Zen. Over the next several hundred years, the yogic dimension of early Ch'an practice was expanded and refined. This was achieved through observation of nature, the master-student relationship, direct transmission of form and technique, and an adherence to the fundamental Buddhist commitment to presence.

The reconsideration of DvT as a martial as opposed to creative art has been floating around as a point of discussion for some time (D.R. Johnson, personal communication, April 19, 2015; Legari, 2011; Rozenberg 2015). While

it remains unresolved, the history and practice of traditional martial arts can be conceived of as a valid dimension of DvT theory and training. In the *Text for Practitioners 2* we are treated to an analogy linking martial training to DvT: "In DvT, this process is very similar [to] karate sparring, the playor presents the player with increasingly difficult challenges of intimacy, desire, identity, and power. The purpose is the same: to prepare the player for the challenges of life" (Johnson, 2013, p. 49). The Order of Shaolin (2006) concur: "Like orchids, we believe that human beings need to be stressed in particular ways to thrive – hence our rigorous martial and meditative training. But stress an orchid too much and it dies" (p. 55).

DvT Training

DvT training is experientially focused but this does not entirely capture the *modus operandi* of the teaching method at play. DvT privileges the performed encounter and by doing so capitalizes on those qualities that make for a successful education in associated realms, for example drama therapy. By moving theory into action as soon and often as possible, the trainee does not unnecessarily expend resources trying to conceptualize their learning. As Butler (2014) explains, "an enactive approach to reflection allows students to engage in an embodied and creative way with the material not privileging overt cognitive processes" (p. 22). With the emphasis on embodied learning, the inevitability of a trainee's personal material manifests. DvT training provides for this eventuality; it may even depend on it. Butler (2014) elaborates,

> …because all experiential learning to some extent recruits the students' material, the question can become one of degree. For therapist education this is not only about the amount of personal material recruited, but also about the amount and quality of the affect associated with that material and how it is navigated in the classroom setting. (p. 24)

But unlike the constraints of the academic institution, both the training institute and the method give form and process to the arrival of this material, namely transformation through the encounter. Group work, one-to-ones, cauldrons, cohort play, and most significantly, training therapy, help the trainee navigate impasses in the natural process of emergence. Through the direct encounter with training director/training therapist the trainee receives the

transmission of applied DvT theory and can develop personal skills in transformations.

The Developmental Trainee

Every DvT playor who makes a commitment to become a practitioner and then graduate of an institute must fulfill the same requirements but the road to get there can differ greatly. In this way, each DvT playor's trajectory is unique. Typically, in year one the novice becomes a beginner trainee and develops basic skills in leading and interventions moving progressively toward the level 1 exam, qualifying them as a DvT practitioner. This process, for some, can take several years. When paired with a practicum, typically in a drama therapy program, where the trainee can begin offering DvT sessions and receive appropriate supervision, the trainee may develop quickly as the direct experience of playing and being a playor with real people can positively expand one's tolerance of ambiguity– a key component in developing DvT competence.

In the intermediate phase of training, the practitioner's encounters with DvT expand considerably. Training commitments include leading one-to-ones and groups, co-leading with the training director, research, supporting monthly trainings, working with a DvT supervisor, writing papers, and, most notably, training therapy. These activities may, and perhaps should, take several years to complete. In doing so, the advanced trainee will have ideally formed, fused, and fought with a cohort and committed to an ever-complex relationship with their training therapist. All of this should appear in the leading style of the advanced trainee with a kind of grace and flow (even in more assertive encounters) settling into their presence and varielation.

With the final completion of the written components of the level 2 requirements, the advanced trainee approaches graduation. Again, this may take several years as the challenge provokes regressive behaviours. Nevertheless, it eventually happens. The papers get written and the ceremony sits on the horizon and with it the culmination of countless hours of play, video, notes, conferences, populations, fits and starts of training therapy, nay-sayers, devotees, cultists, transients, players, playors, pugilists, cut-offs, coalitions, cohorts, injuries, epiphanies, fantasies, and bleary-eyed Sunday mornings with a head-full of readings.

Transparency in DvT Training

If we look at the training therapy relationship through the native concepts of Developmental Transformations: embodiment, encounter, and transformation, we can begin to develop a picture of how the mechanism of direct transmission is effected through the trainer-trainee relationship. In DvT training, like in therapy, the trainer plays with the trainees. This affords the dimension of encounter to be modeled and transmitted. If we compare this to a lecture or plenary, the student experiences a mixture of cognitive development along with the potential for social desirability (I want the trainer to like me or I want to be like the trainer). While there are important modeling moments created through story, anecdote and disclosure, there is little direct transmission activated through this traditional mode of education, no matter the degree of didactic format.

Once in the playspace the degrees of proximity between trainer and trainee change...dramatically. The encounter heightens the stakes of intimacy and presence. This initial complexity heightens the awareness in the trainee that *both* parties share in the act of noticing and being noticed. It begins with noticing difference – or *x'i.* Noticing is the first form of direct transmission. Noticing the noticing as the noticed impacts the trainee on any number of given levels. I will provide an example from one of my earliest memories in DvT training:

> *We are going round in sound and movement. I am delighted and nervous. I watch the choices of each individual in the group and try to match their offering. By the time the passing gets within three or four people of me I am ready. I have my plan. When it is time I execute it with dexterity and focus. "Ah, we're doing some kind of tai chi here," the leader calls. I am deflated and embarrassed, but also excited. I've been noticed and named. I keep moving. By the end of the day I won't remember much of the encounter but this early memory will stay with me.*

I assumed that the instruction here was to name what everyone is doing. But the instruction was to notice. The content of what was being noticed, the tai chi-esque move, was secondary, or negligible, to the emergent – the experience and desire of being noticed. This instruction was directly transmitted to me by and through the proximity of my trainer, through encounter and body. No amount of reading can teach that.

Finally, the expansion of the trainee's playspace through successive experiences of transformations (and impasses) creates the necessary conditions

for development of the player^trainee to unfold as playor. These encounters with transformations occur both at the training institute, framed by the educational setting, and in training therapy where the line between training and therapy can appear murky. Again, it is the transparency of the trainer^playor that retains the vital link to instruction while providing sufficient conditions for the emergence of the trainee's personal material. Johnson (2013) explains:

> The primary intended effect of DvT is to reduce the individual's fear of the instability of being, in particular in relation to the issues of embodiment, intimacy, and change (resulting from the fundamental instabilities). DvT accomplishes this effect by placing the individual gradually into a situation that calls for embodiment, that focuses on the here-and-now encounter with others, and that is continuously transforming. (p. 64)

The Playspace of Proximal Development

Johnson (1999) states that: "Development…is not to be confused with the series of steps, stages or levels that are used to describe it" (p. 173). Development is a dynamic process, one that occurs in proximity to those others that provide the necessary conditions for its unfolding. Vygotsky conceived of the *zone of proximal development* as the learner's potential activated in the presence of the helping other. "…learning is not development; however, properly organized learning results in development and sets in motion a variety of developmental processes that would be impossible apart from learning" (Cole, 1978, p. 90). In DvT, the trainee is primed not simply as a receptacle of theory and practice but a work in progress whose own incomplete (never-to-be-complete) developmental process is engaged. The trainer, in turn, focuses their noticing on the trainee and commences transmission while remaining aware^present^permeable to the trainee's experience.

The individual trainee's zone of proximal development is unique. It is a veritable combination lock. Each encounter with the training director^playor^training therapist offers a new opportunity for discovery and inquiry. When conceived through the dimensions of encounter, embodiment, and transformation, the trainee's zone of proximal development can be evaluated and negotiated. Each trainee will have impasses and unplayable moments to varying degrees across each of these dimensions. The goal is not to be rid of blockages –

an impossible task - but to dislodge and root them out, to make them available for play and to set the natural course of development forward.

The trainer^playor^training therapist is responsible for the realm of instruction. This happens most proficiently through the mechanism of direct transmission. DvT instruction is dynamically intermingled with the trainee's development. DvT instruction aims to set the trainee alight with their own natural, though perhaps dormant^strained^sprained developmental momentum. As Crain (1980) explains: "Instruction, then, propels the mind forward. Instruction, Vygotsky emphasized, does not just add something new to the child's development, like adding clothes to the child's body. Rather, it interacts with development, awakening it, charting new paths for it" (p. 238).

A caveat of successful transmission of DvT is the availability of the trainer and his incompleteness: being a paradox embedded in the heart of DvT instruction. The trainer must have journeyed through the same^similar^familiar training experience to emerge competent yet still rather broken. Indeed the transparency of this instability may be the very fulcrum of a trainee's development or a client's healing. This notion is one that has been explored by DvT trainers (J.D. Butler, personal communication, January 8, 2014).

Here, Now, with You

In DvT we are driving^striving^limping towards the present moment with the Other. In this sphere, in the dynamic, intimate, and clunky dance that the trainer^playor and trainee^player embody there is the opportunity for freedom~, fleeting though it may be. The here-and-now can be somewhat dryly conceived of as "The moment-to-moment awareness and attunement to presently occurring phenomena…" (Legari, 2011, p. 5). The vehicle of the here-and-now^ presence^ immediacy in DvT is developmental transformations. The arena of its negotiation between trainer and trainee occurs when playing with the constructed world, most significantly in the play of presence. Though this places tremendous importance on the ability of the trainer^playor to play with presence with his trainees, the trainer is not, by any stretch, viewed as a master in the conventional sense. Their mastery lies in the ability to transmit their own incompleteness.

> DvT playors therefore do not attain in any heights of maturity, do not aspire to enlightenment. In contrast, we work to more deeply acknowledge how difficult life is, how incomplete our efforts are, and not to be afraid of or ashamed of our failings. The goal is to be

> able to play with these failings, for they have little to do with our value as human beings or our capacity to love and be loved. (Johnson, 2013, p. 68)

A late reflection from training therapy:

> *Here I am again in this little room with you. Just enough to amble around, not big enough to hide. For all my comfort I find no comfort. My head is bobbing and my maw is yammering. And you, you are driving your hand between the space of my arm and my body. I go at this with all my mental abilities, trying to decode the gesture and receive the instruction. But there is none. It's not there. The instruction is you and me and here. I won't arrive for another 20 minutes. But arrive I will. And when I do the shame, and guilt, and embarrassment will fall away, briefly. Perhaps we will be holding each other, or fighting, or not moving at all.*

From Transmission to Representation

As a final consideration of the mechanism of transmission of DvT, I want to draw attention to its manifestation in the student beyond the immediacy of the training relationship. If we accept that the relationship between a DvT trainer and trainee is a special one that emphasizes a transmission rather than an imparting^instruction of both the theory and practice of Developmental Transformations and that the mechanism of this transmission is developmental transformations, then what becomes of the internalized transmission within the trainee? Geller, who has done a great deal of thinking, reflecting, and writing on the nexus of the supervisor/trainee relationship in the training of psychotherapists (Geller, 2005, Geller, 2006, Geller & Faber, 2010) elaborates on a process of introjection of the supervisor and subsequent representation of their style in their own development as a therapist.

Geller describes both the techniques and quality of presence that produce an ideal supervisory environment. In it, the trainee is given instruction in the special manner of listening, projected calmness, and technique that resemble the qualities he employs in therapy. On calmness Geller (2005) writes,

> [It] insinuates itself into those aspects of subjective experiences that are apprehended primarily in the form of felt sensations moving through the body. Like the steady, grounded musical

> rhythms laid down by the bass, a therapist's calmness registers on a patient's body kinesthetically (p. 475).

Here the description of how calmness is experienced in the patient^trainee there is more than echo of the DvT art of noticing, of the body a script.

Another essential transmission for Geller is that of technique. In DvT we employ interventions usually as embodied encounters. In the talking cure we use words and body language. Geller (2005) elaborates:

> I speak to console, to clarify, to exemplify, to motivate, to inspire, to explain, and so forth. Some of my utterances are meant to move the therapeutic dialogue toward greater levels of collaboration [and] intimacy… Others aim to stimulate the creative and responsible uses of truth-telling (p. 470).

Transposed to the supervisory relationship, we can easily imagine how these same techniques might impact the development of the trainee in ways that assist in the internalization of the supervisor (Geller, 2005), not unlike the Ch'an notion of special transmission outside of scripture. This understanding helps me appreciate the larger context surrounding the uniqueness of the DvT training relationship.

For illustration, and to tie this all back in, I present the following composited vignette with myself now in the role of training therapist:

> *You have arrived in a flurry. All huff and puff. We were playing last time. Almost playing for real and not just playing at playing. Today you are talking. You are anxious and need to tell me this story. As much as you want to speak~ with me I also sense that you want to avoid me, avoid dealing with me. I stretch and move and mirror as you slowly enter the space. You'll be entering it forever. I am listening carefully – in that my listening is full of care that you need to speak. But I am also very focused on what you are also saying as you move away and toward me, occasionally stretching too as you notice me stretching. As your story comes to one of its climaxes you are not moving, you are standing. There it is, your hand resting on your hip creating the perfect aperture. With this opening I embody a time-honoured varielation of my own training therapist and move to interrupt that space with my hand – once, twice, three times, until you notice. Together we transform.*

Conclusion

So what is the relevance of this paper? Why have I explored this phenomenon of direct transmission through these lenses and how can they have some application beyond points of interest? One, I believe it behooves all DvT trainers to appreciate the dynamic and bi-directionally influential relationship between trainer and trainee(s). Because of DvT's approach to training, the trainee is in a special position to progress developmentally within the zone of the relationship with the trainer and that is precisely the where-and-when of DvT. As the international community grows, how will this special transmission be reshaped by the next generation of trainers whose branches grow further from the root than their predecessors?

I have begun to train others. First, as faculty in my own institute, and later, and more intensely, teaching a DvT intensive at Lesley University with my training director^therapist^friend. What is most relevant here is the transmitter I have become under the tutelage of my trainer. I have appreciated my charge with humility (when I can properly muster it). Like all the broken toys before me I have a valuable and insufficient incompleteness to offer.

Every student must outlive the master's teaching. When Linji struck Huangbo his education was complete. The student must be kicked out of the nest and become the playor. This process includes destroying our distractions (playfully) and how we attempt to reflect DvT back to itself (It's like yoga! It's like kung fu! It's like playback! It's like a shoal of fish!....). It is not like these things. It is not like Ch'an Buddhism. It is not there. It is only to be found in those micro-moments of shared~ :presence between player and playor, between training therapist and training client, between trainee and trainer, between you and me.

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Commentary on

"The Direct Transmission of DvT"

Navah Steiner [1]

I will respond and reflect on this fine paper in the most classic Zen way possible, by revisiting a famous Koan that I came across during my own Zen training, which mentions Bodhidharma and Shaolin (both referenced by Legari):

Emperor Wu of Liang asked the Great Teacher Bodhidharma:
"What is the highest meaning of the holy truths?"
Bodhidharma said, "Empty – there is no holy."
The emperor said, "Who are you, facing me?"
Bodhidharma said, "Don't know."
The emperor did not understand.
Bodhidharma subsequently crossed the Yangtse River,
came to Shaolin, and faced a wall for nine years. (Cleary, 1988)

In this Koan, Bodhidharma, the famous Zen teacher from India, had recently moved to China at the instruction of his deceased teacher to spread the teachings of Zen. He meets with Emperor Wu, who had converted to Buddhism, was a supporter of many temples, and was eager to learn more about the theory of this exciting new practice. In what I imagine to be a much-anticipated meeting, he eagerly asks Bodhidharma about the "holy truths," which are the four noble truths, the foundation of Buddhist philosophy Undoubtedly, he was hoping for clear answers and guidance for practice. Instead, he received a deeply confusing reply. The noble truths are not holy, he was told, but empty. When the Emperor challenged him for his credentials, Bodhidharma told him that he did not know what they were. Shortly after that, Bodhidharma left Liang for Shaolin, where he

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began his famous retreat of nine years, a period during which he offered no verbal teaching of the dharma that he had been instructed to share.

This encounter, as brief and deceptively simple as it may seem, is a teaching on two core concepts of Zen: emptiness and not knowing. Emptiness can be described as "things not being as they seem," that our projections, assumptions and stories about reality and people in our lives are often not reality itself. The practice is seeing reality more directly, just as it is. Not knowing is the practice of approaching reality with an open mind and curiosity, without preconceived notions and assumptions. Having had the experience of teaching DvT, which is based in part on these principles, in modern day China, I could see how this approach even today could be exceptionally confusing to one trained in the traditional Chinese educational system. I imagine that Emperor Wu must have been taken aback by this frustrating response and this irreverent and rude teacher, especially given his financial investment in the local temples and monasteries. However, it is no surprise that he struggled to take in what was being offered to him. Being new to the practice, he was not ready to appreciate what seasoned practitioners generally come to understand: Intellectual understanding of the method or basic knowledge of the technique cannot replace years of being in and with the other.

And so it is with DvT and so many other forms of psychotherapy. It is the coming back, time and time again, meeting with your training therapist or teacher, season after season, year after year, a process that Legari describes so fully and eloquently in his paper. His process reminded me of my own DvT transmission process. My graduation ceremony occurred after 12 years of training therapy with two mentors, and once I had started to train and mentor students of my own. This process may seem complicated and slow to some, but not, for example, to the practitioners of the Zen center I practice with, where I am seen as a junior practitioner after over 10 years of involvement. Both communities, DvT and Zen, have encouraged me to have boundaried but deeply playful, challenging, connected relationships with teachers, peers and students together with periods of "facing the wall" in meditation or self-reflection. Through an interpersonal matrix that also allows for personal space, we can examine over time our insecurities, projections, idealizations, disappointments, dependencies and frustrations, until some of those stories start to drop away. At the end of the day, no one can teach us to be ourselves, but it is often the ones that help guide us back to a more authentic expression of ourselves, whom we remember as our greatest teachers.

The encounter between these two men at Liang also reminded me of a familiar dynamic in our DvT community. Demands from our founder, DRJ, and questions about DvT texts and desire for structure are often met with indirect responses or no answers at all, much to the frustration of trainees and faculty alike. I have come to understand that this practice is essential to some extent to the transmission of Zen, DvT and any other course of study that involves a deeper understanding of interconnectivity and intimacy. So many moments with our clients, in and out of the playspace, are ones where we frustrate their dependency on us for advice, counsel and answers to questions we hope one day they find within themselves. This paper had me reflect on things that some of my DvT mentors may have played with or said during my early days of training, which I struggled to fully take in. Perhaps I even became, like Emperor Wu, defensive and demanding. In retrospect, I can see some of these teachings now as some of my most cherished and valuable life lessons.

And Emperor Wu himself? Did he ever come to some resolution of his encounter with Bodhidharma? The commentary provided on this Koan tells us that he continued to think about this special man long after he had gone. After Bodhidharma's death, he wrote this epitaph:

I saw him without seeing
Met him without meeting him
Now as of old
I regret and lament this.

The commentary goes on to say that he came to see Bodhidharma in retrospect as his teacher. It seems to me that despite his expression of regret and lament, that what he needed to learn, he did over time. Perhaps then, if the Emperor had begun to teach and train others, he would have been able to share, as Legari has expressed beautifully at the end of the paper, the unique things only he had to offer: his own incompleteness, insights, losses and regrets, all his shared and missed moments. Reality, just as it is.

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The Birth, Torture, and Death of the Outsider Artist

Robert James Miller [1]



Author's Certification of Brokenness

The Birth, Torture, and Death of the Outsider Artist was performed in 2005 and never performed again by anyone. I have not asked anyone why. The author became his own outsider artist of the Institute shortly afterwards when he left the Institute (as if one can ever leave), but married an institute member, and became a father of a daughter who is now an expert on Shakespeare. The cast has certainly changed: the body of the author is now sixty and one member of the

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original cast is dead. Steve already had the cancer that killed him when we performed our love letter to the DvT outsiders at the Institute. It is true that the love never wavers, but it is also true that it becomes only more and more difficult to stay in the playspace with those you love. Re-enter the fool!

❖

This piece was originally performed at the Institute for Developmental Transformations Conference in 2005 by Robert Miller as the Jester, narrated by Kate Hurd, and with Bill Miller and Steve Buchbinder (now deceased) playing Shakuhachi flutes modified with slide whistle. The Jester improvises with the music and narration. The Jester is dressed as a tramp and in white face. The narrator sits on a ladder observing the scene as these stories are told.

Narrator

The purpose of this performance is to show you what we mean by the Body of the Outsider Artist in the playspace. We will show you our meaning by telling you stories about outsiders, stories about our ancestors who have lived through the body of the Outsider Artist, stories about the turbulent emergence of impulses in the body of the Outsider, bodies on the periphery of dominant culture (Maizels et al., 2009).

DvT is the art of periphery, the art of the outsider, outsider art, voices always under threat of silence. Think of the notion of the body of the Outsider Artist as a kind of incarnation, or persona, patterns of action played in the bodies of Shakespeare, the Marquis de Sade, Charlotte Cushman, Antonin Artaud, Henry Darger, bodies at the Institute, my body, and the bodies of children.

We are going to demonstrate a kind of identification for internalization, an image, a model from the examples of these great artists who lived before us. Artists who invited us into playspaces, who suffered as Outsiders. Impulses of turbulence emerge in the gap of being. The body of the Outsider Artist is the gap in being, and emerges like Venus at the seashore after disaster strikes.

Outsider artists and children feel the emerging turbulence before the rest of us, in the periphery of our culture, in the bodies of the powerless. But don't misunderstand us, this metaphor of disaster, this storm, this turbulence that we

speak of now has nothing to do with earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, or weather of any kind. Disasters of violence to which we refer are man-made, certainly tragedies because, certainly they could have been be avoided.

The body of the Outsider Artist seems to emerge in the wake of the tsunami. The body is the form turbulence takes in the wake of violence or before the eruption. The body of the Outsider Artist is born from experiences beyond words. Think of the body of the Outsider Artist as the turbulent impulse in oscillation. An impulse from an unknowable source that leads to courageous actions, "crossing the river into the liberties," or, "tuning the mind to compassion," or "entering the playspace" (Bakhtin, 1981).

As this performance unfolds through our stories, music, my voice, movements of my eyes and mouth, the tilt of my body, you will get the feel of what we mean by the turbulent impulse, by the oscillation that appears as the body of the Outsider Artist.

Wait.

Knowing feeling will become clear to you, in your own way, in your own body, as you feel this oscillation. We intend this performance to be felt as a kind of wake up call, a warning that we only have one breath to live. A memorial for those we have lost. This performance is intended as an encouragement in the midst of continual war, a seduction, a bedtime story to soothe you at night.

We intend this performance to be like showing you an old photo album, pointing to pictures of your family members, and reminiscing about the good times. You need to know these stories so you can remember your past, so you can know your tribe, your lineage, how you got here, and where you are going. So you can know what you stand for, and against.

Think of this performance as a gesture of love toward you, a gesture of encouragement to do the impossible work of entering into, and being knocked out, of the playspace. Stages are cultural peripheries where oscillating turbulence after or before the disaster becomes the body of the Outsider Artist. Stories told tonight are strangely similar, uncannily interconnected. In each story the body of the Outsider Artist is born, is tortured, dies, and is reborn in an endless discursive cycle. Each artist gave us a different playspace, on the turning of the wheel.

Turbulence oscillates in the bodies of Shakespeare, the Marquis de Sade, Charlotte Cushman, Antonin Artaud, the body of Henry Darger, and in this body here tonight. These great artists, like you, have suffered as outsiders.

Listen carefully.

Our playspaces are the true cultural gaps where turbulence before or after violence becomes the body of the Outsider Artist, in beauty and truth. Now, listen to the beautiful Shakahachi Japanese Flute music played by two Zen practitioners, think and don't think, of impermanence.

Shakespeare

Imagine this scene. It is London during the bitter cold winter of December 1598. It is nighttime and most people are asleep in their beds. It is cold enough to freeze over the Thames with a layer of ice. It is snowing and you can hear the sound of the crust crunching under the men's feet as they march north toward Shoreditch. Shoreditch was a suburb of London known as one of the liberties. The liberties were a kind of free play zone that existed in the fluctuating cultural space allowed by consent of the Queen and her Privy Council. This early modern playspace was a pungent stew of prostitution, bear baiting, gambling, crime, sometimes daily and very public executions. Shoreditch was where Shakespeare first worked as an actor in London (Shapiro, 2005).

On this night in December actors from Burbage's theater company carried lanterns to light the way on the dark road. They were well armed with swords, daggers, and pic axes as they proceeded to the site of the Theater. The men posted guard around the perimeter and went to work. On that snowy night they began to dismantle the Theater, timber by timber.

During the Renaissance the playhouses in England were rebuilt from the remnants of classical knowledge rediscovered by Poggio Bracciolini, but that's another story. These permanent theater buildings were conceived as playing spaces not seen in the West since the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. These theaters then drew thousands of London spectators every day.

Theater was big business. The acrimonious negotiations with the landlord had begun two years earlier with the forced closing of Shakespeare's Theater. The landlord Giles Allen had decided to raise the rent on the use of the land to three times the current rate. This move threatened to put Shakespeare's acting company out of business. As the actors worked to tear down the theater the lease had run out. More than just a Protestant reformer, Giles Allen was a Puritan and no lover of the theater. Shakespeare was acutely aware of the delicate political situation that the acting company now faced. Protestant reformers specifically attacked Catholic practices such as the Mass which they referred to as "the Pope's theater." Particularly aggressive were attacks on the Catholic concept of purgatory. Most

everyone after death fell into the cauldron of purgatory. The familial dead suffered unremitting pain in order to purify the body before ascending to Heaven. Catholics believed ghosts could return from the grave and encourage their living relatives to attend Mass. Mass cost money, but even the poor gathered small funds together to give to their priests. Priests performed Masses for the dead in purgatory and raised the significant capital base that Henry VIII confiscated in 1533.

Protestants dismissed the Mass as an imaginative and profitable space; an elaborate con game for the gullible and simple-minded. The Catholic view had been dominant for over a thousand years in Britain. Not people of the body or the imagination; early modern Protestants were people of the book. The Puritans would be the only religious group in history to successfully close the theaters for eighteen years. Puritans were disturbed by gender bending in Shakespeare's theater. Boys dressed as women in Shakespeare's theater excelled in the impersonation of female characters. But most disturbing for the Puritan moralists was not sex, or gender bending. The Puritan fathers were most disturbed that common, low, and working class actors were impersonating princes and kings. The blurring of class boundaries was the gravest degeneracy. In the theater, power differentials were almost equalized. This frightened the Puritan pastors.

The only thing more profane or dangerous than being an actor in Elizabethan England was being caught as a priest. Shakespeare probably witnessed the public execution of the Jesuit Robert Southwell. Southwell was racked several times for his confession. He was dragged on a pallet through the streets of London to endure the jeers of the rabble. At Tyburn, Southwell was hanged in public on a raised platform for thousands of people to see until he was close to death. He was then cut down, castrated, and disemboweled while still alive. Drawn means having your intestines pulled out slowly on a turning wheel. His entrails were held up before his own eyes and then burned. His heart was cut out and shown to the crowd. He was beheaded. His body was cut into quarter pieces and thrown into a large vat of boiling water. His severed head was stuck on a pike for display at the south end of London Bridge. This was the deliberate use of violence presented as theater for governmental control of the populace.

Shakespeare would certainly have known about the nighttime raid to dismantle the timbers of the Theater; he was probably there with the cry of players. The actors in the Lord Chamberlain's Men were shareholders in the

company. They shared investments, shared in writing the plays, and shared in the performances. The actors shared in the profits and each shared in the risks.

Shakespeare knew the risks of offending the Protestants on that December night in 1598. That night, the actors carried the Theater in pieces across London Bridge to Southwark. Only six months later the actors would build a new theater called The Globe.

> Petronius: "Totus mundus agit histrionem," from the Latin, "quod fere totus mundus exerceat histrionem" translated roughly, "because all the world is a playground."

On that December night Shakespeare was a middle-aged man. Rich and famous, he had already given us the history plays, most of the high comedies, and some of the great tragedies. Shakespeare had given us new representations of inner lives in the characters of Juliet, Falstaff, Mercutio, Portia, Titania, and Bully Bottom. Shakespeare had already written the sonnets. Many of his fellow playwrights were dead or murdered. His father was aging and close to death. Shakespeare had just lost his only son to disease at the age of eleven (Schoenbaum, 1991).

On that night is it possible Shakespeare was reflecting on his losses? Did he wonder what would happen next as the timbers from the Theater were carried across the Thames? We can imagine that he certainly felt the turbulent oscillation in his body. But, more relevant to us, Shakespeare gave us his greatest gift. Shakespeare opened for us the cultural gap out of which was born the body of the Outsider Artist. Shakespeare gave us a great comedy playspace. Shakespeare created the vivid post-pagan and moral imaginative playspace. Shakespeare opened the sublime hybrid space between Catholic fantasy and Protestant hyper-reality. He conjured the middle way.

Shakespeare drew us into this playspace called 'a wood near Athens' where we lose our bearings and our identities are dissolved. Where we become confused, where we wander aimlessly, where we discover we are not who we thought we were.

But, best of all, Shakespeare gives us the bodies of Outsider Artists. The company of rude mechanical players. Amateur actors that can do the one special thing that royalty and the fairy other world cannot. Bottom can pull aside his mask to remind us that we are in role and out of role at the same time. Outsiders are the true keepers of the playspace that Shakespeare made.

Shakespeare was an outsider in his world. The Marquis De Sade was an

aristocratic insider who, like Shakespeare, gave us a dark and unruly playspace. Shakespeare was dead at fifty-two. Shakespeare was embraced at court and then forgotten in his lifetime except by a few loyal friends. The Merry Marquis was not lucky in the face of the Republicans.

Marquis De Sade

The Marquis De Sade was imprisoned by Napoleon for eleven years at Charenton Asylum (Lever, 1991). Sade was now seventy-four years old, with long white hair, high and wide forehead, an aquiline nose, and hooded eyelids. The corners of his mouth turned down permanently and his bottom lip thrust forward in a perpetual pout. Sade was old, submissive, and fearful. He stood five feet six inches tall. He was obese and had difficulty shuffling down the corridors of the asylum. He lived almost half of his adult life in various prison confinements. Most everything he ever wrote, Sade wrote in prison. That is important to notice. The theatrical partnership between Sade and the director of the Asylum lasted for eleven years.

By 1814 when Napoleon was deposed, all of Paris society knew the famous theatricals, dance concerts, and costume balls given by Sade and Coulmier at the Asylum. The director of the Asylum, Francois Simonet de Coulmier, was a dwarf who stood four feet tall with hunched back, and crooked legs precariously supporting an enormous torso. Coulmier provided Sade with the newly renovated two hundred-seat auditorium in order to conduct his experimental theater. The obese Sade and the dwarf Coulmier must have made quite a sight as they welcomed the fashionable of Paris to the Asylum for their soirees.

Sade spent the last years of his life selecting plays and casting inmates alongside of famous actors and actresses contracted from Paris. Sade tirelessly organized and conducted rehearsals, supervised publicity, sold tickets, and acted in the performances. Sade hosted exclusive dinner parties for the elite from Paris. Even before Sade had arrived at the Asylum, Coulmier had experimented with theater as therapy. Coulmier asserted the exercise of the imagination might draw the mind of the inmate back to the world of reality, little by little. Coulmier argued theater might have a curative effect not only for the inmates, but also for the director of the play, and the audiences who witnessed.

Coulmier was sacked. The therapeutic theater at the Asylum was closed. One can imagine Sade at that moment. Confined to his room at night, his

belongings searched for forbidden manuscripts. An old man, sad, and lonely. With Coulmier gone Sade had lost his mentor, protector, and friend. One can imagine the old man reminiscing. Did he remember the pain of separation from his mother, a cold woman who sent him away at the age of four to be raised by an uncle? Did he think of his absent father the diplomat whom he barely knew as a boy? Did he remember the Jesuit priests who educated him with frequent canning? Did he remember his manuscripts carefully hidden in the stone walls of the Bastille?

Sade died at the Asylum imagining that his manuscripts had been lost forever. Miraculously, *120 Days of Sodom* and other works had survived the mob. The manuscript was kept hidden for several generations in France until it was sold to a German psychiatrist who gave the work its first publication in 1904. This darkly imagined work was censored in United States until its first English translation in 1965. The Marquis De Sade invited us into his twisted and humorously erotic playspace. Extreme sexual and violent impulses were represented, but they must be seen as a comic swerve and are not for the literal minded (Greenblatt, 2011). Sade called his playspace the Chateaux of Silling. To arrive at the Chateaux one had to travel deep into the Black Forest. One had to cross-rivers, and to climb steep mountain passes on horseback to reach the fortress, within the thirty-foot walls of stone.

Sade created his Chateaux surrounded by a deep crevasse that plunged down more than ten thousand feet to the rocks below. Only by a single bridge could one reach the Chateaux-fortress. Male and female libertines who inhabit this playspace live in unlimited luxury, exploitation, corruption, and violence. In the Chateaux there is a theater, secret bedrooms, torture chambers, and the best cooks in the world. Over six hundred perversions and acts of violence are perpetrated against the bodies of women, men, and children.

Sade wrote his masterpiece one hundred years before Krafft-Ebling's ponderous, moralistic, and humorless compendium *Psychopathia Sexualis.* Sade understood sexual violence before Freud projected his phallocentric visions. Sade imagined horror before the Nazis recorded in bureaucratic detail the real catalogue of violence by murdering one million Jewish children. Sade anticipated in his body the turbulent violence of the French revolution. He gave us his bloody playspace before the Reign of Terror when the Guillotine filled the streets of Paris with blood. Sade certainly felt the oscillating turbulence of violence in his body.

He was lucky, he died an old man in his bed, under the ministrations of his female companion, and his kind doctor.

Sade died on December 2, 1814 at Charenton Asylum at age seventy-four years old. Charlotte Cushman was only fifty-nine years old when she died.

Charlotte Cushman

Charlotte Cushman died of breast cancer on February 18, 1876 (Leach, 1970). Just before seven in the morning, she roused from sleep, and was offered a sip of cool water. At that moment of her death, Charlotte smiled as she recognized her black servant Sallie Mercer who had traveled with the actress for more than thirty years. Charlotte held the hand of her lover Emma Stebbins, the sculptress responsible for the angel at Bethesda fountain in Central Park. Before she slipped into a coma, Charlotte Cushman remembered December 1845 at the Haymarket Theater in London where she played Romeo opposite her sister Susan as Juliet.

Charlotte came to England intending to make a name for herself in the home country of Shakespeare. Born in poverty, her father having died, Charlotte Cushman rose to become an American actress prevailing as Romeo before the extremely critical audiences of London. Cushman arrived in London from acclaimed performances at the Pearle Street Theater in Albany New York 1837, and in 1839 at the Park Theater in New York City. Charlotte knew Lincoln and his love of Macbeth. She was a close friend of Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, and acted roles from Shakespeare with Lincoln's murderer John Wilkes Booth. Cushman was collaborator and competition for male actors Edmond Booth, Edwin Forrest, and William Macready.

Throughout the summer of 1845, Charlotte and Susan prepared their roles in a small cottage rented on Garway Road in Bayswater. They first performed Romeo and Juliet in Edinburgh Scotland as the preview for their London debut. In Edinburgh innuendoes and rumors of lesbianism were made against Charlotte and aspersions cast on the character of her sister Susan. The sisters scandalized the women of the Unitarian Christian society.

Susan Cushman had been married off by her mother at fourteen years old. This man, Nelson Merriman, abandoned Susan when she was pregnant. Charlotte supported her mother, sister, and her nephew Ned. Female breeches performers had been successful in Edinburgh Scotland, all married heterosexual women of course, these women were familiar on the Victorian stage with their form-fitting costumes appealing to the unspoken fantasies of men. Charlotte and her sister

presented a moral problem for the female audience in conservative Edinburgh Scotland.

Susan Cushman was divorced. Susan was a single mother and sought acceptance as an actress. She had seven-year-old son Ned to feed. Charlotte was forced to send for "marriage certificates, bills, and paper to prove our respectability." She became a master at answering rumor and maintaining bourgeois respectability.

Charlotte and Susan opened as Romeo and Juliet in London to enormous critical and financial success. Critics of the time described the effect Charlotte Cushman had as Romeo (Merrill, 1999).

> The London Times:
>
> It is enough to say that the Romeo of Miss Cushman is far superior to any Romeo that has been seen in years…Miss Cushman's Romeo is a creative, living, breathing, animated, ardent human being.

> The Atlas:
>
> The appearance of Miss Cushman at the Haymarket, and the debut of her sister, Miss Susan Cushman, has been the theatrical event of the week…Miss Cushman as Romeo has created no small sensation…Perhaps a more intellectual and at the same time a more theatrically effective performance has never been witnessed.

> The Britannia:
>
> Miss Cushman as Romeo gave an illustration of the character startlingly real. Singularly masculine in her energy and her decisive action. This lady might pass for a youthful actor with little chance of her sex being detected. She was therefore the creation of the poet.

In 1846 Charlotte was thirty years of age. Tall, angular, square-jawed, sure of stride, with a deep voice.

> The Athenaeum:

> It is Love at First sight-but not first love…this is very different from the mere sentimentalism which, under the title of Shakespeare's play, has so long usurped the boards.

Her lover Emma Stebbins described Charlotte in the role of Romeo as "passionately agile." Her husky voice was acknowledged as serving her well in male roles. Critics acclaimed realistic fencing scenes.

When Charlotte and Susan returned to Edinburgh after their London success, fellow actor John Coleman wrote,

> During her short absence, my eccentric friend had become more eccentric than ever. She had mounted a man's hat and coat, a man's collar and cravat, Wellington Boots, which, so far from trying to conceal, she displayed without reticence or restraint as she strode about.

Masculine proclivities shocked spinsters and detractors who dubbed the new Romeo "Charley de Boots." Charlotte continued to play Romeo for more than a decade after her sister Susan retired from the stage. During one raucous performance at Boston's National Theatre during the 1851-52 season, a man insulted Charlotte from the audience. At that time, Juliet was played by one of Charlotte's lovers. As Romeo, Charlotte put a protective arm around her Juliet, led her into the wings, returned to center stage, and demanded, "Some man must put that person out, or I shall be obliged to do it myself." The audience cheered, evicted the man, and Charlotte went on to complete the performance.

Charlotte Cushman went on to play Rosalind, Cardinal Wolsey, and Hamlet. She was lauded and beloved. Charlotte Cushman gave us the transvestite playspace that is necessary for transformation. Sadly, the last two outsider artists in this performance both died alone.

Antonin Artaud with his Theater of Cruelty and Henry Darger in the Realms of the Unreal were not so lucky as Shakespeare, the Marquis, or Charlotte Cushman. Our last two outsider artists left important legacies, but both never found the playspace with others.

Antonin Artaud

"Little Antoine" was born in September of 1896 in Marseilles (Esslin, 1976). For some nefarious reason six of nine siblings in this middle class family died in childhood. Artaud was described as a nervous child with "stuttering and

facial tics." One day he witnessed the nanny pick up his seven-month-old sister, shake her, and slam her down on the table because the baby would not stop crying. This assault perforated the infants' intestine and the next day Artaud's baby sister was dead. At eighteen, Artaud suffered a nervous breakdown when he became depressed, suicidal, and burned all of his poetry.

For most of his early adulthood, Artaud lived in costly sanatoria at his family's expense. At one Swiss Asylum, Artaud was first prescribed opium for his nervous symptoms. At twenty-one Artaud began the life long addiction to opiates that eventually killed him. Artaud was frequently impotent. He never married but was engaged briefly to a Belgian woman who was also addicted to drugs.

Artaud searched for the playspace all his short life. He wrote conventional poems that no one would publish and acted small parts in films for money. Artaud appeared in two great silent films with beautiful performances, one as Marat in Abel Gance's Napoleon (1927), and the other as the Monk in Carl Dreyer's The Passion of Joan of Arc (1928).

Artaud was usually broke and begged for money from his friends. Frequently homeless he lived with his mother on and off for years. Artaud tried numerous detoxification cures that failed. He wrote a few plays and a theater manifesto that has influenced some of our greatest directors such as Peter Brook and Grotowski (Artaud, 1958). In the playspace of shame all of Artaud's own theater experiments failed. The Theater of Cruelty closed after producing only one conventional play that ran for seventeen performances.

Artaud left Paris. He traveled to Mexico and took peyote with the indigenous peoples. He studied voodoo and made drawings that he burned with cigarettes and cut with knives as he cast spells on his enemies. He wrote a historical novel, an opera, numerous essays, and hundreds of letters. Artaud was eventually arrested in Ireland for vagrancy and deported as an undesirable. Returning to France under an armed guard Artaud spent seventeen days in a straight jacket tied to his bed. He was diagnosed by Dr. Jacques Lacan as "fixated." For the first time, Artaud was committed to the asylum against his will. He spent the next nine years of his life incarcerated. He wrote to his friends that Lacan was "a filthy, vile bastard."

During WWII doctors at the infamous Rodez Asylum administered fifty-one electric shock treatments to Artaud without anesthesia (Marowitz, 1977). Electric shock treatment was innovative in France at the time. The Italian doctor Ugo Cerletti had observed pigs at the slaughterhouse becoming docile before

being killed when electric shock was applied to their skulls. When Cerletti applied this technique to his schizophrenic patients he discovered they too became docile. During the course of these treatments, Artaud fractured his ninth dorsal vertebra and was confined to his bed for two months. He became terrified. Artaud wrote this pleading letter to stop the treatments:

> Dear Doctor, I have a great deal of affection for you and you know it, but if you do not stop these electric-shock treatments at once I shall no longer be able to keep you in my heart. For this iniquitous treatment is separating me from everything and from life itself. Put yourself in my place for a moment, as a writer and a thinker who never stops working, and see what you would think of humanity if people were permitted to deal with you as they do with me. If here, too, they are going to regard me as a sick man because they do not understand me, it was not worth the trouble of coming to Rodez.

Twenty-two months before his death Artaud was released into the care of his friends. Jean Dubuffet, who first coined the term "Outsider Artist," was a friend to Artaud, and helped him toward the end of his life. With his final freedom, Artaud entered into an intensely creative period. His last work was a radio production entitled: To have done with the judgement of god. He worked furiously on this production for more than a year. Artaud recorded himself reading his text along with his screams for emphasis in January of 1948. Artaud was crushed to learn that his radio play was censored as "blasphemous and obscene," and was cancelled the day before the scheduled broadcast. Artaud was dead two months later at the age of fifty-two.

In the last week of his life Artaud gave an interview to the French magazine Combat. In this final public interview Artaud laments: "I know I have cancer. What I want to say before dying is that I hate psychiatrists." The Gardener found him dead, at dawn, sitting up at the foot of his bed, hunched forward, holding his shoe.

Henry Darger

Last in this cast, Henry Darger was born in Chicago in April of 1892 (Elledge, 2013). Henry was only three and a half years old when his mother died in childbirth. In grief, his father put his infant sister up for adoption. When Henry was five he began to set fires. He threw ashes in a little girl's face and he cut another little girl with a knife. Both girls required treatment and his father had to

pay the hospital bills.

His alcoholic father had difficulty controlling his eight-year-old son and sent Henry to Our Lady of Mercy Catholic boy's home. At this school, Henry developed "strange gestures." His nickname was "crazy," a nickname that stayed with Henry for the rest of his life. The priests struck him on his hand with a length of hard rubber to make him stop fidgeting. Viciously, older boys bullied Henry at school.

Because of his nervous character doctors diagnosed him: "heart isn't in the right place" and Henry was committed to the Lincoln Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children where he lived for the next five years. This notorious asylum was at the center of scandal. The medical director was charged with abuse and neglect that resulted in the deaths of several children. One physician was using body parts of dead children in her anatomy lectures.

Henry's father never visited his son at the asylum and died when Henry was fifteen. Henry became severely depressed and after three failed attempts he succeeded in running away from the asylum. Henry made his way back to Chicago. Darger lived alone for the next sixty-three years in North Chicago. One of his neighbors remembers hearing voices in Henry's room at night. One voice sounded loud and aggressive and the other voice soft, low, and frightened. When the neighbor knocked on the door to remind Henry that visitors were not allowed after dark, Henry was surprised, and politely replied that he was alone in his room.

People remembered Henry as an old, hunched-over, and short bald man who rarely bathed. Henry kept to himself most of the time, and if someone said hello, Henry answered: "Ok," then grunted and said: "Gotta be going." His daily routine was the same. Henry ate breakfast at the same restaurant every morning and attended Mass at the same church several times a day. Henry could be seen wandering the streets of Chicago rummaging through trashcans and collecting scraps of paper. He worked as a janitor, dishwasher, and bandage roller before he became lame, and was forced to retire. When Henry became too frail to climb the steps to his apartment, his landlord arranged for him to be placed in a nursing home. Henry died alone among the nuns the day after his eighty-first birthday. He was buried in the pauper's section of the Catholic Cemetery without a headstone.

Renovating Henry's apartment the owner found bundles of newspapers and magazines stacked nearly to the ceiling. The landlord found piles of telephone books, an old upright Edison phonograph, two typewriters, hundreds of empty

Pepto-Bismol bottles, boxes of rubber bands, tiny plastic containers of maple syrup, and five hundred balls of twine. The owner found hundreds of cutout pictures of little girls from magazines, newspapers, and coloring books. These female images were tacked up everywhere there was space on the walls. On the table in the middle of the room, the owner found three large albums filled with more than forty sheets of watercolor paintings. These works of art were painted on both sides of the paper. In the bedroom the landlord found hundreds of smaller watercolor works and collages. In a trunk was found Henry's 5,084-page autobiography entitled: The History of My Life and the 15,000 page fictional novel entitled The Story of the Vivian Girls, in what is known as the Realms of the Unreal, of the Glandeco-Angelinnian War Storm, Caused by the Child Slave Rebellion (MacGregor, 2002).

These narrative works were typed single-spaced and written over a twenty-year period. The main characters are the seven Vivian Girls who fight the evil Glandelinians to end forty years of child slavery. Spotless in their virtue, the Vivian girls sometimes dress as boys to infiltrate enemy lines, they have supernatural powers, and are friends of the Blengins. The Blengins are giant dragon-like creatures with wings of butterflies and the heads and arms of reptiles, cats, dogs, or eagles. The Blengins fight those who would harm children. Sometimes the Vivian princesses are depicted as happy perky blondes in simple sundresses. Sometimes they are depicted naked and with penises.

The playspace of the Realms of the Unreal puts us into the body of children tortured and in slavery. Darger writes: "Their lives were of continual misery, toil, illness and ill-treatment, they never had good things, no presents to enjoy, and they were never allowed to play, or have good times."

The owner of the apartment inherited the entire Darger archive, now at the Folk Art Museum in New York City. In an act of belated kindness, the owner and his wife paid for the granite monument that now marks Dargers's grave. On the monument are the words: "Henry Darger 1892-1973, Artist and Protector of Children." His work is described in condescending terms. Controversy continues as to the meaning of his gendered continuum playspace.

So, at the end of our performance, what have we learned about the body of the Outsider Artist? What can you take home from these stories? Perhaps we have learned that man-made violence will create turbulence in the body of the outsider. Oscillating turbulence will form in bodies of those that live on the

outskirts of town, across the tracks, will appear in the bodies at the gap with migrant war orphans, and at the edges of our culture.

We have learned that the bodies of children will feel the turbulence most acutely and usually before the rest of us. We have learned the body of the Outsider Artist will search for others to love in the playspace sometimes with success or with failure. We have learned that the enemies to our work are always the same:

- Ignorance of history, puritan pastors, religious intolerance, misogyny, lack of imagination, literal mindedness, bad faith, money without work, relentless self-promotion, self-aggrandizement, and impression management.

- Abuse of power, racism, patriarchy, white male privilege, white female enabling, corruption, greed, anger, and, worst of all, fear.

- Fear of letting go. Fear of change. Fear of impermanence. Fear of the Other. Fear of loving.

Perhaps we have learned a few simple actions to play. One action is to invite someone into the playspace. To play is no small action.

So, let us pick up the wooden timbers of our old home and carry them across the ice. Let us build our new home in the freedom of the liberties. All of us are shareholders in this enterprise, sharing the work, sharing the risk, and perhaps sharing the joy of the playspace.

Take a minute.

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A Chest of Broken Toys

Commentary on

"The Birth, Torture, and Death of the Outsider Artist"

Kate Hurd [1]

I vividly remember participating in Miller's keynote address at the DvT conference in 2005 entitled *The Birth, Torture, and Death of the Outsider Artist.* Yet I remember the experience incompletely. I go searching for the tape my husband made the day of the event but I cannot find it. In reading over what Miller wrote I have no visual memory of those flute players. If I try hard enough I might conjure up the sounds they played, however inexact and inaccurate that memory might be.

Surely this event was not so long ago! Was it really 2005? And while (clearly) I was only intermittently present during the whole experience, it still beckons. This, despite and because of the gaps; the gaps of time and the oscillations between the then and the now, as I straddle both history and presence.

As I read the script again, I find myself located with Miller, at various times, in various locations, with various experiences that reverberate, shift, and move me. Shared encounters, both inside and outside of the playspace, such as going to California as training directors of Institute West so long ago. Watching Miller engaging in one-to-ones in the playspace with another trainee practitioner, purposefully bringing in unrelated materials, doing spills and spinouts long before the terms were written down, creating dissonance at the same time he engaged so fully with the other. It was...electric. It was...non-linear. I was not entirely sure what was going on, the same way I felt while participating in the keynote event entitled *The Birth, Torture, and Death of the Outsider Artist.*

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I remember many things about this performance, even as I honestly did not quite understand it. What was happening, exactly? Was I in it? Or was I on the periphery of Miller's outsider art, looking in, as I would a fishbowl, as I sat atop a ladder and narrated the script, the only person using words, words, words. I knew this was something: heightened, elevated, uncomfortable, thrilling...and odd. Miller was in a Jester costume and clown face, there were these amazing flute players whom I don't remember but I am sure I experienced as loving and lovely as they made sounds both beautiful and incongruent with the narrative that was going on, the narrative that I was speaking as I sat on a ladder above and behind the embodied action that was going on in front of me.

For me, in the moment of performance, the flute was outside of my frame, another disrupter to the narrative, as was Miller's Jester himself. Here was an offering, a discrepant love song that joined and then departed from words that were spoken, an invitation to experience the gap in being, of what was and what is. I do not know if this was Miller's intent. I didn't really know what was going on. But I know that I had a visceral response to the artistic creation as well as to the dissonance and the emerging turbulence.

There were pauses in the narrative, punctuated by silence, the sound of the flute, absence, the Jester's emergent responses to words, sounds, lived experiences, his Jester bells jingling, the flutes playing and the narrative straining on from artist to artist.

Miller writes lovingly of the power of the playspace and the outsider artist in a world taut with harm. Miller states "think of this performance as a gesture of love towards you, a gesture of encouragement to do the impossible work of entering into, and being knocked out, of the playspace."

There is the evocation of the liberties, a space both real and liminal, where real debaucheries took place outside of the confines and the jurisdiction of the law, and where theatre flourished, as Miller states, "outside the periphery of the dominant culture." A place for the dissolute, the loose, the insolent, a marginal space, a pleasure pit. A space of disorder (as viewed by those inside the city walls), a place that challenged order and disrupted the status quo, even as the theater walls rose, gave form and shape to this outside space, and even as the theatrical companies traveled back inside the walls of London to serve the royal pleasure, leaving the outsider artist to return to "the fold."

This oscillation between unrest and order as played out in the body of the outsider artist, this oscillation between conforming and nonconforming, between

alarm and delight, between turbulence and stability, between experience and the representation of experience, becomes another type of journey. How does the outsider artist become internalized? Somewhere, somehow, he/she/they are brought inside. That is the fulcrum of change. That is awe.

But what of the cruelties of the world, and what we do with them? What of the matter of choice? Who chooses to be the outsider artist, and who becomes one because they have been banished there, by those with power and control? Who winds up there because they are misunderstood?

This brings us back to those outsider artists that Miller chooses to examine: Shakespeare, the Marquis de Sade, Antonin Artaud, Henry Darger, and Charlotte Cushman. All had different journeys. Deviants and/or accepted by the cultural norm, mad and/or sane, gaining^holding^grasping power and privilege and/or creating in true obscurity within the harshness of reality. Thus we oscillate art, and creativity arises.

This piece confronts us with DvT as an outsider form that is more and more being brought into the fold. Where, and how, does it belong? Does it want to belong? What space does it occupy and where am I within it? Am I sitting on my ladder, watching? Or shall I come down onto the stage?

I repeat Miller's words: "Think of this performance as a gesture of love towards you, a gesture of encouragement to do the impossible work of entering into, and being knocked out, of the playspace." To get off my ladder. To wait for the non-repeating element. And then to go with it. To be disrupted. Even as I move towards connection.

(*Stage directions: Wait. Pause.*

Hear a jingle of Jester bells, the sounds of a flute with a slide whistle. Embrace the wink.)

400 Seconds

Renée Pitre and David Read Johnson[1]

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

This article reflects hundreds of hours of examination of only 400 seconds of one session selected by the authors, one of whom was the therapist in the session and the other one who was a therapist for the client's mother. This article is therefore so infused with the biases and projections of the authors that most certainly any claims of objectivity are simply ridiculous. The unstated intent of doing this project has been to justify, enhance, and celebrate the contributions of Developmental Transformations, a practice founded by one of the authors and mastered by the other. Therefore, this article may in fact be a sophisticated form of marketing, though the results are so arcane it may result in a general distaste among readers, reflecting a longstanding self-defeating pattern of behavior of at least one of the authors.

In the tradition of Jean Piaget, we decided to select a short section of one session of trauma-centered Developmental Transformations to examine in minute detail. We chose a client who has a documented trauma history of some severity, who was fully engaged in the DvT process. The session was selected to be representative of her treatment, but otherwise was selected somewhat randomly. The idea of a length of 400 seconds was selected as a round number of a relatively short period (six minutes and 40 seconds). Despite urges to extend the length of time or select other sessions, the authors did not change the length or selection of segment during their analysis. Nor did they examine parts of the

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session immediately prior or following this segment, though of course the therapist did dimly remember these moments.

The procedure was simply to view the tape over and over with no overt preconceived notions, and to allow whatever observations or patterns to emerge from these viewings.

We have organized these observations into five layers: 1) background clinical information regarding the client and her traumatic event; 2) a detailed transcript of the actions that occurred during the segment, without interpretation; 3) a clinical analysis from a trauma-centered developmental transformations perspective of the meaning of the actions in the session in terms of the client's trauma and clinical progress; 4) a detailed analysis of the session from DvT theory, and 5) phenomenological, personal reflections of the session from the authors' unique perspectives.

We can share with you our conclusion: a great deal goes on in 400 seconds.

LAYER ONE
Background Information

It is 3:00 pm on a weekday. Samantha (S) has just come back from school on the bus, and enters the apartment, which consists of a living room with a TV, a kitchen, and three bedrooms. She goes immediately into her bedroom and shuts the door. Her uncle, who is legally blind, is in his bedroom and quiet. Her mother, who has been sick lately, is lying in her bed in her bedroom. S ignores the muttering of her mother. S dutifully opens her school bag, takes out her homework, and methodically completes the assignments with her unusually good handwriting. She likes to do her homework and has been doing well in school. Every morning she wakes up by herself with no alarm, gets dressed, and prepares a piece of toast without butter or jam, and then goes to her next-door neighbor's house to wait for the bus to school. She is eight years old.

The apartment is quiet. S takes time to lay on her bed and stare at the ceiling, though she is not thinking of anything in particular. Each day is more or less like this. After some time, S takes the book "100 Facts" off her bookcase and reads from it and then practices remembering the facts. Since she has been doing this for months, she has already remembered them all, but she enjoys the exercise and feels good about knowing so much. She lays in her bed, feeling satisfied.

Around 5:00 pm, S goes out to the living room to watch a show on TV. She watches the same show every day. She sits quietly in a chair. At 6:00 pm, S. goes into the kitchen to prepare herself dinner. She takes out two pieces of sliced bread from the refrigerator and toasts them. There is no butter. She opens the cabinet and takes out a packet of powdered chicken flavored soup, puts the powder in the plastic soup bowl she uses every day, adds two cups of water, and then puts it in the microwave and pushes the buttons for 4 minutes, like always. She then sits at the small table and eats her toast and soup. The only sound in the apartment is the occasional moan or deep-throated muttering coming from her mother's bedroom. We learn later that S hears what her mother is saying, but for many months she denies she heard anything.

At 6:30 pm, S washes her dishes and cleans up the kitchen, and then goes back into her bedroom. For about two hours she plays with her dollhouse and the little figurines her mother bought her, whom she calls her "little people." She likes this play and imagines all kinds of scenarios with her imaginary family who live in the dollhouse. Occasionally she takes a break and lies on her bed and stares at the ceiling, not thinking.

About 8:30 pm, S gets dressed in her pajamas, washes her face and brushes her teeth in the bathroom, and then knocks on her uncle's bedroom door. He answers, and she enters. He is lying in bed and smiles at her. She comes to him and says, "good night," and he smiles and says good night to her. They do not touch. She closes the door behind her and then knocks on her mother's door. When she calls out, "come in!", S enters and goes to her mother, who reaches toward her from her bed to give her a brief hug. S says, "good night" and her mother responds with "good night, love" and S departs, closing the door behind her. She then goes to sleep, though she wakes up two or three times a night with nightmares.

S later tells us that she did not notice the blood-soaked sheets; did not smell the strong odors coming from the feces and pieces of flesh rotting in the bed and on the floor; did not notice the flies swarming around her mother's body and face; did not see the needles, rubbing alcohol, prenatal vitamins, and box cutter on her mother's bed stand.

When S's uncle finally noticed the smells coming from his sister's bedroom, and investigated, and then finally called for help, the police, emergency medical personnel, and child protective services team who came were overwhelmed with what they found. S's mother had disemboweled herself with

the box cutter, cutting into her abdomen and removing pieces of her own flesh and internal organs and thrown them on the floor, over a period of possibly two weeks or even more. They reported that there was blood everywhere in the bedroom, floors and walls. The mother was completely disoriented and psychotic. When interviewed, the mother reported that for some time someone, a male, had entered her room and "grabbed me from behind." She believed she had become pregnant by him and had decided to abort the fetus herself. Of concern was that blood and feces were discovered in her car, which implied that S's mother had been cutting into herself for some time and driving places while in this condition. S said nothing about this.

S's mother was rushed to the hospital and underwent emergency surgery, which she survived. The police and EMTs were horrified and had never seen anything like this before. The child protective services worker called out sick for the following week. S was placed that evening with her mother's aunt, who lived nearby. S was interviewed but did not speak. A week later she was referred to our Center for an emergency psychological evaluation, which was conducted by one of the authors (DRJ).

We know very little about S's early years. She was born in 2002. Her older sister Carol had been neglected by the mother and Child Services had been called several times. Carol had moved out in 2008 after the mother went berserk and attacked her with a shovel. She lives in a neighboring town and has two children of her own. S's father visits only occasionally. Family members reported her mother had shown odd behavior for many years, wanting to eat alone in her room, and muttering to herself occasionally in a deep, male-like voice as if she was someone else. However, the mother has had no formal mental health history or hospitalizations for mental illness that we know of and has never abused substances. She completed a high school education, had boyfriends, married S's father at age 23, separated from him for 10 years and then got back together with him, and then had S. They separated and divorced a year prior to the incident. She worked in retail for 10 years, then became a secretary/receptionist for 11 years, a school bus driver for 6 years, and now a home health aide. Her parents lived to 93 and 98 and died within a year of each other several years prior to the incident.

S was unable to report any details about her mother's condition. S remembers being taken by her mother once or twice to a grocery store where she bought hotdogs, bread, and soup. She has no other memories of her mother.

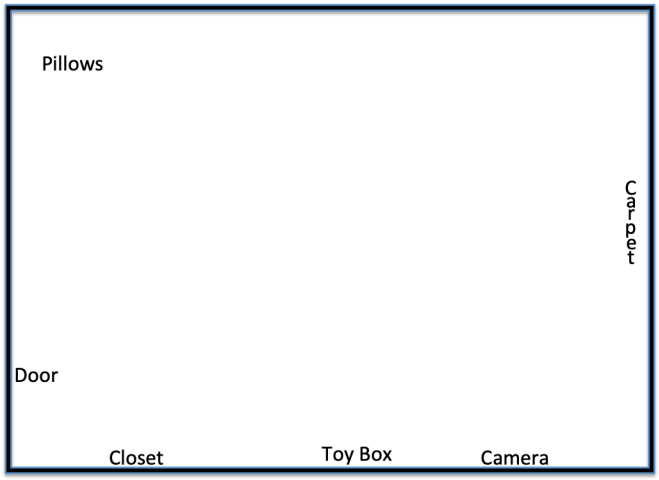
About a week before the final event, she noticed a bad smell in the bedroom, but thought her mother was sick and had thrown up. During the evaluation, she was able to report her daily routine but not much more.

S entered DvT psychotherapy less than a month after the event, which occurred in April 2010, and was seen weekly for 3 years. She was initially in complete shock and nonverbal, as if frozen. Her psychic spirit had been completely emptied from her body. For many months she continued not to speak, and in the session we examine, she does not speak.

She continued to do well in school. One year later, her mother requested to see her, and we evaluated her. She was in psychotherapy and receiving psychotropic medications, had gone back to work, and was on the surface functional and coherent. However, she denied any knowledge of what had happened, and though "apologetic" was vague and paranoid regarding the event. She believed someone was trying to get into the apartment. She did tell us that she remembered being bedridden and having to call out to S for various things, and that she hid her condition under her sheets and blankets when S. came into her room. She said the cutting began with a mole that "felt funny, like a callus" and that she gradually became obsessed with extracting it. Our impression was that underneath, she still believed she had been pregnant and that the fetus had been removed when she had gone to the hospital. A year and a half after the incident, she began short visits with S at our Clinic, supervised by both authors who sat in the room while mother and daughter sat with each other. S's treatment was successful and was essentially completed by 2013, when the frequency of sessions was reduced. Child Services withdrew from the case after two years, and S's visitations and placement were managed by the authors. In 2016, S was allowed to move in with her mother, and in 2017 they went back to court and the mother's guardianship was reinstated. They remain in periodic contact with the authors. S is now finishing high school and has been an honor student. Her mother has remained healthy and grateful that her daughter has returned to her. Throughout the process, both authors made conscious attempts to be aware of and open to the impact of racial and class disparities between them (as White middle and upper middle class persons) and S and her mother (as African American and disadvantaged persons).

LAYER TWO
Session Transcript

The Room



400 Seconds

The following session took place on March 9, 2012. It was the 40th filmed session and lasted 45 minutes. The 400 seconds begins at the start of the session just after they walk into the room. The room has pillows randomly strewn about the floor. There are a few collected in the corner of the room in a pile. S is lying face down underneath these pillows. She is not visible. R is initially standing downstage right.

(R is *walking slowly towards pillows that are strewn about the room. She moves from downstage right, through center stage, approaching upstage left. Her voice is soft, not yet dramatically animated and she moves with her back to the fourth wall.*)

R: I wonder where Samantha went?

(*R's voice begins to take on a dramatically animated tone – playing that she does not know where S is. Taking on the role of "seeker."*)

R: I don't think she's in here.

(R begins to pick the pillows up and toss them lightly onto the corner pillow pile.)

R: (*Speaks in a bent-over position as she picks up a square leather pillow – her voice is strained and guttural. R stands up and her voice returns to its normal tone.*)

R: Well, I'll just tidy up.
(*R tosses the leather pillow in an underhanded toss – it lands on the pillow pile with a thwack. R picks up another square leather pillow –R makes an audible "Euh" sound as she tosses the pillow with the same underhand toss. Same thwack. R picks up and more forcefully tosses a softer pillow to the pile.)*

R: I don't think, *(R picks up two small pillows*) I don't know if she is going be here yet.
(R tosses the pillows one after the other onto the pile.)

R: Or not.
(*R's body shifts to face the fourth wall as she continues to pick up and underhand toss pillows onto the pile. Her voice has a tentative quality. R throws a small pillow backhanded onto the pile.)*

R: I wonder if she is going to show up, or I wonder if she's ok?
(R bends down and picks up one of the largest pillows in the room. It's floppy. She tosses it sideways onto the pile. R's voice is extended here a bit – she holds the "kay" sound for a bit longer than normal; it's harsher sounding. R walks over silently to the two last pillows that are flat, small, and located near the wall in front of the \ pile. R has gradually worked her way toward the pillow pile and these are the last pillows to be tossed onto the pile. She tosses one of them.)

R: Oh goodness.
(R *mumbles as she tosses the other pillow. R turns towards the fourth wall and begins to walk towards downstage right. Her body is somewhat scrunched as she walks, and her left hand and fingers are held in a grabbing shape.)*

R: Samantha? I don't know if you are here or not.
(R's voice is loud, not yet a yell, and a half an octave above her normal range. She walks quickly to downstage right – and is soon off camera. R's voice is directed upwards as if S is far away or in the heavens – R begins to move towards downstage center.)

R: But ah, what's going on in there? Ah, wherever you are.
(*R moves without speaking, her body in an upright position, but fingers in a cupped position by her side, neither tense nor relaxed. She arrives in center stage. R's left hand moves towards her face. R takes a long step, a lunge with her right foot and leg, and ends with her right hand on the carpet wall hanging and her left foot on its toes. Her right foot is flat on the floor as she leans into the wall – center stage left.)*

R: Are you behind here?
(R lifts the carpet wall hanging and peers behind it – her back is to the camera. R does a 180-turn counter-clockwise and ends with her back to the carpet wall hanging.)

R: Sa…man…tha!!!!!
(R yells very loud and cups her hands around her mouth. Her back is arched backwards, as she calls out S's name.)

R: Are you over there?
(R shifts her position towards upstage left almost as if that is where the "there" is. A slight indication by R's right index finger towards upstage left as her hands fall from the cupped position near her mouth. S makes a sudden movement inside the pillow pile that is visible. R takes another step towards upstage left.)

R: Samantha!
(R's voice is pressured – she speaks S's name quickly. R immediately turns, adjusts the top of her sweater with her left hand and simultaneously another movement occurs from inside the pillow pile. Some pillows rise up and then fall again as if S is moving them slightly above her head. A bump. R moves towards center stage at an even pace. Her hands are slightly cupped by her side. R walks silently until she is very close to downstage right as she speaks.)

R: Hello?
(Spoken more tentatively than previously. R's body is mostly hidden from the camera, but the left side of her body is angled towards downstage center and her left hand is closed in almost a fist. S. moves the square leather pillow and a shadowy shape of her face can be seen.)

R: Hello…? *(R moves to face downstage left.)* Samantha…?

(R's voice is tentative. Worried even. R shrugs her left shoulder and her arm moves. Simultaneously, the pile shifts again revealing more of S's face. R begins to walk forward.)

R: Um, *(R moves and adjusts her right arm. The pile moves.)* Samantha, ahh, ahhh, oh gosh, I don't know where she went.

(While speaking, R travels a direct path from downstage center to downstage left, directly up to upstage left without pause. The path is an inverted "L." R's left-hand fingers shift and move around as she walks. She adjusts her watch on her left wrist. She speaks in a slightly louder than normal tone.)

R: Samantha!

(When R finishes the "ah" of S's name, she is in mid-turn in front of the pile with her back to the pile.)

R: Samantha, are you in here?

(R's hands move up in front of her body at chest level – they are open palmed as if to say hold on or stop, or in response to a "stick 'em up." Again, she looks up towards the heavens as she speaks. R's head moves from side to side, slowly, looking for S. The pile begins to move and shift as pillows fall to reveal S's forehead and the front of her face.)

R: Are you in….

(S suddenly stretches forward out from the pile. She is on her stomach and with her left-hand grabs R's left leg, right at the shin. R reacts, flails her arms, and screams "Ahhhhhhhh." She bends her knees and falls onto her right knee and places her right hand onto the floor – the screams of "Ahhhh" continue and S giggles at a barely audible level. Her smile is visible. R falls to the floor onto her stomach. S remains half hidden in the pile. R's body faces upstage right, her back to the fourth wall. She makes an ugh sound as she hits the ground.)

R: Ahhhhhhhhhhh - Let go of me!

(R is now laying almost completely on her stomach, facing towards center stage left. R travels a few feet by sliding on her stomach like an inchworm. S continues holding R's foot with both of her hands. S's legs remain underneath the pillows. R continues to scream but shifts her body around so that she is now facing upwards. S holds on with only her left hand now. R's arms flail and then stretch out on each side. She partially sits up, leaning on her left elbow, and looks at S who is slowly emerging from the

pile. R's screaming has moved from a "Ahhhh" to a lower and slower "whoooo ahhh whoooo ahhh.")

R: Ahhh, ahhh, ahhhh!

(R scooches up towards upstage right on her buttocks, towards S who is laying on her back with the ends of her legs emerging from the pile. As R moves, S's legs move towards the ceiling and then back down again. She is on her side – she still holds R's left foot. R's sock is being stretched out.)

R: Whoooaaaahhhhh, No…!

(R is again on her stomach and has her arms and hands tucked up underneath her chest. S is on her side, holding onto R's foot with both her hands. She is looking down at R's foot. R is looking forward towards center stage left. S is smiling during this entire time.)

R: No. *(A slight pause by both S and R.)* Huuhhhhh.

(S begins to tickle R's foot.)

R: Aaaahhhhhh.

(R's voice changes as she registers the tickle. She flops her torso towards and then away from S. S giggles. R is now facing downstage right. They are in a diagonal line together – both laying on their stomachs. Both smiling.)

R: No, no, no, no, noooooo!

(R twists her body around as she says "no" and looks at S through her bent left arm. Her hands are in fists. She jerks her body so that she is completely face up, hands in fists and she cries out "huuuhhhh"s as S says "eeeee." R huhhhh's again. S tickles R's foot. She smiles and follows R's movement away by moving closer.)

R: Oh no! *(R laughs.)* Don't tickle me!

(R's body moves so that her knees are facing center stage left – they are bent but S still holds R's left foot.)

R: That's the worst kind of torture ever.

(R's body wriggles and moves her legs. S continues to hold onto her foot. R moves her right leg over top of her left and past the point of contact that S has with her left foot.)

R: Someone's torturing me!

(R's foot is released. It is unclear if S lets go or if R's wriggling legs have managed to undo S's grip. Both R and S are on the floor. R's body is face

up – S is face down. R lays diagonally across center stage. Her left hand hits the floor audibly as both S and R move their arms and legs together simultaneously in a swimming front crawl motion although R is on her back and S is on her stomach.)

R: Help! Someone's torturing me!

(S lunges forward- still on the ground- and makes a small "eeee" *sound. Her swimming-like motion carries her forward towards downstage left. Her lunge loosely resembles the breaststroke – arms brought behind her and then a circle around her body and end up in front of her as her body moves forward. R remains on her back, her head now facing in the direction of upstage right. She mirrors the slapping movement and sound of S.)*

R: HEEELP!

(S has lunged a second time. Again an "eeee." *Only one arm makes the breaststroke motion. R makes a grunt sound. S lunges forward and grabs R's left foot that is extended into the downstage left area. R's limbs are extended away from her torso. Almost splayed.)*

R: No. No!

(R begins to move her body sideways to reach and grab S's foot. R says "No!" *just as she grabs S's foot.)*

S: No!! (*Squeals – high pitched, but quietly. S immediately jolts up and sits with her back to downstage left.)*

R: Ya!

(Mid – word both R and S begin to swat with both hands at each other. R begins while still on her back. After 4 seconds pass of swatting – animated by R's audible breath timed to each swat, R and S simultaneously enter into a very short movement sequence, timed exactly in sync. They both move away from each other, sit on their backsides with legs extended up, touch their legs, and rock back into an all-four position. R is in center stage as S approaches (crawling) from downstage center. She is behind R and approaches her feet. S "eee-s".)

R: No!

(*R continues moving towards upstage center.)*

R: No, no, stay away!

(R's "away" is extended at the end – aaaaaaaa. S is up on her knees, back to the fourth wall, as R crawls into a child's pose. Quickly R moves up to sit on the back of her legs.)

R: No!

(*She places her hands on her feet and looks directly at S. S also sits on her haunches and her body is open towards R, arms by her side. R releases her arms to her side - no longer covering her feet- and breathes audibly three times. S approaches R who moves upstage left but turns around to face S. S. continues to approach.)*

R: Noo…

(*S lunges forward – arms forward.)*

R: Ahhh…

(*S lunges again. R crouches down again in child's pose. S moves around R's body towards her back. They are both in upstage right.)*

R: Ahhhhhhh…

(*R sits up on her haunches and looks back at S. S is almost hidden from view – she is approaching R's back.)*

R: No, no…oy….ok, ok, ok….

(*R offers her right foot to S. R is on all fours.)*

R: Only a little bit, just a little bit.

(*S immediately begins to tickle R's foot. R quickly moves away from S and towards downstage center.*)

R: Ok, that's too much, that's too much!!

(S and R travel downstage together – in single file, both on all fours and in sync. S laughs. R's feet are held by S – and R rolls over onto her back.)

R: I said a little bit, oh, I said a little bit.

(R struggles to free her left foot and makes 'arrrggg' mumbling sounds. R's left foot is now touching the wall in downstage left. S holds onto R's right foot.)

R: HeeelllllllllP! HEEEElllllllPPPPPP!

(*The second 'help' is in a high pitch. S giggles as R continues to rock her body from side to side as if she is struggling to break free.)*

R: Help. Helllp…

(R's knees are bent. She is still on her back.)

R: Hellllllllllll – (*S touches both of R's feet)* – llllPP. Hellllll –

(*R extends her right leg in the air. Her sock is stretched out and S rises on her knees to follow the path of R's right leg.)*

R: Ppppp. (*S holds onto R's right foot.)* Naoooo!

(S holds both of R's feet in the air. S sits above R and together R's legs move back and forth like a baby's legs waving in the air on a changing table.)

R: Hellllp!

(*R laughs audibly and begins to roll her body towards downstage center. She does a side roll and 'ahhhhh's' while she does it. She is approaching S sideways in center stage. S remains still and watches R. R lunges with her left arm out towards S in a downward motion – S moves back on her haunches slightly and then moves around R and lays on R's back. R 'arhhhhhhs.' S 'eeeehs.' S's hands are on R's shoulders, she grips with her knees, and her entire body is tucked onto R's back. Not one part of her is touching the floor or empty space.)*

R: Someone's got me!

(S's body is completely on R's back. R is folded in half.)

R: Helll Hellllppppp!

(*R's arms move back behind her. She exhales a laugh. S giggles.)*

R: Someone's goooooot…..

(*R 'arrrrrgggggs' as she moves lower down. S slides slowly off R's back towards downstage right. S rolls off camera and towards the closet. S 'euhhhhss.' R follows S's movement towards downstage right. R's left side moves in one fluid motion – her right does not move. It is an arc. R is on her back. She breathes and ughs and pants. She also adjusts her sweater near her abdomen and then her right sock. 'Uggggggghhhhhh' – her arms lay flat beside her. Her knees are bent. S is in the closet.)*

R: Come baacK. (*R coughs.) "Huuuuuuu."*

R: Uh oh.

(S throws a red toy shield at R's head. R rolls to her right and leans on her right elbow. She looks at the closet area where S is standing.)

R: Where did you get that from?

(R reaches forward with her left hand and grabs the toy shield from the floor. She pulls it close to her.)

R: I've been looking for this. I've been….

(*S throws a blue toy shield at R – right over her body – it hits the red shield and R follows its movement. She rolls over and picks up the blue shield.)*

R: Geez…I've been looking for that too.

(R is on her haunches in center stage left. She looks towards the closet. One shield in each hand. She smacks them together.)

R: These are the things I need.

(*R places the blue shield on top. R sandwiches the shields together and flips red onto the top, pushes them onto the floor and begins to move herself up from that central point and crawls backwards towards center stage right*.)

R: To do exactly what I am going to do.

(R stops and sits back on her haunches. A small sound is heard as S opens the door of the closet.)

R: Oh, what the heck?

(S has thrown a piece of the drywall from the closet. It's about the size of a quarter. R crawls toward it, shields both sandwiched together in her left hand. Blue side up. R picks up the drywall.)

R: I don't want this piece.

(R sits upright and throws the drywall piece at the closet, making a 'euh' sound. S moves quickly out of the closet to the toybox area. Rummaging can be heard. Her backside appears.)

R: *(Off camera and right by closet)* You need more things to throw at me from there?

(S turns towards R – and begins to run towards the pillow pile.)

R: Here, you can use these ones again (indicating the shields).

(R closes the closet doors. R sees S run towards the pillow pile.)

R: Oh!

(S nears the pillow pile – the closet door closing sound is heard – and she jumps. Both knees bend up and she is airborne.)

R: Restart, restart!

(R puts the shields into the toybox. S lays on her side in the pillow pile. R walks towards the pillow pile.)

R: Restart, restart.

(*S turns over to face the fourth wall and takes one of the large brown pillows and covers herself with it like a blanket. R approaches the side of*

the pillow pile that hits center stage. Her hands are up towards her head and she bobs back and forth like a cartoon character 'not knowing something.' R's voice is singsong-y.)

R: I don't know where Samantha is.

(R bends down and picks up the other large brown pillow.)

R: I'm not sure where she is in here.

(*R tosses the pillow onto S. It covers her head.)*

R: I'll just clean up. I don't know, I don't know.

(*R bends down from the waist and picks up the edge of the brown pillow and tucks it under S. She also touches both of S's feet and lightly taps them*.)

R: Where she is…I don't know.

(R returns to a standing position and as she walks away from the pillow pile, she looks back.)

R: Ok, ready? Here we go, starting (*in a quickened pace.*)

(R moves to face the fourth wall and is in center stage right. She adjusts her sweater and moves in an almost shuffling pace, and has her arms bent at the elbows and her hands held in front of her.)

R: Samantha!!!

(R yells this and moves from center stage right, to downstage right, through downstage center and downstage left.)

R: Where are you?

(R quickly moves through the blocking similar to the first section. R moves from downstage left to downstage right.)

R: Hellooo? *(off camera)*

(R begins to move slowly towards center stage left – adjusts her sweater - similar to the first section.)

R: Where are youuu?

(R continues making an arch from center stage left, slowly walking towards the pillow pile. She is tracing the same path as in the first section.)

R: Where are you? Helloooo Samantha?

(R is almost in front of the pillow pile when S moves under the pile, behind R's back, as in the first section.)

R: Are you here?

(She stands in the exact spot from the first section – her back is to the pillow pile. S begins to move pillows aside.)

R: I don't know if you are…

(S leaps out of the pillow pile and grabs R's left leg – right at her calf. R begins to scream 'ahhhhhhhhhh!')

R: Ooo…God!

(*R bends and falls towards the ground. Her body jerks forward and back a bit – like she is having a spasm.)*

R: Don't…no…

(R is on the ground on her back. S is half out of the pillow pile. R's right leg extends towards the pillow pile. S grabs it.)

R: No, stop stop it!

(R squirms and moves her free leg (right) back and forth from extended to bent at the knee. Her voice is loud and pleading.)

R: Stop the torture…..Stop it……Stop it!.....Stop it!!!!

(S and R slide down towards downstage right. S is on her stomach. R is on her back.)

R: Leeee gaaaaaa…..arhhhhhhh…..!

(R's body twists and contorts as S hangs onto her left foot. S giggles and twists her body as well. Their legs twists are in sync and identical.)

R: Noooooooo….Nooooo!

(R's feet land on S's shoulder. Her right foot comes to rest on S's right shoulder and she moves her left leg across her own body and it lays bent on the floor. S is still on her stomach. Her right arm is outstretched and is visible underneath R's right leg. It is mere inches from R's left foot. R's arms are outstretched at her side similar to S's. They rest there for a second. S begins to squirm, and then makes a grunt.)

R: No.

(S continues to squirm and wiggle. She then reaches out her left arm and hand to grab R's right leg and foot. As S grabs her foot, R bends at the waist and sits up and moves towards S.)

R: No. No. No, that's it.

(R continues moving towards S as S swivels on her stomach so that her legs move away from R. R moves through upstage right and into center stage and thus is able to get hold of S's legs.)

S: Euh, No…

R: Yes yes, your turn.
(S is on her back with her legs extended in the air. R has S's left leg. They struggle and S aggressively tries to move away. She leans forward and pulls at her leg unsuccessfully.)

R: I got her!
(R continues to hold S's left leg as she bucks it to and fro. Both R and S bend at the waist at the same time and S manages to get her leg out and begins to roll from the edge of upstage right to downstage right.)

R: Yaaaaowwww!
(R follows S's movement, crawling and saying 'ahhhhhhhhhh' as she moves quickly towards S on all fours. They arrive at downstage right at the same time. They are back to back. R faces upstage right – legs extended out in front of her body. S is facing the fourth wall and a smile is on her face.)

R: Where are you Samantha? *(Panicky.)*
(S rolls away from R's back and does a quick log roll to downstage left. R shuffles herself along the floor in pursuit.)

R: Where are you? Samantha? Where are you?
(S giggles - almost a squeal - and moves quickly on all fours towards upstage left. R continues to pursue her, shuffling backwards on the floor.)

R: Where are you?
(R stops in center stage and S stands up behind her in upstage left. R's legs are spread open. She remains seated.)

R: Come out. Right now.
(R moves a large brown pillow on her right side. She closes her legs a bit and brushes her nose. S sneaks toward R's back. She almost tiptoes. S falls onto R's back almost like a collapse. Her arms lay on R's shoulders.)

R: Ahhhhhhhhhh.
(R extends her arms in front of her and falls forwards. S giggles.)

R: Oh my god! Someone got me from behind.
(R is laying on her side and S is on top of her. S begins to slowly roll towards and over R's stomach. R groans and grunts as this is happening. S moves very slowly – in fact it takes 4 seconds from when S begins her roll for her to fall off of R. S continues the rolling motion and log rolls to downstage right. R follows and log rolls as well – she reaches S and they

are both on their sides and facing each other. They then swat each other with both arms as they sit on their knees close to each other.)

R: Uh oh, Uh oh, Uh oh…

(S moves towards center stage right and R swats as S goes by.)

R: Too close!

(R crawls diagonally towards S who has stopped at center stage right.)

R: Too close to each other.

(R sandwiches her body against S who is sitting upright on her knees. S falls onto R's back and R bends down in child's pose. R grunts. S slides off of her – past her head.)

R: Arrrhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

(R leaps up against S who is sitting with her back up against the wall. R's head leans on S's chest and her legs are extended out towards center stage.)

R: I got her! I got her!

(R's legs kick and bend and S squirms behind R's head and shoulders.)

R: This is it!

(R emphasizes "this.")

S: Eeeee!

R: This is it!

(S begins to tap and hit R's forehead.)

R: Oh, hello?

(R's tone is inquisitive, almost surprised. R's body goes immediately still.)

R: Someone's, someone's hitting my head.

(R's legs bend at the knees and her feet rest on the floor.)

R: Yes, can I, can I help you?

(R's tone is higher pitched – especially as she says, 'help you.' S squirms and tries to break free from underneath R's head/shoulders. S grunts.)

R: Can I help you?

(S says something but it is inaudible.)

R: Can I help you?

(Both S and R begin to twist against each other, making guttural sounds. S moves away from R – who holds S's right arm as long as she can.)

R: Oh.

(S breaks free, stands and moves towards the pillow pile. She turns towards the fourth wall. R moves to a sitting position, then a kneeling one.

She kneels upright and adjusts her sweater. S adjusts her braids. R is in downstage right with her back to S. R looks down.

R: Good thing *she's* gone.

(R's tone is lower and expresses relief.)

LAYER THREE
Clinical Analysis

This clinical analysis relies on Trauma-Centered DvT (Johnson, 2014; Johnson & Lubin, 2015; Pitre, Mayor, & Johnson, 2016; Pitre, Sajnani, & Johnson, 2014).

At this point in the treatment, R was still working with S as a matter of psychic survival. She had lived in a home with her mother and blind uncle, in a world of silence, a world alone, bounded by a door to the outside world, a door to her uncle's bedroom that she never entered, and the door to her mother's bedroom with its smells and blood-covered sheets and brief "good nights." At the time of this session, S had been in a state of shock for many months and spoke as little as possible even in school. Living now with her great aunt, at least she was being fed and cared for.

S is almost entirely mute throughout the session. She is at times the silent hidden perpetrator, at times a playful cub, at times a frozen witness of the unseen. She navigates a very narrow track, avoiding dangerous cliffs to the left and right. She is on the edge.

R speaks and sometimes narrates throughout the 400 seconds, though most of the soundscape consists of guttural and primal sounds ("ugh, eeww, ahhhhhh, noooooo"). If one listened just to the soundtrack, the impression is that something terrifying is about to occur, as strange utterances are followed by screams then eerie silence and low muttering or heavy breathing.

S's Trauma Schema. A person's trauma schema is a set of beliefs and behaviors shaped by the original trauma that are applied in new situations that evoke the fears generated by that trauma (Johnson & Lubin, 2015). At the base of S's trauma schema is the *fear* of her mother's behaviors that she had walled off with her daily rituals and focus on school. The *sensory elements* of her trauma schema included:

- Mother's calling out for her: "Samantha!?"

- The sights and smells of her mother's bedsheets covered in blood.
- Mother's story that she had no doubt shared with S. about being "grabbed from behind" by "someone" who "impregnated her."
- The silence in the home.

The anticipated actions in her trauma schema were her concerns that her mother would die, that she would be left alone forever, that there would be nothing to eat, that no one would ever know what happened.

Her sense of the *lack of rescue* was a feeling of being all alone and having other adults be unable to handle the stress: teams of EMTs and DCF workers arrived, two of them fainting when entering the room; S was ushered out as if the house was radioactive, with thoughts of never seeing her mother again if she died (a possibility) or was not allowed to. Though she had remained calm living there, the rescue team was in shock.

S's behaviors throughout the early phase of treatment had been:

- Frozen silence.
- Hiding in the pillows.
- Not facing R from the front, only from R's backside.
- Tentative physical contact only with R's feet and occasionally arms.

The roles of S's trauma schema included:

- Perpetrators: Mother on S, Mother on her imagined foetus, "Someone" on Mother
- Victims: S, foetus, Mother
- Bystanders: Uncle, S.
- Collaborators: Uncle, S.

Process. In TC-DvT, the therapist initially presents a challenge to the client, plays out a conflict as the perpetrator until the client feels comfortable to reverse roles, in what is called the *rounding*, whereupon the client plays the vulnerable role until they have desensitized themselves, whereupon they relax, in what is called the *release* (Johnson, 2014). At the time of this session, S had moved out of a frozen state to playing out the conflict with R. However, she had not allowed any reversal of roles that placed her in a vulnerable position.

The 400 Seconds Again, with Clinical Analysis

[Behaviors of special interest will be highlighted in red.]

SEGMENT 1

(R is *walking slowly, unanimated, towards pillows that are randomly strewn about the room. She moves from downstage right, through center stage, approaching upstage left. Her voice is soft, not yet dramatically animated and she moves with her back to the fourth wall.*)

R: I wonder where Samantha went?

(*R's voice begins to take on a dramatically animated tone – playing that she does not know where S is. Taking on the role of "seeker."*)

R: I don't think she's in here.

(R begins to pick up the pillows and toss them lightly onto the corner pillow pile.)

R: (*Speaks in a bent-over position as she picks up a square leather pillow – her voice is strained and guttural. R stands up and her voice returns to its normal tone.*)

R: Well, I'll just tidy up.

(*R tosses the leather pillow in an underhanded toss – it lands on the pillow pile with a thwack. R picks up another square leather pillow –R makes an audible "Euh" sound as she tosses the pillow in the same underhand toss. Same thwack. R picks up and more forcefully tosses a softer same sized pillow to the pile.)*

R: I don't think, *(R picks up two small pillows*) I don't know if she is going be here yet.

(R tosses the pillows one after the other onto the pile.)

R: Or not.

(*R's body shifts to face the fourth wall as she continues to pick up and underhand toss pillows onto the pile. Her voice has a tentative quality. R throws a small pillow backhanded onto the pile.)*

R: I wonder if she is going to show up, or I wonder if she's ok?

(R bends down and picks up one of the largest pillows in the room. It's floppy. She tosses it sideways onto the pile. R's voice is extended here a bit – she holds the "k" sound for a bit longer than normal; it's harsher sounding. R walks over silently to the two last pillows that are flat, small, and located near the wall in front of the pile. R has gradually worked her way toward the pile and these are the last pillows to be tossed onto the pile. She tosses one of them.)

R: Oh goodness.

(R *mumbles as she tosses the other pillow. R turns towards the fourth wall and begins to walk towards downstage right. Her body is somewhat*

scrunched as she walks, and her left hand and fingers are held in a grabbing shape.)

27 sec point 1A

R: Samantha! I don't know if you are here or not.
(R's voice is loud, not yet a yell, but a half an octave above her normal range. She walks quickly to downstage right – and is soon off camera. R's voice is directed upwards as if S is far away or towards the heavens – R begins to move towards downstage center.)

R: But ah, what's going on in there? Ah, wherever you are.
(*R moves without speaking, her body in an upright position, but fingers in a cupped position by her side, neither tense nor relaxed. She arrives in center stage. R's left hand moves towards her face. R takes a long step, a lunge with her right foot and leg, and ends with her right hand on the carpet wall hanging and her left foot on its toes. Her right foot is flat on the floor as she leans into the wall – center stage left.)*

R: Are you behind here?
(R lifts the carpet wall hanging and peers behind it – her back is to the camera. R does a 180-turn counter-clockwise and ends with her back to the carpet wall hanging.)

R: Sa...man...tha!!!!!
(R yells very loud and cups her hands around her mouth. Her back is arched backwards, as she calls out S's name.)

R: Are you over there?
(R shifts her positioning towards upstage left almost as if that is where the "there" is. A slight indication by R's right index finger towards upstage left as her hands fall from the cupped position near her mouth. S makes a sudden movement inside the pillow pile that is visible. R takes another step towards upstage left.)

R: Samantha!
(R's voice is pressured – she speaks S's name quickly. R immediately turns, adjusts the top of her sweater with her left hand and simultaneously another movement occurs from inside the pillow pile. Some pillows rise up and then fall again as if S is moving them slightly above her head. A bump. R moves towards center stage. She is motion and after the initial burst of her turn, R walks at an even pace. Her hands are slightly cupped

by her side. R walks silently until she is very close to downstage right as she speaks.)

R: Hello?

(Spoken more tentatively than previously. R's body is mostly hidden from the camera, but the left side of her body is angled towards downstage center and her left hand is closed in an almost fist. S moves the square leather pillow and a shadowy shape of her face can be seen. More tentatively than the first "hello.")

R: Hello…? *(R moves to face downstage left.)* Samantha…?

(R's voice is tentative. Worried even. R shrugs her left shoulder and her arm moves. Simultaneously, the pillow pile shifts again revealing more of S's face. R begins to walk forward.)

R: Um. *(R moves and adjusts her right arm. The pillow pile moves.)* Samantha, ahh, ahhh, oh gosh, I don't know where she went.

(While speaking, R travels a direct path from downstage center to downstage left, directly up to upstage left without pause. The path is an inverted L. R's left-hand fingers shift and move around as she walks. She also adjusts her watch on her left wrist. She speaks in a slightly louder than normal tone.)

R: Samantha!

(When R finishes the "ah" of S's name, she is in mid-turn in front of the pillow pile with her back to the pile.)

R: Samantha, are you in here?

(R's hands move up in front of her body at chest level – they are open palmed as if to say hold on or stop or in response to a "stick 'em up." Again, she looks up towards the heavens as she speaks. R's head moves from side to side, slowly, looking for S. The pillow pile begins to move and shift as pillows fall to reveal S's forehead and the front of her face.)

73 sec point 1B

R: Are you in….

(S suddenly stretches forward out from the pillow pile. She is on her stomach and with her left-hand grabs R's left leg, right at the shin. R reacts, flails her arms, and screams "Ahhhhhhhh." She bends her knees and falls onto her right knee and places her right hand onto the floor – the screams of "Ahhhh" continue and S giggles at a barely audible level. Her

smile is visible. R falls to the floor on her stomach. S remains half hidden in the pillow pile. R's body faces upstage right, her back to the fourth wall. She makes an ugh sound as she hits the ground.)

Analysis: In this opening segment, S remains hiding while R is looking and calling out for her. R may be playing the role of Mother who is calling out for S. S is in hiding and possibly is her Mother's perpetrator or the fetus stirring inside her. When S stirs the pillows, she signals R that she is ready to be found and/or ready to come out. The two are clearly cooperatively playing out a scene in which the Mother is going to be grabbed from behind. S avoids the vulnerable victim role and, identifying with the perpetrator, reenacts the attack on her mother, with delight.

R: Ahhhhhhhhhh - Let go of me!

(R is now laying almost completely on her stomach, facing towards center stage left. R travels a few feet by sliding on her stomach like an inchworm. S continues to hold R's foot with both of her hands. S's legs remain underneath the pillows. R continues to scream but shifts her body around so that she is now facing upwards. She holds on with only her left hand now. R's arms flail and then stretch out on each side. She partially sits up, leaning on her left elbow, and looks at S who is slowly emerging from the pillow pile. R's screaming has moved from a "Ahhhh" to a lower and slower "whoooo ahhh whoooo ahhh.")

R: Ahhh, ahhh, ahhhh!

(R scooches up towards upstage right on her buttocks towards S who is laying on her back with the ends of her legs emerging from the pillow pile. As R moves, S's legs move towards the ceiling and then back down again. She is on her side – she still holds R's left foot. R's sock is being stretched out.)

R: Whoooaaaahhhhh, No…!

(R is again on her stomach and has her arms and hands tucked up underneath her chest. S is on her side, holding onto R's foot with both her hands. She is looking down at R's foot. R is looking forward towards center stage left. S is smiling during this entire time.)

R: No. *(A slight pause by both S and R.)* Huuhhhhh.

(S begins to tickle R's foot.)

R: Aaaahhhhhh.

(R's voice changes as she registers the tickle. She flops her torso towards S and then away from S. S giggles. R is now facing downstage right. They are in a diagonal line together – both laying on their stomachs. Both smiling.)

R: No, no, no, no, noooooo!

(R twists her body around as she says "no" and looks at S through her bent left arm. Her hands are in fists. She jerks her body so that she is completely face up, hands are in fists and she cries out "huuuhhhh"s as S says "eeeee." R huhhhh's again. S tickles R's foot. She smiles and follows R's movement away by moving closer.)

R: Oh no! *(R laughs.)* Don't tickle me!

(R's body moves so that her knees are facing center stage left – they are bent but S still holds R's left foot.)

R: That's the worst kind of torture ever.

(R's body wriggles and moves her legs. S continues to hold onto her foot. R moves her right leg over top of her left and past the point of contact that S has with her left foot.)

R: Someone's torturing me!

(R's foot is released. It is unclear if S lets go or if R's wriggling legs have managed to undo S's grip. Both R and S are on the floor. R's body is face up – S' is face down. R lays diagonally across center stage. Her left hand hits the floor audibly as both S and R move their arms and legs together simultaneously in a swimming front crawl motion although R is on her back and S is on her front.)

R: Help! Someone's torturing me!

(S lunges forward- still on the ground- and makes a small "eeee" *sound. Her swimming like motion carries her forward towards downstage left. Her lunge loosely resembles the breaststroke – arms brought behind her and then a circle around her body and end up in front of her as her body moves forward. R remains on her back, her head now facing in the direction of upstage right. She mirrors the slapping movement/sound of S.)*

R: HEEELP!

(S has lunged a second time. Again an "eeee." *Only one arm makes the breaststroke motion. R makes a grunt sound. S lunges forward and grabs R's left foot that is extended into the downstage left area. R's limbs are extended away from her torso. Almost splayed.)*

119 sec point 1C

SEGMENT 2

R: No. No!
(R begins to move her body sideways to reach and grab S's foot. R says "No!" *just as she grabs S's foot.)*

S: No!! (*Squeals – high pitched, but quietly. S immediately jolts up and sits with her back to downstage left.)*

123 1S

R: Ya!
(Mid – word both R and S begin to swat with both hands at each other. R begins while still on her back. After 4 seconds pass of swatting – animated by R's audible breath timed to each swat –R and S enter into a very short movement sequence, timed exactly in sync. They both move away from each other, sit on their backsides with legs extended up, touch their legs, and rock back to an all-four position. R is in center stage as S approaches (crawling) from downstage center. She is behind R and approaches her feet. S "eee-s".)

Analysis: The traumatic attack on the Mother by Someone is reenacted in this segment. R immerses herself fully and dramatically as victim in a playful way, and soon the attack shifts in tone to "tickling" and then a kind of mutual flopping around the floor together more suggestive of intimate play between a parent and child. R subtlely mirrors the slapping. S restricts her physical contact with R to her feet, clearly a part of an avoidance of her abdomen. R takes the opportunity when S grabs her foot to mirror by grabbing S's foot but S reacts to this not as mirroring but as an attempt to reverse roles which she reacts strongly to by moving away and initiating the swatting sequence. The swatting action (which is repeated in the second half of the session) appears to be a distancing or erasing maneuver to reject the reversal of roles, expressing S's avoidance of vulnerability.

R: No!
(*R continues moving towards upstage center.)*

R: No, no, stay away!

(R's "away" is extended at the end – aaaaaaaa. S is up on her knees, back to the fourth wall, as R crawls into a child's pose. Quickly R moves up to sit on the back of her legs.)

R: No!

(*She places her hands onto her feet and looks directly at S. S also sits on her haunches and her body is open towards R, arms by her side. R releases her arms to her side - no longer covering her feet- and breathes audibly three times. S approaches R who moves upstage left but turns around to face S. S. continues to approach.)*

R: Noo…

(*S lunges forward – arms forward.)*

R: Ahhh…

(*S lunges again. R crouches down again in child's pose. S moves around R's body towards her back. They are both in upstage right.)*

R: Ahhhhhhh…

(*R sits up on her haunches and looks back at S. S is almost hidden from view – she is approaching R's back.)*

R: No, no…oy….ok, ok, ok….

(*R offers her right foot to S. R is on all fours.)*

R: Only a little bit, just a little bit.

(*S immediately begins to tickle R's foot. R quickly moves away from S and towards downstage center.*)

R: Ok, that's too much, that's too much!!

(S and R travel downstage together – in single file, both on all fours and in sync. S laughs. R's feet are held by S – and R rolls over onto her back.)

R: I said a little bit, oh, I said a little bit.

(R struggles to free her left foot and makes 'arrrggg' mumbling sounds. R's left foot is now touching the wall in downstage left. S holds onto R's right foot.)

R: Heeellllllllllp! HEEEEllllllllPPPPPP!

(*The second 'help' is in a high pitch. S giggles as R continues to rock her body from side to side as if she is struggling to break free.)*

R: Help. Helllp…

(R's knees are bent. She is still on her back.)

R: Hellllllllllll – (*S touches both of R's feet)* – llllPP. Hellllll –

(*R extends her right leg in the air. Her sock is stretched out and S rises on her knees to follow the path of R's right leg.)*

R: Ppppp. (*S holds onto R's right foot.)* Naoooo!
(S has both of R's feet in the air. S sits above R and together R's legs move back and forth like a baby's legs waving in the air on a changing table.)
R: Hellllp!
(*R laughs audibly and begins to roll her body towards downstage center. She does a side roll and ahhhhh's while she does it. She is approaching S sideways in center stage. S remains still and watches R.)*

Analysis: In this section, following the attempted role reversal we see both a continuation of S's perpetrating against R as Mother, though mixed in with more delight and playfulness and increased mutuality, most significantly when R offers her foot for S to tickle it "only a little bit." Also, significantly, S makes numerous movements that attempt to position her behind R's back, foreshadowing the leaning on her back just to come. R offers her abdomen to S while lying on her back and lifting her legs, and S only grabs her feet, rejecting this offer. This shift from contact only with R's feet to approaching her central body from the back indicates S's desire to make more significant physical contact with R as the "Mother."

174 1D

SEGMENT 3

(R lunges with her left arm out towards S in a downward motion – S moves back on her haunches slightly and then moves around R and lays on R's back. R 'arhhhhhhs.' S 'eeeehs.' S's hands are on R's shoulders, she grips with her knees, and her entire body is tucked onto R's back. Not one part of her is touching the floor or empty space.)
R: Someone's got me!
(S's body is completely on R's back. R is folded in half.)
R: Helll Hellllpppp!
(*R's arms move back behind her. She exhales a laugh. S giggles.)*
R: Someone's goooooot…..
(*R 'arrrrrgggggs' as she moves lower down. S slides slowly off R's back towards downstage right.)*

Analysis: S's interest in approaching R from her backside and then placing herself completely on her and then slowly rolling away seems to reflect two relationships: S as the perpetrating Someone who grabbed her mother from the back; and S as herself wishing to have physical contact with R while avoiding contact with her abdomen. The resulting behavior is therefore a compromise that satisfies both desires. The play has poignantly merged the perpetrator-victim role configuration with a good mother-child interaction. This 12-second sequence will be repeated in the second half and thus must have particular significance.

186 1E

SEGMENT 4

(S rolls off camera and towards the closet. S 'euhhhhss.' R follows S's movement towards downstage right. R's left side moves in one fluid motion – her right does not move. It's an arc. R is on her back. She breathes and ughs and pants. She also adjusts her sweater near her abdomen and then her right sock. 'Ugggggggghhhhhh' – her arms lay flat beside her. Her knees are bent. S is in the closet.)

R: Come baack. (*R coughs.) "Huuuuuuu."*

206 1F

R: Uh oh.

(S throws a red toy shield at R's head. R rolls to her right and leans on her right elbow. She looks at the closet area where S is standing.)

R: Where did you get that from?

(R reaches forward with her left hand and grabs the toy shield from the floor. She pulls it close to her.)

R: I've been looking for this. I've been….

(*S throws a blue toy shield at R – right over her body – it hits the red shield and R follows its movement. She rolls over and picks up the blue shield.)*

R: Geez…I've been looking for that too.

(R is on her haunches in center stage left. She looks towards the closet. One shield in each hand. She smacks them together.)

R: These are the things I need.

(*R places the blue shield on top. R sandwiches the shields together and flips red onto the top, pushes them onto the floor and begins to move herself up from that central point and crawls backwards towards center stage right*.)

R: To do exactly what I am going to do.

(R stops and sits back on her haunches. A small sound is heard as S opens the door of the closet.)

R: Oh, what the heck?

(S has thrown a piece of the drywall from the closet. It's about the size of a quarter. R crawls toward it, shields both sandwiched together in her left hand. Blue side up. R picks up the drywall.)

R: I don't want this piece.

(R sits upright and throws the drywall piece at the closet, making a 'euh' sound. S moves quickly out of the closet to the toybox area. Rummaging can be heard. Her backside appears.)

R: (*Off camera and right by closet*) You need more things to throw at me from there?

(S turns towards R – and begins to run towards the pillow pile.)

R: Here, you can use these ones again (indicating the shields).

(R closes the closet doors. R sees S run towards the pillow pile.)

R: Oh!

(S nears the pillow pile – the closet door closing sound is heard – and she jumps. Both knees bend up and she is airborne.)

Analysis: The full body contact with R is followed in this sequence by an apparent pause in the action, with S's exit into the closet and then throwing of objects at R from a distance. The flow of the scene has been disrupted. This symptomatic structure of traumatic play - the compulsion to repeat - seems to be occurring here, as the playing out and partial transformation of the trauma schema seems to have been interrupted. As if scripted, both R and S appear to know that the scene must be repeated again. This entire segment 4 will be deleted in the second half.

241 1G

SEGMENT 5

R: Restart, restart!
(R puts the shields into the toybox. S lays on her side in the pillow pile. R walks towards the pillow pile.)
R: Restart, restart.
(*S turns over to face the fourth wall and takes one of the large brown pillows and covers herself with it like a blanket. R approaches the side of the pillow pile that hits center stage. Her hands are up towards her head and she bobs back and forth like a cartoon character 'not knowing something.' R's voice is singsong-y.)*
R: I don't know where Samantha is.
(R bends down and picks up the other large brown pillow.)
R: I'm not sure where she is in here.
(*R tosses the pillow onto S. It covers her head.)*
R: I'll just clean up. I don't know, I don't know.
(*R bends down from the waist and picks up the edge of the brown pillow and tucks it under S. She also touches both of S's feet and lightly taps them*.)
R: Where she is…I don't know.
(R returns to a standing position and as she walks away from the pillow pile, she looks back.)
R: Ok, ready? Here we go, starting (*in a quickened pace.*)
(R moves to face the fourth wall and is in center stage right. She adjusts her sweater and moves in an almost shuffling pace, and has her arms bent at the elbows and her hands held in front of her.)

Analysis: This short transition appears to repeat the preparatory opening of the session that preceded the 400 seconds segment.

261 2A

R: Samantha!!!
(R yells this and moves from center stage right, to downstage right, through downstage center and downstage left.)
R: Where are you?
(R quickly moves through the blocking similar to the first section. R moves from downstage left to downstage right.)
R: Hellooo? *(off camera)*

(R begins to move slowly towards center stage left – adjusts her sweater - similar to the first section.)

R: Where are youuu?

(R continues making an arch from center stage left, slowly walking towards the pillow pile. She is tracing the same path during the first section.)

R: Where are you? Helloooo Samantha?

(R is almost in front of the pillow pile when S moves under the pile, behind R's back, as in the first section.)

R: Are you here?

(She stands in the exact spot from the first section – her back is to the pillow pile. S begins to move pillows aside.)

R: I don't know if you are…

287 2B

(S leaps out of the pillow pile and grabs R's left leg – right at her calf. R begins to scream 'ahhhhhhhhhh!')

R: Ooo…God!

(*R bends and falls towards the ground. Her body jerks forward and back a bit – like she is having a spasm.)*

R: Don't…no…

(R is on the ground on her back. S is half out of the pillow pile. R's right leg extends towards the pillow pile. S grabs it.)

R: No, stop stop it!

(R squirms and moves her free leg (right) back and forth from extended to bent at the knee . Her voice is loud and pleading.)

R: Stop the torture…..Stop it……Stop it!.....Stop it!!!!

(S and R slide down towards downstage right. S is on her stomach. R is on her back.)

R: Leeee gaaaaaa…..arhhhhhhh…..!

(R's body twists and contorts as S hangs onto her left foot. S giggles and twists her body as well. Their legs twists are in sync and identical.)

314 2X

R: Noooooooo….Nooooo!

(R's feet land on S's shoulder. Her right foot comes to rest on S's right shoulder and she moves her left across her own body and it lays bent on the floor. S is still on her stomach. Her right arm is outstretched and is visible underneath R's right leg. It is mere inches from R's left foot. R's arms are outstretched at her side similar to S's. They rest there for a second. S begins to squirm, and then makes a grunt.)

R: No.

(S continues to squirm and wiggle. She then outreaches her left arm and hand to grab R's right leg and foot. As S grabs her foot, R bends at the waist and sits up and moves towards S.)

R: No. No. No, that's it.

(R continues moving towards S as S swivels on her stomach so that her legs move away from R. R moves through upstage right and into center stage and thus is able to get hold of S's legs.)

S: Euh, No…

327 2C

SEGMENT 6

R: Yes yes, your turn.

(S is on her back with her legs extended in the air. R has S's left leg. They struggle and S aggressively tries to move away. She leans forward and pulls at her leg unsuccessfully.)

R: I got her!

(R continues to hold S's left leg as she bucks it to and fro. Both R and S bend at the waist at the same time and S manages to get her leg out and begins to roll from the edge of upstage right to downstage right.)

Analysis: This section is a condensed replica of the first section, though as a copy, it has a sense of mutuality and fun of a familiar repetition with its expected outcome. Again, both parties are clearly cooperating smoothly in replaying the action, including S's stirring the pillows just prior to her grabbing R. R reacts just as powerfully once grabbed, and the affect between them is of pure delight, though R subtly varielates the interaction most notably by slowing down her fall once grabbed. R then initiates a new action by placing her foot against S's shoulder, and remarkably, S completely relaxes, and they enjoy a brief pause,

indicating the first "release" of S's defensive behavior. This seems to be an indication, again, of S's desire to be held by a "good enough mother," though the contact is only with a peripheral limb of the mother figure. R follows up this action with a repeat of the role reversal where she grabs S's feet, this time in a much longer sequence in which S faces R's abdomen and tolerates being grabbed by R. S even mirrors R's prior position of being on her back and raising her feet in the air. R announces this role reversal when she says, "Yes, yes your turn." R will continue throughout this half of the session to introduce increasingly discrepant actions to "shake the tree" of S's rigid trauma schema.

R: Yaaaaowwww!
(R follows S's movement, crawling and saying 'ahhhhhhhhhh' as she moves quickly towards S on all fours. They arrive at downstage right at the same time. They are back to back. R faces upstage right – legs extended out in front of her body. S is facing the fourth wall and a smile is on her face.)

R: Where are you Samantha? *(Panicky.)*
(S rolls away from R's back and does a quick log roll to downstage left. R shuffles herself along the floor in pursuit.)

R: Where are you? Samantha? Where are you?
(S giggles - almost a squeal - and moves quickly on all fours towards upstage left. R continues to pursue her, shuffling backwards on the floor.)

R: Where are you?
(R stops in center stage and S stands up behind her in upstage left. R's legs are spread open. She remains seated.)

R: Come out. Right now.
(R moves a large brown pillow on her right side. She closes her legs a bit and brushes her nose. S sneaks toward R's back. She almost tiptoes.)

Analysis: This section replaces Section 2 in a much-condensed version of the perpetrator-victim play, with significant differences. In this section, R takes on the perpetrator role with enthusiasm, pursuing S with her backside, a remarkably nuanced picasso merging being aggressive with the safer part of her body. This follows a moment when R and S sit back to back, the first time this occurs. R is still seeking S by asking "where are you?" but now in the form of pursuer rather than victim. It seems that the avoidant aspects of Section 2 are

partially transformed and combined with greater nuance and complexity, beautifully symbolizing S's conflicted feelings.

352 2D

SEGMENT 7

(S falls onto R's back almost like a collapse. Her arms lay on R's shoulders.)

R: Ahhhhhhhhhh.

(R extends her arms in front of her and falls forwards. S giggles.)

R: Oh my god! Someone got me from behind.

(R is laying on her side and S is on top of her. S begins to slowly roll towards and over R's stomach. R groans and grunts as this is happening. S moves very slowly – in fact it takes 4 seconds from when S begins her roll for her to fall off of R.)

Analysis: This repeated refrain of Segment 3's 12 seconds now appears, with two important differences. S approaches R's back and in a more relaxed manner "falls" onto her back and then, instead of rolling off *behind* R, rolls *forward* across her abdomen. This clearly represents increasing comfort in making contact with R's torso, and a decrease in her avoidance of R's abdomen, a significant development in her expressing her desire to have been comforted by her mother. Though R announces the perpetration "Someone got me from behind!", S's behavior demonstrates a childlike clinging to the body of the mother. The resulting action expresses the core conflict in S's trauma schema, with signs of softening that reflect a degree of desensitization.

360 2E

SEGMENT 8

(S continues the rolling motion and log rolls to downstage right. R follows and log rolls as well – she reaches S and they are both on their sides and facing each other.)

364 2S

(They then swat each other with both her arms as they sit on their knees close to each other.)

R: Uh oh, Uh oh, Uh oh…

(S moves towards center stage right and R swats as S goes by.)

R: Too close!

(R crawls diagonally towards S who has stopped at center stage right.)

R: Too close to each other.

(R sandwiches her body against S who is sitting upright on her knees. S falls onto R's back and R bends down in child's pose. R grunts. S slides off of her – past her head.)

R: Arrrhhhhhhhhhhhhh.

(R leaps up against S who is sitting with her back up against the wall. R's head leans on S's chest and her legs are extended out towards center stage.)

375 2Y

R: I got her! I got her!

(R's legs kick and bend and S squirms behind R's head and shoulders.)

R: This is it!

(R emphasizes "this.")

S: Eeeee!

R: This is it!

(S begins to tap and hit R's forehead.)

383 2F

R: Oh, hello?

(R's tone is inquisitive, almost surprised. R's body goes immediately still.)

R: Someone's, someone's hitting my head.

(R's legs bend at the knees and her feet rest on the floor.)

386 2Z

R: Yes, can I, can I help you?

(R's tone is higher pitched – especially as she says, "help you." S squirms and tries to break free from underneath R's head/shoulders. S grunts.)

R: Can I help you?

(S says something but it is inaudible.)

R: Can I help you?

(Both S and R begin to twist against each other, making guttural sounds. S moves away from R – who holds S's right arm as long as she can.)

R: Oh.

(S breaks free, stands and moves towards the pillow pile. She turns towards the fourth wall. R moves to a sitting position, then a kneeling one. She kneels upright and adjusts her sweater. S adjusts her braids. R is in downstage right with her back to S. R looks down.

R: Good thing *she's* gone.

(R's tone is lower and with some relief.)

400 2G

Analysis: S initiates the swatting motion immediately after the roll, suggesting a need to distance or erase the previous moment of intimacy, as in the first half. R beautifully reflects this observation by saying, twice, "too close" even though she continues to pursue S, leading with her back, the safe part of her body. S now sits with her back up against the wall, a significant departure from her exiting into the closet before. R leans up against her and says, "I got her!" which seems to carry a dual meaning: I, the perpetrator, have got the mother; and I, the good enough mother, have got my daughter, even though physically S is in the perpetrator/mother position. S then taps R's head, some kind of repetition of throwing the shields at her head from before. R's response appears to suggest images of S knocking on her mother's bedroom door, and yet something else as well, indicated by "Can I help you?" as if said to an unfamiliar person who is asking for help. It seems to us quite possible that this ambiguous fragment may be a re-enactment of the "knock on the door" of the rescue team who came in the house to "help," subsequently removing her mother. R's comment, "Good thing *she's* gone!" with its tone of relief seems to fit with this interpretation. S's tolerance of this close contact ends, and she writhes out from R's grip, and moves toward the pillow pile, as if indeed this is now the end of the segment, and another restart must occur. Instead, S remains standing, adjusts her hair, and looks with

some anticipation at R who continues to face away from her. Something has been completed. There is apparently no need for another repetition, for now.

Discussion

In this trauma-centered DvT session segment, S plays out her trauma schema with R by taking on the perpetrator role of grabbing R from behind. As the session progresses, she explores reversing roles and tolerating being grabbed by R. In addition, she moves from having contact only with R's distal limbs (feet) and then back, to moments when she allows contact with R's abdomen and torso. As the desensitization process moves forward, her need to protect herself from the memories of the event recede in relation to her concomitant desire for a nurturing mother. This double desire is simultaneously expressed by her delighted jump on R's back, simultaneously being an "attack" and "being held."

At 119, R reaches out to grab S's foot and this is followed immediately by a mutual swatting motion that appears to be a form of distancing or erasure. Segment 2 consists of various negotiated approach and withdrawals, leading up to the 12 second Segment 3, where S jumps on R's back.

Following the intimate contact of Segment 3, S takes immediate distance by hiding in the closet and then throwing shields at R's head. This Segment 4 is quite diffused and avoidant, leading to a pause in the action and the "Restart" of the second half.

Segment 5 is a delightful repeat of Segment 1, slightly condensed. Of significance is a new behavior at point 314, where R places her foot against S's shoulder/neck area. S, for a moment, responds to this as a caring hold, and relaxes in a *release*. Here, for no more than a few seconds, she accepts the care of a good mother, albeit as a foot against her neck. Though minute, this response suggests a softening in S's defensive schema. Note that S did not have difficulty touching R's feet and did not tolerate having her feet touched by R, but did tolerate being touched by R's foot. Clearly this indicates that R's feet were safe and not entwined in her trauma schema. This leads us to wonder if her mother asked her to rub her feet when she came to visit.

The following segment continues the theme of integration, with much more fluidity between R and S in terms of roles and movements. R's attempts to catch S but "from her back" is a beautiful example of the therapist communicating to the client that they understand the complex nature of their traumatic defenses. Similar to the *picasso* technique, R expresses two divergent sentiments at the same time: "I am coming for you and you have the advantage of being behind

me." This segment 6 is therefore a streamlined and integrated version of Segment 2.

R and S then replay the refrain of Segment 3 in Segment 7, only this time S lingers on R's back and then slides off in front of her, over her abdomen, instead of off her back, clearly indicating greater tolerance for proximity to the scene of the crime of the mother's self-immolation.

This moment of intimacy is followed by S initiating the slapping motion again, perhaps an erasure or distancing from the implications of the previous action. Unlike Segment 4 however, when S completely removes herself from the room by hiding in the closet and effectively ending the play interaction, she continues to play out the pursuit, capture, and release with R. R empathically reflects this feeling by saying "Too close" twice. R presses up against S who is sitting against the wall, S repeats an attack on R's head this time from very close proximity. R begins to speak in a different voice, as if not to S but to another presence. ["Someone is hitting my head. Can I help you? Good thing she's gone."] Much more melding of roles appears to be occurring. A kind of transcendence emerges, of a third presence between R and S. When S removes herself from R's press, she runs back to near the pillows, but turns toward R, pausing. The need to restart apparently has lessened.

Clinically, this session segment illustrates the many small steps that client and therapist take in trauma-centered DvT to desensitize the client from their traumatic memories. The exquisite sensitivity of the therapist to the nuances of the client's communications is paramount in the success of this effort. Great patience and remarkable capacity for noticing, feeling, animating, and expressing the client's behaviors seems to be required. R uses her back as a way of *varielating* across the divides of abdomen/back, aggressor/victim, and lurking presence/surprised victim. R uses her back to place herself in front of S in the pillows in order to be surprised and assaulted. She uses her back as support for S when she jumps on her, as a means of holding her. She uses her back as a means of seeking, grabbing, and holding S. Each of these positions carries different nuances of meaning for S. Abdomen/back refers at least in part to the mother's disembowelment and therefore S's need to avoid her mother's abdomen, a place that should be a source of comfort for a small child. Aggressor/victim refers first to her mother as the aggressor and herself as the victim of neglect, but also her mother's perpetrator (imagined) and her mother as victim, being "grabbed from behind." The lurking presence (hiding in the pillows, coming up from behind) may also refer to her mother's perpetrator, and the surprised victim to her mother,

but also possibly to S as hidden from her mother, who may have had to call out for her as R did ("Samantha?"). In a third variation, being hidden in the pillows and then jumping out may also be a reference to the malignant fetus lurking inside the mother whom she was trying to locate and cut out ("Good thing she's gone.")

All of this process occurred in six minutes and forty seconds.

LAYER FOUR
DvT Analysis

Structural Issues

A structural analysis of these 400 seconds was conducted and revealed 8 clearly defined segments, as illustrated in the figure below. We were able to identify different types of segments. First, there were segments that were replicas of previous segments: Segment 5 for Segment 1, Segment 7 for Segment 3. Second, there were segments that were deleted in the second half: Segments 2 and 4 and replaced by new sequences: Segments 6 and 8.

Condensation. Our first observation is that Segment 5 was a repetition of Segment 1, indicating that together R and S intentionally replayed the previous sequence in almost every detail. In fact, when placed side by side on the computer screen, the two segments are eerily the same. However, the second time was more condensed, a total of 80 seconds in comparison to 119 seconds (67% reduction). No action was removed, but the actions were performed more efficiently, more leanly, as if the pair understood what was unnecessary. The condensation did not appear to eliminate important or distressing aspects of the scene. Indeed, the scene was replayed highlighting the "surprise grab" of R by the perpetrator. Interestingly, the overall condensation ratio of the second half to the first half was almost exactly the same (159/241 = 66%).

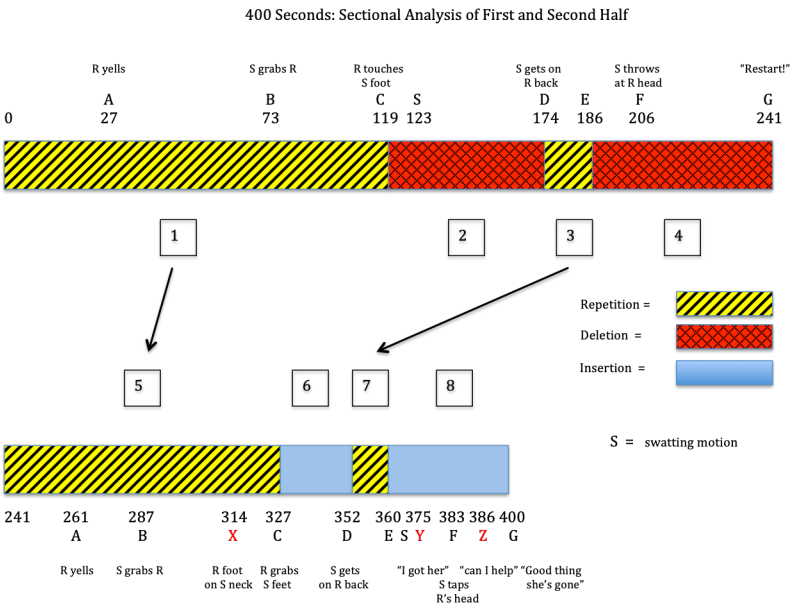
Segments 3 and 7 were extremely short but meaningful, reflecting some kind of refrain or possibly core conflict of the trauma schema within the client-therapist relationship: the tension between the grab of the perpetrator and the clinging of the child to the mother. Indeed, the two changes in Segment 7 (S rolled over R's front rather than back, and she rolled in a more languid manner), appear to show progress in the desensitization process.

Repeating Actions. On two occasions R and S engaged in a repeated action of swatting their hands. In each case this action followed a moment of role reversal when S was placed in a position of vulnerability and so appears to function as a form of distancing or erasure. However, these actions took place out

of sequence and therefore do not appear to be part of a repeated trauma schema but rather an independent defensive action that can be utilized whenever needed.

Deleted Segments. In the pair's repetition of the main sequence, Segments 2 and 4 appear to be deleted and replaced by Segments 6 and 8. Why are some sequences repeated but condensed, while others are deleted and replaced? Are they deleted because they are unnecessary or of less interest, or because they contain anxiety-ridden material and need to be avoided? In both cases here, Segments 6 and 8 contained less avoidance than the previous, deleted, scenes. It appears that S's initial discomfort with the intimate, proximal play lessened, which allowed her to tolerate the play with R. When replacements for deleted sequences are less avoidant, there is evidence of progress in the desensitization process.

Summary. This analysis reveals the session to be like a psychic genome, with actions similar to gene-splicing and gene transcription. Certain segments (1, 3, 5, 7) appear to be coded sequences, while certain small actions (S running to the pillows) appear to function as start codons, initiating a sequence, while others (R touching S) appear to function like stop codons, which end a sequence. Specialized actions (swatting) serve as a pause or erasure. R and S's apparent mutual understanding of these patterns are the psychological equivalent of messenger RNA that somehow knows which segments to code and which to ignore. Our analysis of this short section of a session illustrates powerfully the complexity and co-created nature of the interaction, at levels that we were not previously aware of. This knowledge appears to be held mutually but communicated nonverbally, especially in this case as S did not speak. The mutual descent/opening to the traumatic material appears to engage the participants in an intimate encounter with great specificity.



Play Analysis

State of Playspace. R and S showed a strong playspace during this session: there was restraint from harm, mutuality, awareness of play, and reversing of roles. The seamless "restart" and replay of previous scenes appeared as if the pair had memorized a script and were acting from a unified mind. The playspace weakened in Segment 4 when S went into the closet and then threw real shields at R just before the Restart. This weakening followed the full body contact with R in Segment 3.

Form of Instability. The major source of instability in the session was po'a: the absence of the mother's perpetrator, the mother's absence for S, and absence of the imagined fetus inside the mother. These absences appeared in R and S's play in numerous variations, including S's hiding in the pillows and closet, R's looking for S, S jumping out from behind, S's silence, the mysterious knock on the head near the end, and the "good thing she is gone."

Level of Play: Most of the play within the trauma schema was play of powers, where S exerted power over R and resisted R's attempts at controlling S. However, as the play proceeded and S's schema softened, elements of the play of

possessions emerged around R "getting" or "holding" S, as when R said, "I got you" near the end. This reflects the early nature of the work at this stage, when S had not yet had contact with her mother. The expression of emotions characteristic of the play of passions, or the complexities of the play of presence, were yet to come.

Techniques. R remained fully engaged in the playspace as S's playobject throughout the session, and used intensification in each repetition consistent with TC-DvT. As noted above, R's capacity to notice, feel, animate, and express S's behavior was exceptional and allowed her to varielate many aspects of S's images and boundaries, which presumably caused the softening and desensitization that occurred during this session. R identified the core issue of S's dual interest in avoiding and approaching R's abdomen, and then used cycling to hover around this issue so S could make progress in resolving it.

R's technique largely relied on faithful rendering, closely playing out the roles that S's behavior evoked in the play. R did utilize emergent rendering in moments where S's desire to be held was tolerated and in noticing that she was comfortable being approached from R's back or touched by R's foot. Mirroring occurred infrequently (e.g., during the swatting and in the foot play). R's use of picasso to go after S leading with her backside was the main divergent rendering in the session.

Primary Affects. S expressed many moments of delight in which she showed excitement and enjoyment in her surprising R and in jumping around the room with her. R portrayed alarm often – in the playspace – as a counterpoint to S's delight. S's expressed some degree of alarm at moments where R attempted to grab her, primarily in the first half of the session. A moment of awe occurs when S releases under the touch of R's foot.

Moment of Presence. As R works to ease S's fears of intimacy, subtly questioning, stretching, her trauma schema, S responds by showing brief moments of risk-taking. However, at point F in the second half, her defenses loosen enough for a non-repeating element to appear, in the quickly formed "tap on the head," which R helps further form into a "hello, can I help you?" without knowing what this referred to. S speaks here, for the first time. This moment of unformulated experience, which we speculate as being linked to her rescue and the removal of her mother, is most important: for S to allow herself to experience the moment freed of the control of her schema is indeed an act of great courage, achieved not through an act of strength, but of letting go. What allowed her to do that was being with R; the present moment is a mutual one. There would be many

more of these encounters with presence in the treatment. This was one of the first.

Summary. Once trauma occurs, the rise of something new cannot be risked, for surprise can bring with it the terror. The trauma schema is vigilant over the appearance of the nonrepeating element, a return of something absent, or emergence of something vague or rejected. In these 400 seconds, S and R overcome these fears by intentionally re-enacting them with S comfortably protected in the role of perpetrator. Occasionally an unexpected action activates S's defenses, followed by a brief retreat, but then they are at it again, repeated in a slightly different (varielated) way. First comes contact, then a softening, and finally presence. And so the journey goes.

LAYER FIVE
Personal Reflections

David's Reflections

I met her in shadows, in the silence of a horror. Glances, courage. Broken shards of her experience emerged: the soup, the toast, the 100 Facts. Between these small facts the clock ticked, loudly. For me at least. This eight-year-old stared through me. I thought she was done. That nothing could be repaired. It was over. There was nothing left to console. I walked with her from living room to kitchen to bedroom back to living room and then to her mother's bedroom door, over and over. I too looked away as she kissed her mother good night, I too ignored what was under those bedsheets.

These 400 seconds, recorded a month shy of 2 years later, do not reveal that horror. Yet seeing Renee there, *knowing*, reaching out and reaching out over and over again, and seeing Samantha grab on and then let go, over and over again, *knowing*, stops my heart. I cannot call up anything inside me to understand that eight-year-old and her toast and uncle, TV show and mother, that home. She just went on. She just went on. And so did Renee. And so did her mother. Her mother found her way back to her daughter; after that. That too is unimaginable. The whole thing is an impossible story.

Renée's Reflections

These 400 seconds, only 6 minutes of one 50-minute session, within a treatment of 150 sessions, when examined closely, defy words, even images. Now, years later, I watch the session and I am filled with absence. Of missing

Samantha – of missing that space we entered into and got lost together, trying to meet each other, and making sense of what all that had happened to her. I met her in the midst of a horror, a feeling that she would and should not see her mother ever again, and that she would never be able to get over it. Her experience was opaque to me. I simply had to throw myself in.

The past is a story we tell ourselves. I have no idea what *this* story is. How to tell what is happening here? We must be able to make sense somehow. I'll start with the basics. I walk. I am looking for you. Are you under here? I will pretend I do not know. I know the where, but I don't know the why yet. I am uncertain. You can hear it in my voice. I hope that does not make you feel more alone. If only I could say the words that you are wishing me to say. I take my position. And then. I scream for you. I scream for you. It is an abyss of sound. I don't know if I can stay in this space…I am terrified. I want to leave my body. Slow down. I can think only about what happened to you. That story that was told once before. The story of a vicious attack.

That Someone who grabbed your mother from behind. Upside, right side up, backwards, slowed down, it's all the same story. Too dangerous to be close, too dangerous to be alone. You are dangerous. I am dangerous. That's all there is to it.

I can't stay in that space too long – it is tremendously painful and sad. You are right there in front of or behind me, and I can't reach you. I would give anything to stay in that moment with you. To connect – to share the same rhythm, the same steps to this dance. I wish I could dance with you like this all the time.

Why do you hide from me? The girl who I can never find. The one who needs to hide. To save herself. They call you mute. You have been put on "mute." You say I talk too much.

And then we restart. It's bound to come back around. We are both traveling on our own, moments that we share, and others so far apart. You say two words. In this entire segment, you say two words. I say 417 words. Approximately. And you repeat one of them a few times. But only two words. And really one is just a bunch of sounds…actually just one letter: "eee."

One word. Can change. Everything. One sound can develop into a routine. A sequence. A repetition to help survive what horrors lay beyond the door. Routines helped you. No space for spontaneity. I try to create some space. Just a little space on my back – and you slowly roll off to the side. Next time you stay a bit longer on my back and roll over on my stomach, slowly, and I rejoice! Is there space? Time to linger? Without fear? It's in the lingering where the

strangeness comes in. Where I can lose myself, become a chair, a mere object, not human. Not after what you survived. I had to be a chair. Sometimes even just the arms, or the legs. No middle. No torso. No stomach.

How do you help an eight-year-old whose delusional mother cut her own abdomen open to remove an alien fetus? What do I know? This was just a story. Depends how she remembers it, right? Especially now that they live together again and have dinners together and go to family gatherings together, and are, together, again.

I can only catch my breath. There is no end. I will watch this videotape again, and see how we begin again, all over again, only this time there is something new, something unseen previously, something I did not catch….if only……..

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Commentary on

"400 Seconds"

Marc Willemsen[1]

After reading "400 Seconds" I was silent for quite a while. My heart was stirred by the struggle of this young human being, Samantha, to survive in a situation beyond my imagination. I was moved by her resilience and touched by the determination and courage of the authors in their roles as clinicians, helping to make a difference for this little girl and her relationship with her mother. Admirable is the insane endurance of the authors as researchers, who repeatedly zoom in, reflect, question, and analyse, all in an effort to reveal the trauma-centered DvT process in a randomly selected 400 seconds of a session.

I imagine an eight-year-old girl who for many months held tightly to her daily routines, and no one is aware of the horror going on in her life. No bus driver, no teacher, nobody seemed to have noticed? How is that possible? Unfortunately we know very well that it is possible. A self-report from children aged 10-12 in the Netherlands tells us that 27% experienced one or several forms of child-abuse. Reports from other countries show comparable or even worse figures.

Samantha tells us that she did not notice the blood-soaked sheet; did not smell the strong odors coming from the feces and pieces of flesh rotting in the bed and on the floor, did not notice the flies swarming around her mother's body and face; did not see the needles, rubbing alcohol, prenatal vitamins and box cutter on her mother's bed stand. Oh how successful she was in shutting off these terrifying sensations! This blocking of sensation must have been a significant challenge in the beginning of treatment. Here, Renee as the playor showed great sensitivity and responsiveness to Samantha. By tracking and then varielating the subtle

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bodily leakages and interactions, Renee gave Samantha space for sensory exploration. Through the many repetitions, Samantha gradually became more aware of her inner compass, develop sensory integration, and feel more present. The playor, Renee Pitre, shows up, is closely in touch with her own recursive cycle (noticing, feeling, animating, expressing) and seems therefore able to tune into the different rhythms and melodies of Samantha, enough to hear them without falling into complete harmony. I find that inspiring.

When a child experiences safe attachment in intimate physical interaction with an attuned primary caregiver, these intense but comforting bodily sensations will form the foundation of a confident embodied and psychological self in space and time, and with personal agency. When the authors met Samantha she did not speak, being in a state of complete shock. The authors describe her as if she were frozen and her psychic spirit had been completely emptied from her body. The trauma had completely derailed her development. Standard phase-oriented treatment usually recommends to first stabilize the child and the environment before beginning the trauma processing. Based on the principles of trauma-centered psychotherapy and DvT, the gradual exposure to her traumatic experience begins immediately. The authors summarize the process as: "First comes contact, then a softening and finally presence. And so the journey goes."

Most surprising is how Samantha's moments of anxiety or alarm lay so close to moments of delight and awe. Though she hides, she does want to be found! How her perpetrator-victim role configuration weaves in and out with a good mother-child interaction. Through the physical contact with Renee, she seems to be developing a body-awareness and presence, as if she is learning where she is and what is going on for her. This piece illustrates for me the power of our interdependency through the difficult but urgent unfolding *between* people.

The graphic analysis of these 400 seconds revealed repetitions, condensations, deletions and insertions between 8 clearly defined segments. What does this result imply? Not surprisingly that seems difficult to decipher and answer. I am bewildered, touched, inspired. It makes me curious. I have too many questions. Could it demonstrate shifts from a static towards a dynamic equilibrium? Is it related to the constructed worlds, recursive cycle and/or the prime discrepancy? Is this an illustration of the genetics of DvT? Will the authors ask each of us to decipher 400 seconds of our own sessions? It is overwhelming.

My experience is that through the mutual and playful encounter, within a dramatic dialogue, more insight can be obtained about what is going on within the

child's life. This is why I believe in the importance of trauma informed schools through preventive drama therapy programs like ALIVE.

The transcript and analysis of these few 400 seconds confirms how subtle the dramatic dialogue within the playspace is and how much goes on. If so, how much goes on in a whole hour of a regular DvT session? How present and aware can I be as a playor in such a complex process? Are we as DvT-practioners able to be conscious and sensitive *enough* in this amazing, awesome domain of po'a?

I know that I am still learning.

Lost and Found:
A meditation on po'a, loss, Gestalt Psychology and DvT

Noa Emanuel – Mizrahi[1]

in dialogue with David Read Johnson

Authors' Certification of Brokenness

This paper was written over four years ago. Since then, I have moved back from New Haven to Israel, I lost my first therapist to suicide, my younger son was diagnosed with ASD, I sold my childhood home and an awful, bloody war broke out in my country. As a result, some pieces of this paper are outdated or inaccurate. Nevertheless, throughout this time of loss and grief, our dialogue continued. We tried to figure out why is it so difficult for people to let go of what is gone and transform, and we tried to understand how DvT can be helpful in that process; all the while we both used our dialogue to push away and deny the grief we were feeling, capacities each of us have honed over the years. In the end, neither of us find the paper persuasive. It seems we just keep repeating that absence is hard. Oh well.

"Thirty spokes share the hub of a wheel;
yet it is its center that makes it useful.
You can mold clay into a vessel;
yet, it is its emptiness that makes it useful.
Cut doors and windows from the walls of a house;
but the ultimate use of a house will depend
on that part where nothing exists.
Therefore, something is shaped into what is;
but its usefulness comes from what is not."

(Lao-Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Verse 11)

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This paper was born out of my own personal training therapy, where I explored and played with the loss of both of my parents, and primarily my mother who died a few years ago. As I was working through my own grief in the play, I realized that I had spent most of my life seeking my parents' validation and love. I realized that I hold the idea that I will never receive the thing that I ask for. What I did receive was never enough and not exact, because it was not coming from them, from the right people. I tried to fill the hole left by the loss of my parents, but failed because I could not acknowledge the fact that it was there.

(David) I'm wondering how, in your process of working on your grief over the loss of your parents, why you tried to fill the hole, rather than accept the hole, or repair the hole? For example, did you consider finding replacements for your parents, or try to recognize the presence of your parents in your own self/behavior?

(Noa) My family referred to my father's death as "the loss," as if this person was an object we once had and is now gone. We did not talk enough about our own sense of loss and how that has impacted our being in the world. The death of those we love leaves us lost! The process of healing from grief is the process of finding ourselves again. Discovering who we are now. In a way, the death of a loved one can free us from old narratives or ideas that we have about ourselves. For example, when my mom died, I was able to let go of my wish to be needed all the time: My mom depended on me so much, when she died there was no one there on the other side of that dynamic. For the first time in my life, I felt like I had the choice to keep looking for other people who need me, or to change the way I take care of the people around me. If we are able to the face the absent, if we truly allow ourselves to notice and feel it, a new sense of presence can be found.

In my case, I lost my parents before they died, due to their alcoholism. I remember with sadness being in my bedroom in my mid-thirties, listening to my inebriated parents arguing with each other in the next room, and thinking, no feeling, "I do not have parents." The realization that I had no parents helped me stop

looking for (and rejecting) mentors to replace them, and instead appreciate the people I loved and who loved me.

I remember the moment when my mom told me that my dad is dead. I could feel the air leaving my body and the earth open underneath me. It was better for me to not know that he was dead. Yet not knowing brings me a lot of anxiety; so I prefer to avoid endings! I always have an extra bottle of shampoo "just in case." My family makes fun of me that when we reach half of a maple syrup bottle, I rush to the store to get another one.

As I became more curious about absence, I noticed that many times my clients or the children that I played with at school were angry with the world because they kept asking for something that they had lost, and the world did not seem to care. Whatever was offered was never enough and always incomplete because it was never the real thing. Whatever it was, it was too little, too late. So I became even more curious about po'a, and the power of absence in our lives. I was curious about the second degree of po'a: "The absent. That which has been perceived but is no longer present" or "that which is not present, but still exists: the missing, the lost" (Johnson, Text for Practitioners Number Two, p. 77). I wondered how it is possible to play with what is missing? With what is already gone? How can we, as playors, shape the unshapable? How can we give presence to the absence?

The Whole Phenomenon: Gestalt Psychology and the Study of Absence

According to Gestalt psychology, parts or pieces are first perceived as members of a whole, which is still perceived even if some of the parts are missing. The German word gestalt means "form" and is interpreted as "pattern" or "configuration." Created in the early 20th century by a group of German and Austrian psychologists, Gestalt psychology tried to explain how we organize our perception of a stimulus in relation to its environment and other objects (Goldstein, 2011).

From the Gestalt perspective, the most fruitful way to view psychological phenomena is as organized, structured wholes. They argued that the psychological whole has priority and that the parts are defined by the structure of the whole (Wertheimer, 1924). They were able to show in their experiments that the mind prefers to perceive a complete, closed and continuous image rather than breaking

it up to tiny details that seem disconnected. For example, in Figure 1 below, people usually perceive the white, three-dimensional cube rather than the individual black shapes. In Figure 2, people are more likely to perceive the smiley face rather than the random black dots and lines:

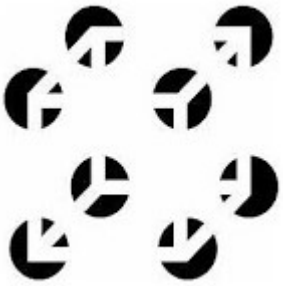


Figure 1



Figure 2

(https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/the-law-of-similarity-gestalt-principles-1)

These principles of perceptual organization are much like heuristics, or rules of thumb, that provide a best guess solution to the problem and provide a mental short-cut (Goldstein, 2011). They are also probably of evolutionary significance, in that survival may be improved if one can determine from only partial information the presence of a threat. From a DvT perspective, the Gestalt principles of perception are ways to stabilize p'oa. By completing what is incomplete, we have a quick solution, a relief to our anxiety. The instability that the brokenness evokes in us is immediately relieved. But in the process, we miss much freedom, creativity and opportunities for transformation.

Why is brokenness, or incompleteness, associated with creativity or freedom?

Once complete, a thing is a thing; if broken into pieces, there are more possibilities, and thus more freedom to create. An image of shattered glass comes to mind: the light will now reflect in so many different patterns! In the same way, if I am whole – in my

case – Noa Emanuel Mizrahi, I have a limited identity, but if I am a composite of pieces, I can be many things, tired, sick, weak, angry, scared. I am human, an entity that can be redefined differently in each moment!

What if the Whole is an illusion from the beginning, a construction that suppresses the perception of holes, as noted by the Gestalt psychologists. Then the concept of "broken" would only be a derivative of the original illusion: There was never any hole to begin with, just "what is." As you say, if we are in touch with our original freedom, then we do not have to be… anything in particular.

If I understand you correctly and wholes like language and symbols are merely constructs, then are the people in our lives wholes too? In experiencing grief, it is hard to accept that your mother was just a construct that you made up to have stability! The work of discerning what "is" and what "is not" must be very delicate.

OK, but this is the paradox: a lot of who your parent was, was of course their presence in holding, feeding, bathing, driving, instructing, and being with you in all sorts of ways. But a lot of who they were to you was also what they were not, what they could not provide, what they missed, their quirks, mistakes, and lack of response, that is, their holes, all of which may have caused you pain or hurt and motivated you to seek other paths. Maybe these missing parts are as important in the process of grieving?

The Hole Phenomena, or better, the W'hole Phenomena

The human body is full of cavities. The center of the eye is basically a hole that allows the light to enter so we can see, the shape of our ear is surrounding an open canal that allows the sound waves to enter so we can hear, the womb is an empty space waiting to be filled up with new life. Our mouths, our noses. Holes, or empty spaces, are an essential part of who we are as humans, from sensation to digestion, breathing, and blood flow. We actually need these holes in order to live and communicate and be part of this world; yet we tend to

ignore them. Holes are essential to the creation of open channels of communication and transaction.

> Indeed. In the beginning, there were only open channels of communication, as molecules moved in the primordial waters from place to place. Life began by restricting these movements, by creating a boundary between inside and outside. Wholes define themselves by closing themselves off from their environments. Presumably for protection, for survival. Holes do not need to expend energy to survive. Wholes do. Which is why wholes take in energy, consume, kill, eat. If they don't, they deteriorate and rejoin the random play of nature.

Yes, I understand that. The question is how do you turn the painful hole of loss into a playful, lively one?

> Since play is both an act of body and mind, of physical imagination, perhaps it can be of service in grieving a loss because through it, one can reincarnate the lost parent in one's playful enactment of them, by being what one has lost, at least for the moment. In this way in play we regain and then lose them again, over and over. This is the essence of shamanism, where the shaman enacts the dead ancestors in front of the grieving, bringing them to life again (as the playor does for the player), and only then to have them depart, dissipate, in the vapors of the fire or water or earth of the ceremony. Play can also be such an incantation, an appearance, however temporary.

And a way to portray the both-ness of loss and life: I remember in my own training therapy many moments like that**:** Renee was my mother and she was not my mother at the same time. She held my mother's spiritual/ mental quality despite being of another shape and form at the same time. I remember feeling mesmerized by this at first, having a hard time accepting or allowing Renee to holding this duality for me.

Alan Watts, a scholar of philosophy and theology, describes our

consciousness as a radar geared to identify change or potential danger: "Our attention is captured by the figure rather than the background… and by something moving rather than by something that is relatively still….Consciousness is a radar. The radar doesn't notice the vast areas of space where there are no rocks or ships." (Watts, 1960 , https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mEUDzkMskw)

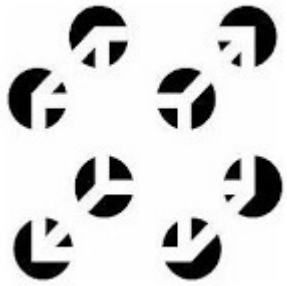
In the same way, when we listen to music, we think we are listening only to the tones that are being played. But it is actually the intervals, the little moments of silence, of "nothing" in between one tone and another that create the melody. If there were no intervals, there would be no melody. If there was no space between the stars, we would not identify Draco the Dragon as a constellation (Johnson, 2013). The gaps out there are filled in by the gestalt in here. As Watts implies, every positive space is surrounded by negative space. You actually cannot have positive space without negative space, and vice versa!

> That'swhyweplaceaspacebetweeneverywordinasentence! A perception of any object can disappear the moment we shift our focus to the negative space around it! So maybe sustained grief is the inability to shift from the perception of the negative space around your mother (which makes her disappear), to her as positive space?

I think that sustainable grief is the ability to shift from one type of space to the other, and not necessarily just being stuck in the negative space (my mother is gone), assuming that the positive is that my mother is not gone. I think about it in Gestalt terms of figure and background. In that sense, it is not about focusing on one of them, it is about shifting from one to the other, thus having the w'hole picture rather than a partial one. Play in general and DvT in particular seem especially capable of doing this.

According to Gestalt psychology, the way we perceive the world (as whole, complete patterns and figures) is not a learned process, rather it is our automatic, natural and organic way of perceiving others and the world (Kohler, 1947). This is the primary way we bring stability to our experience in the world. So how can we let go of this grip of our mind? How can we also see the holes, the pieces of reality that are missing? How can we notice po'a if we are prone to ignore it as a way to survive? Take another look at Figure 1 (below), but now make a

conscious choice to focus on the incomplete black marks~. We can see that what gives the black marks~ their incomplete shape is actually the shape of the white square that caught our attention first. The shape of the whole affects the shape of the hole, and that tells us more about what is missing. It is almost impossible not to see the white cube, but if we are able to perceive both, and play with both, then the shape becomes more dynamic and dimensional.



Say more about what you mean by "perceiving both." Can you really perceive both simultaneously, or more back and forth? Grief and mourning are often experienced in that back and forth way, one moment feeling fine and the next, crying, going back and forth between past and present.

Yes, I agree with that, it is more back and forth than simultaneously. I always imagine ocean waves when I think about this motion between the absent and the present. Can you see how this back-and-forth motion is a part of the aliveness of it all? When I experience that, I feel much more alive, because then everything exists and everything moves.

Perhaps it is this complexity of dual perceptions that leads us to move back and forth, that is, causes motion in the first place? That necessary process of grief works itself on our desire not to move, and to preserve, the images of your parents. It is about stability and instability in our relationships with grounding figures in our lives, such as our parents. Tell me why you think you perceived your parents in a stable way prior to their passing? They were not actually stable, as they were alive. Which is the illusion: your experience of them when they were alive, or now, when they are

gone?

That is a great and difficult question to answer, as I have very little memory of them when they were alive… I do not think we can refer to one experience as more of an illusion than another experience, assuming that we agree that there is always a discrepancy between our representation of experience and experience itself (prime discrepancy). It is always both, real and not real. With that said, I can see how my relationship with my dead parents is still evolving, changing, as new emotions and feelings arise, more than it did when they were alive as fixed figures in my life, with their very stable - well known - reactions and behavior patterns.

Right, the ironies and paradoxes of this topic continue! I do not think we experience our parents as stable or fixed when they were alive, how could we? In which case the feeling of the loss of that stability after they die cannot be quite right. Maybe DvT play could be helpful if it reminds us of that original instability? Which would make the difference between now and then less stark. Just think: we aren't 100% present for our kids, either in physical presence or mental presence. Their grieving process over our absences has already begun!

In their book Trauma-Centered Group Psychotherapy for Women, Lubin and Johnson (2008) describe a balanced interaction between the self and the environment as a perceptive ability to differentiate and to integrate; to be able to perceive a stimuli both as distinct but also as a part of a larger whole. It is that simultaneity that results in experience of autonomy. Just as in Figure 1 above, if we are listening to what is, we are able to understand more of what is not. The figure and the background, the present and the absent, are so intertwined and connected that one tells the story of the other, one gives the shape to the other.

Perhaps this intertwining occurs through movement from one to the other, rather than a static perception.

Yes!

H, a 50-year old woman who went through physical and verbal abuse by her father when she was a child, told me in one of our sessions that she cannot seem to stop shopping online for different stones and crystals and alternative therapy methods to help alleviate her depression. When I asked more about how the shopping makes her feel, or what is it that she is asking for by this continuous search, she said that she wants to be told that she is fine and will feel better. When I asked her if there was anyone in her life who made her feel accepted and loved, she burst into tears and said it was her deceased grandmother. By understanding and acknowledging that she was still looking for her grandmother's love, and by allowing herself to grieve over her grandmother's death, she found herself shopping online less and less. When H was able to acknowledge the absence, she was able to transform the presence.

If we can accept and tolerate the existence of the loss, of the holes in our lives, we do not need to work so hard to stabilize it. When we are able to look at what is broken, we are able to shift and transform and hold both truths. If we, as playors, are able to bring the po'a, the loss, to the front, we are creating a space for grief, healing and transformation to occur by creating this balanced differentiating experience.

How do you bring an absence to the front?

Great question. I believe it begins when we acknowledge death's finiteness. Death feels so final and certain (a closed shape maybe?) How do you imagine death? What kind of image comes to mind? For me it is like a quiet, dark plateau. With no motion whatsoever. There is something about death's certainty that ends creativity and imagination. The uniqueness of DvT is that it allows you to play with death. You can die, in so many ways, and you come back to life! Again and again. When you realize how certain your loss is (my parents are not coming back), there is room to explore what is left and what is gone. There is room to move with and around it. I think about a client of mine who was not told that her mom died when she was 4 years old. It was never discussed in a direct way. So she spent her life looking for her mommy, waiting for her mom to come back. Of course, in our sessions we played (compassionately of course) with "Your mom is dead." At first she

gasped and cried and then less so, and finally she was the one to announce it. This play helped initiate many transformations in her life, involving being able to mother herself.

How do you "see" a hole?

I think you can see a hole by listening to what is. Because we live most of our lives trying to fill that hole and not feel it, our actions and movements in the world tell the story of what is missing.

This is kind of interesting: for I think we do in fact "feel" emptiness. Mourning includes so many deeply painful emotions, often described as physical experiences of wrenching, stabbing, ripping, or choking pain. We must be feeling something else that we take for emptiness and loss. Does the cell that is dividing feel like it is being ripped apart? Does it "miss" the other half once cell division is completed? Is that why we cling to someone who is departing? By emptiness do we mean our own attachment to others?

I think that the clinging we feel stems out of the fear of change. It feels different and we call the difference "empty." Maybe the experience of emptiness is the experience of "not here"? You wrote in Text for Practitioners 2 about the concepts of elsewhere and elsewhen that develop in infancy when the caregiver disappears, and object constancy stabilizes the resulting p'oa, the feeling of change and instability. This conversation of ours reminds me of something that I wrote after my mom died:

In the place in our closet
Where we hid your sweet and healing grass
There is a space.
All the sweaters pressed up,
adjusted themselves to the shape of the fragrant box.
And now, they don't know how to rearrange themselves
How to loosen up
How to hug
The void.

I think you can feel emptiness only when something around it has a shape. If we want a grieving process to occur, we have to give it a shape first, then there is something that can be empty or can become nothing. Only then we can grieve it and let it go.

Yes. Perhaps one of the underlying causes of Being's instability is the tension between the finite and the infinite. We are finite beings, as you noted above, and we cannot get over that because we are a part of an infinite expanse, which we feel as well. Our grief is the remnant of that awareness, that your mother is part of a forever universe even though her particular "shape" has dissolved back into it. It is about accepting our mortality when we know that in the Garden there is a Tree of Immortal Life! It is kind of intolerable.

I just realized that this is another prime discrepancy that we have to live with! The mortality of our shapes and the immortality of our holes or universal^cosmic^spiritual being have an intrinsic tension. When a loved one is gone, we face that discrepancy in a very direct way, and we have to make sense of this world all over again. It is as if we got a sneaky peek through the veil to this vastness surrounding us, and now we are back here in our compartment!

I believe that DvT and the playspace can be a catalyst for this process. The playspace is a liminal space that exists between what is real and what is not real, between the symbol and the symbolized, between the present and the absent. Thus, it has the ability to hold both the whole and the hole, and bring them both to life.

Kohler (1967) explains that the Gestalt qualities of a stimulus remain the same, as long as the relations among the stimuli remain the same. For example, a person will be able to recognize a melody that is played in different keys, as long as the intervals among the different notes remain the same. (Again, it is the po'a that defines our perception). If we play with the relations, with the intervals, we create a different image and give more space for po'a to arise. By using proximity play, by suspending, by creating open shapes in the play- we allow the player and the playor to explore the space that is in between one whole to another. We allow the hole to come to the front.

Causing holes to emerge happens with the technique of a pinter, where the therapist inserts a pause, or space, in the play, for no apparent reason. Sometimes the client pauses also, sometimes they fill it in. I had one client where we played increasingly with these pauses, and one time, near the beginning of a session, we were standing very close to each other, moving toward each other slowly, when my client paused. I paused. Though we paused, our expressions were filled with the intention of moving toward each other, only we did not. We remained that way for 40 minutes (a killer). Then somehow, I don't know who moved first, we moved, and slowly passed each other a mere inch or so apart. The client later told me that her healing from her trauma began in this session.

And Something About Loss

"Because that is the nature of things: If it should happen- it will happen,
and if it did not happen- it should not have happened.
And there is no need to dwell on what is not, rather on what is."

This is how my older brother opened his toast on my Bat Mitzvah day. I lost my father when I was 10, and since then I was praised for being so strong, for being able to move on and not give up. My coping mechanism, of focusing on what is rather than grieving over what was lost, was reinforced by my family and friends for years. I remember so many times in my childhood when I broke down and cried because I missed my father; the grown-ups around me immediately offered a comfort through food, a toy or their child for me to play with. My mother worked relentlessly to make sure that I had everything that I needed; she spent hours on buses to go downtown and get me the things that I asked for, she took me to the afternoon classes that I wanted to go to and made sure that the fridge was always full. She was so occupied with making sure that I never missed or lost anything else in my life, that she made herself chronically and severely sick. It was only after she died as a result of her sickness that my journey steered in a different direction- into the hole, rather than away from it.

Why did your mother's death allow you to move into the hole?

I felt like I did not have a choice. I was truly alone (the first words that came out of my mouth when the doctor said it was her final hours were "I am alone in this!"). There was nothing to hold on to. No railings to the boat! It is that tragedy of going through the worst thing and not having the support you need. I remember looking for her at her funeral, feeling angry at her for not being there to support me. How paradoxical.

> As for so many of us, seems like a part of you was in your mother, that you were losing something of yourself when she died, as if she lived in you, or with you, and then left you, alone. The question is, if you were able to hold a piece of her inside you when she was living, why can't you hold a piece of her inside you when she is dead?

It is not that I cannot, it is just a different way of holding. The grieving process is actually a process of reshaping that piece of her within me. It is a different form of communication and a different way of being. One that takes time.

The void that the loss of a loved one brings shakes our sense of stability to the core and raises our primal anxieties and fears. As Gestalt theory might predict, people view healing from loss as sealing up this deep wound, as making the hole whole again through some kind of closure. But this kind of healing does not stick. Holes and gaps are an integral part of our existence. Loss and death are part of our existence; we cannot ignore or rewrite them.

As I was growing up, I became a very rigid person. I never lost anything, always was on time and did my best to be the best and not make any mistakes. I did not appreciate messiness or sloppiness, because they held the potential harm of encountering my deep pain over my father's loss. It is when I started my drama therapy studies, and mostly DvT, that things started to shift and change for me. I was able to see that life is comprised of "yes and" and "both" moments. Slowly, I was able to accept more of the instability of life and be at peace with it. DvT, the playspace and the embodied encounter allowed this process to take shape. The aesthetic distance in the play allowed me to experience the present - my therapist's loving eyes - and the absence, the loss of my parents' loving eyes. It was there and it was not there at the same time.

When was the first moment you realized this, that your therapist's loving eyes were linked to those of your parents?

I remember the shape, the movement, and our location in the room. What was unique about this moment was that I allowed it. I allowed her to look at me like that. With all this love. I believe that she looked at me with loving eyes almost from the beginning of our work together, but I was not able to accept it. It was too scary. Too close.

I think this is really important, for I agree, she probably was looking at you that way from the beginning. What do you mean by "allowing it?" How can you allow it, without knowing what it is that you are allowing? It is like when there is a knock on the door, and you have to decide whether to open it or not. Most of us do not open the door until we look through the peephole to see who is out there.

I think the playing and reversing roles and seeing my therapist allow it created that peephole! I had closed the door to the images of my parents; the play allowed these images to transform, to move; suddenly, there was a room for something new and non-repeating element to come forward.

Prolonged grief is a repeating cycle that goes around and around. Adaptive grieving must be transforming, moving. One notices the nonrepeating elements of one's memories of the loved ones we have lost. DvT should be helpful with that, especially through the playor's varielation around the themes and memories. It is what I am now referring to as natural acts, those simple actions children do, for no purpose, like running, or climbing up and sliding down, or making noise, or peeking and booing. When these spontaneous, natural acts break out in a DvT session, indeed, there is this feeling of tremendous relief, as you say. It must be the surprise of these nonrepeating elements that helps us deal with the reality of our mortality, and the mortality of all those whom we love.

Through the play, I have come to learn that po'a is an inseparable part of my existence. It is not gone and not fixed (even though I wish it was). But it is alive. It is moving. It has so much color. It keeps changing. This is why it is an ongoing, never-ending process.

Broken Toy

As I am near the end of this paper, I am thinking about the concept of the playor as a broken toy, but now from the po'a^ hole^loss perspective. I can see now that being a broken toy does not only mean that we own our own brokenness and bring it into our play with the players. It also means that we intentionally create broken shapes and incomplete images that will invite our players to do the same. The more we are aware of the brokenness that exists in the core of our being, the less afraid we become of not being whole, and the more freedom we have to be.

> Here's the thing: only the finite can be broken, only the shape of the Self with its boundaries, can break, like a beat-up guard rail along the highway. The sky cannot be broken; oceans do not break; nor the vastness of consciousness inside us. These are the infinities that surround existence. The playor hopes to show the player that – by peeking through the holes in the Self, in our constructed identities – that our immutable being-here is also unbreakable, and with that awareness achieve peace with our grief. Perhaps it is a similar feeling to the one you get when you look up at the night sky and experience the wonder and awe of its emptiness and presence.

> Here's the thing: Being in our body, being broken, going through pain and loss, dying (in short - being human) is not lesser than the unbreakable vastness of the universe. I want to place the body, its brokenness and humanness in the front, as figure to ground. I want us to be able to celebrate that, cry over it, and only then let the infinite shine through. It is through incomplete, gritty human experience that we learn about being w'hole-y. Our bodily presence has to come first.

The word "holy" does not mean that one is good and perfect. It means that

one sees the holes that connect us, the losses that make up human existence. It is when one is able to hold both, that one can be really whole. In that sense, being a broken toy also means being holy and the playspace is the holy ground that allows it all to happen.

How grateful I am that I have come to know this holy land.

Amen. Your words here fill me with joy.

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Commentary on

"Lost and found: A meditation on po'a, loss, Gestalt Psychology and DvT"

Brigid Wells[1]

The contradicting, swaying between elements of delight (our connection and aliveness and shared encounters) and the elements of sadness (the incompleteness and fleeting nature of these mutual encounters)… the bifurcated gift that our therapist is entirely loving and present to us and for us, *and* that this is entirely temporary, shines through every page here.

Noa and David's dialogue peers into the depths of knowing attachment-detachment, and the pain that we allow ourselves to feel, when we have cared enough, or have been alive enough, to face Loss… and perhaps Noa offers a concept map to fellow grievers… a way of approaching longing, so that we can have an experience of it, and not be indefinitely lost in it.

Noa offers tender fragments of experiences… images… felt sensations, of common understandings that evolved through time together… recognitions… shared jokes and meanings that become associated with common experiences or frames of reference… millions of micro-moments of connection and mutuality. If we are truly lucky…These are the things that emerge within the playspace, and throughout our lives, and within this essay, with one other, or several others. (Ah… this salty wateriness in my eyes and a pre-cry twinge in my nose, let's me know I am move-able… how comforting).

Our explicit and implicit memories hold the structure of our identities, through which we accept or reject thoughts and feelings, express or repress our responses to the world… depending on how well we can get into a state of flow… between meaning and pain… and, in that reassuring way, meaningful pain… maybe. Their dialogue dances with words, and the impressions of their parents' roles; absences, neglects, s-motherings. Between ideas of incompleteness and the w'hole-y>ness of accepting the longings we feel, when our parents do not meet our emotional / psychological selves, and when they die. I recall Marc

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Willemsen's observation that loss is a constant… the riverbed under the flowing river of life. That we cannot live without experiencing it.

The motion between *David's* and *Noa's* explorations elicits my associations of sorrow for their losses, and a joy in the sharing of these… an appreciation of their generosity to articulate the incomplete-able-ness of Being for the reader. As I read their encounters in *red* and *blue*, I felt the t^space… what is not there… and was somehow lifted up.

A little, younger part in me is in touch with Noa's mother's wish to protect Noa from experiencing (or expressing) pain or deficit after her father died… and the inherited determination to not be 'without' – be it shampoo or her generosity toward other people (she used to not want to be late, or messy, or in need of empathic accommodation and support).

I feel into the helplessness we can experience, as part of our human condition. If we are separated from another with whom we have bonded, we experience excruciating pain when we cannot touch or be touched by them, never smell their scent in our noses or feel their body's warmth on our skin… when our longing for them, or our calling out for them, will not result in their return.

I guess the fear is that this pain will go on forever, at the level of intensity that makes it difficult to get through a day… or even, to go on living (pause here, little one… we don't have to rush through these… you have feelings about this stuff, and that connects us all.)

Is it a process of resolution that emerges in the playspace, when we portray that primal, screaming outrage that a loved one is well and truly gone, but begin to play with it? To have our experience of helplessness, but not be helpless? Does it somehow change our chemical make-up, that we retain our physiological (and psychological) integrity during that moment when we enact our becoming, being, atrophying, dissolving, and ending… and we face that void - they are gone - from our physical world… but *we* continue…?

"Something *always* emerges from the void," I fondly remember David telling me at a training day. What a seriously, good relief that was to hear. Where there was once someone with whom we shared spoken and unspoken connections and disconnections, they return in play, with our feelings of their presence and absence living within us! Isn't that some kind of transformation of energy that cannot be created or destroyed – that's science, right? Yes, as long as we are not creating the illusion that we have transcended humanity, for too long!

My yoga instructor says: "Breathe into the areas that need the support, so you can go deeper…," pull it in…heart pumping whether you want it or not…

oxygenating your cells, even though you cannot control where your blood flows inside your veins…it is happening…you are living…for as long as you will be here, you will be here.

Noa and David's play with words and images steward the emergence of trust in a process that we cannot always perceive, while we are immersively rumbling around inside it… As fleeting as our delight and joy may be, so too is our pain and despair. Welcome to the ride: bring tissues.

Being in the Playspace

Margot Lambregts[1]

Author's Certification of Brokenness

Well...I wrote this only in order to graduate; describing a training therapy session. As a small part of a much longer paper. It never came to my mind that anyone would think to make an article out of it. I'm still not sure. It's just something I wrote for myself. For my graduation. Nothing more, nothing less. Perhaps it also has a broader purpose. But for me, it is still a session with my training therapist. Vulnerable for me; filled with all kinds of internal thoughts^feelings. Maybe you will see how broken I am. Perhaps you will doubt my abilities. I don't know who you are, maybe a friend^client^colleague^stranger, but you will encounter a part of me. My intention was just to graduate, yes really, just to graduate, and instead it ends up in the Chest of Broken Toys with all the other playthings!

❖

Introduction

I have always said that putting myself into the playspace is important. Because then I can really encounter the Other. But more often I play on the edges where it is easier for me to hide, disappear from the Other who tries to see who I truly am. Do I dare be vulnerable? Do I dare to feel and by that I mean really feel what makes me sad, angry, anxious, or what I long for, what I miss, what I have missed? Once I feel these things, am I brave enough to put them into the playspace? To connect with the other, with myself? To be tremendously vulnerable, exposed. I have tried to hide from my insecurities and brokenness. So they remain covered up. I know I shortchange myself. When I try to put myself, my whole self, in the playspace, I receive an enormously beautiful gift. Connection. With myself. With the Other. With you.

My training therapist, Marjon Wagenaar, with whom I played in the session below, lived quite a distance away. Those train travels provided me with

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dedicated time for me to write down my memories of the sessions, what had touched me and what stayed with me. I was especially interested in those interactions where I grew as a person or learned something about how to be a DvT therapist - both seemed to involve expanding my playspace.

I began by expressing my heart on paper - at first the sessions were minimally described, but as time went on, the more I had to say. I went back and forth between the raw feelings and taking a step back and asking, "What happened there?" "Was that an intervention?" "Why did that moment work for me?" I don't think I was trying particularly hard, but the thoughts just came. Perhaps I put aside my judgements.

I wrote the session notes below immediately afterwards on the train. There seemed to be an afterglow surrounding my feelings, which sometimes changed shape, sometimes grew stronger, as I tried to recreate the flow of the session. Later I read it a couple of times and added a few details about interventions I noticed, but mostly just let it be. Reading it now, the words still hold meaning for me in my process as a person, and in my development as a therapist. I can see the landscape moving past me, and feel the quiet vibration of the train carrying me along.

A DvT Session

> I indicate that I am going to lie down. Hey, there we are on the ground again. As usual. The repetition that often occurs at the end of the session. Yet this is the beginning of the session. We chat a bit and suddenly you call out “dearest.” You deviate, diverge, from my story and its dramatic elements. I am physically disturbed, no longer on my track. Although diverging can be random, you don't use this word “dearest” randomly. Or was it an action interpretation based on my story and the movements I make that I haven't yet figured out myself? Anyhow, whatever it is, I feel a physical reaction: my eyes get a little bigger and I freeze a little. You make a comment in the here-and-now, "oh no, I couldn't have just said this!" I say "yes," and turn on my side towards you, and continue talking. The comment to the here-and-now relaxed me. Despite the fact that I freeze, I like that you said this. You mirror me with a twisting on your side, and look at me. You really look at me. I see your bright eyes and we look at each other. So

much happens to me on my face. I press my lips together, I feel a kind of softness in my muscles. You see me and that makes me shy. I notice that I want to crawl away and push my face into the pillow. You mirror me. This makes me smile and I feel in better contact with you again. I get the thought that on the one hand I think it's stupid that you mirror me, and somehow, also very pleasant. Because to look at me when I hide would be too much. Too much, with your reassuring, sweet and warm look. Such a reassuring, sweet and warm look. Although I might also want this sometime. I don't know. I find it difficult to imagine. I look into your eyes again and I notice our hands reaching out toward each other. Our hands touch. Our fingers go back and forth around together. You say a number of things. I hear them, but I don't really listen. I want to stay with this feeling that I feel now. Or at least did a second ago. You are naming what you see. I notice that I am about to join the conversation, but I don't really want to. This frustrates me. I mention my frustration and make a joke. Another rehearsal in our training therapy sessions. You who talk and name, while I want to feel and be in silence. Deep play. You say, "Let's feel for a moment," and you close your eyes. I don't close my eyes. I want to, but I don't want to. The duality. I can't do it. Instead, I feel my body. You open your eyes again and say, "Oh, you feel with your eyes open." "Yes, I say," and sigh. Again you close your eyes briefly and then peek at me with one eye. It seems like an act completion: "I want to, but I can't because of fear." So you will do it for me. It reminds me of that session when I wanted to bend over while I was sitting on the floor, but I couldn't. Then you did it... act completion. Then I did it too. So who knows, maybe I will dare to do it now. But before that, I briefly detour into who I am: I indicate that people were not allowed to touch my nose, *first*. You ask if I have a trauma from that. I indicate, no. You move your finger towards my nose. I squeeze my eyes shut and you tap on my nose and make a sound. It seems like child's play and at the same time, I feel. I feel with my eyes closed. Then immediately a kind of awkwardness emerges in me; an annoying and a bit heavy, punishing feeling. As if this is not allowed. A repetition of old behavior. As if I'm not good enough. I ask you if you think that's

stupid. You look at me and say, "please, I'd like to see you again." Then I think, "oh this was an intervention!" Or maybe you are just pretending despite the fact that you may have meant it. I want you to mean it. What if you don't mean it?... Urgh... Uncertainty. Frustration. Sadness. Aching. Something changes in me when you are happy to see me again. I can't name what it is that changes in me. It's a feeling, in my body. We look at each other. What you say touches me. I want to get closer physically to you. Then you crawl a little closer to me. This has a name that I do not want to mention. Naming takes away the feeling. Then I will no longer be able to close my eyes at home and sense in my body what I felt then. I don't want the feeling to be gone.

A wave of feelings comes through me. Our fingers tap each other. The repeating elements in the play. I notice a feeling inside me, so touching. I don't really know what I want anymore. It's scary, nice, sad and heartwarming all at the same time. You say, "Here we are again." I am startled and think, oooh noo! This is not allowed at all. We will get stuck in this pattern for too long. Should I be further along, or not? I become overly aware of what I am doing, and my critical disapproving self is on edge, ready to bite. Our fingers tap further against each other. I now find it difficult to make eye contact with you. It evokes tension. Because you look at me, accept me, embrace all this from me. With too much tension I will disappear and then end up feeling sad; punishing myself for not allowing myself to feel or experience...you. It's a crazy feeling. The now sturdier developed healthy adult in me says, "Go on girl, it's okay, let it be." I relax my leg, leaning on your leg. I notice some tension in that move, and try to make eye contact. You look at our hands and tap my thumb. Oh shit, you're looking at me. I quickly look at our hands again and continue playing with our fingers. That healthy adult in me says again, "Go on girl, it's okay." I smile to myself. Again, I look at you and you look at my face. It takes a little longer before you look me in the eyes. Again, I break the eye contact. Not much later I look for contact again. Now I seek it consciously, but I notice that this doesn't do anything for me. Not anymore. I consciously make myself smaller and more sensitive than is necessary at that moment. I don't need it, it feels

stupid and I let it go. So I look for eye contact and maintain it. You smile. I smile. The tapping of the fingers continues. I feel that I want to get closer to you. I'll slide myself towards you. You look at me and say from the here-and-now, "What is going around in your head?" My head is kind of empty, but I have a feeling. My lips are tightly sealed. How should I put words to this? I need to say, "I want to snuggle up to you!!!" Do I dare...? No...! It doesn't cross my lips. Okay, I do want to communicate something that is going on inside me. But how should I put these physical experiences into words? Ideally, I would like to put them on a USB stick and mail it to you so that you understand what I am feeling without putting it into words. Hmmm. I tell you that I find it difficult to verbalize. I smile and say, "yes, I know." I feel a kind of shame around this that I hope to hide by saying "I know." At the same time, I pull my head slightly away from you. You respond with "yes indeed you know your shit." I smile, you smile back. Like you know that I'm hiding. A wave of feeling goes through my body. It sticks. I feel it in my stomach, arms, legs. Again, I want to snuggle up to you. But a part of me holds me back. You're not...what?, you're my training therapist. That's weird. Who knows, you might not want to hear this at all. Who knows, maybe you think I'm getting too close. Who knows, I might think you're getting too close. But I feel it anyway. You don't appear to think this is stupid. How special this is, to feel close to you. How painful this is to feel desire here. Deep play. Then you name my desire and bring your head very close to my head. I giggle and say that this is too close when it is not close enough. Deep play. I say that I don't see you clearly and would like to look you in the eye, though I do not move. I like to look into your eyes. That's where I feel a connection. There I can disappear into the warmth of our pleasant contact.

But I do not move. Instead I feel the longing for the infinity of this feeling. You move your head back a bit. Smile at me. I smile back. Again a wave of feelings that I cannot verbalize. It tingles. I want to hug you. No, I want to be hugged by you. Instead I mention that sometimes you are stupid and sometimes sweet. Why not? You laugh. Fortunately, you say, "you can always think I'm stupid." Immediately I shout "oooohh! and not always think

you're sweet?" You say "yes" while laughing, "always sweet." You then say something profound, transforming to the here-and-now, articulating my internal process most precisely, I think, though instead of listening I think "she is preparing me. This is a rehearsal." As if I know what's coming. I quickly shout, "what are you saying, I don't hear you??" You look at me and say in a serious tone, "I have to get in front of you..." My big smile and I guess my mischievous eyes that betray my playfulness. Now that is a variation in our rehearsal. You smile and say "Haha!" and ask me if I want to leave something behind. Yes, our exit structure! But I notice a change this time: It is easier, the interaction, the vulnerability, the desire, the contact. There is more space. You ask again what I want to leave behind, but I shake my head, because I am waiting to be asked what I want to take with me. I shake my head, because in my head I will permit only a movement. I lift your arm in front of me. Your face tells me that you don't really know what I'm going to do, or in what form I will cast it. I place your arm next to my arm. I shuffle towards you, put my arm against the side of your body and move my head towards your sternum. You stroke my hair and then my back. Again, the feeling...the feeling I want to have for infinity. You say, "Take a minute." You give me a minute when I want to keep this feeling forever. I think perhaps I should bargain for at least 10 seconds longer. Yes, a minute and ten seconds! I know that when you are gone, this feeling does not have to be gone. That you are not this feeling. Then you stand up, you tell me to be careful with my neck when I lie down again. I smile and say "yes." You walk out the door, but strangely I'm hardly concerned with that. Instead, I place the pillows where you were just lying around myself, feeling your warmth linger for a moment. This is different from the beginning. Back then, I could be overwhelmed by you or a person leaving. The mystery and ambiguity of then and now. Now, lying on the ground next to the you/pillows, I feel the ground. It feels more stable, more inside. When you leave the room, I don't disappear anymore, I'm not that overwhelmed anymore. This is now. I know that I am here, with you, and not there, back then. This feeling, this emotion, unnameable and inexpressable, lives in our contact with

each other, that is also me. It's not gone when you're gone. I close my eyes and feel myself, the floor, the pillows, and you. Whomever or whatever the "you" may be. And I see myself in my mind's eye, as if I am taking a photo of what I feel now, as if seeing myself from your eyes, that I know so well.

Commentary on

"Being in the Playspace"

David Read Johnson[1]

Descriptions of therapy sessions are usually written from the perspective of being *outside*, reporting what one might see and how one might speak about their feelings. Margot has achieved something special here: her stream of consciousness rises and falls like waves; there is no description of her therapist or the room or her movements or really anything other than what is actually going on inside her, the "where" and the "what" and the "why" are not to be found in any clear sense. The piece seems neither a poem nor a story, not even a narrative, yet it coheres, it flows, it exudes meaning and presence. One is pulled in.

I do not think one can consciously decide to write like this. I think perhaps one has to give up writing - give up thinking - *about* the session - from the outside. What remains is only the inside, and one simply lets it be. Yet there is nothing simple about this. Frankly, I think this piece will need to be studied for quite some time in order to understand how this was done. What comes across here is an uncanny mutuality between Margot and her therapist, who seems to be inside the same inside that Margot describes; the boundaries between them being entirely undeclared. I got the jitters several times, reminding me of those moments of deep contact in DvT sessions where my client and I both lived in the same present moment if that can be possible. I still do not know how that is possible.

In this piece, the words "I" and "you" lift off the page as if floating in space, dancing around each other... *iyou, youi, iouy*. Amazingly, as the reader I do not feel confused.....perhaps I feel no urge to keep track because I understand what is being noticed, felt, animated and expressed. Indeed the recursive cycle is played out in sentence after sentence:

- *You move your finger towards my nose. I squeeze my eyes shut and you tap on my nose and make a sound. It seems like child's play*

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and at the same time, I feel. I feel with my eyes closed. Then immediately a kind of awkwardness emerges in me; an annoying and a bit heavy, punishing feeling. As if this is not allowed. A repetition of old behavior. As if I'm not good enough. I ask you if you think that's stupid.

- *I smile, you smile back. Like you know that I'm hiding. A wave of feeling goes through my body. It sticks. I feel it in my stomach, arms, legs. Again, I want to snuggle up to you.*

In the Text for Practitioners 3, one of the Beholds states that "there is no outside to existence." But we place ourselves outside of ourselves all the time: to get away from, to protect ourselves, to have power over, to pontificate, to observe from a distance, to witness. Not so much here. Margot calls to us from the inside in a way that surprises. We can learn from this: how do we find our way back to the inside of our own experience?

Margot's attempts to witness her own session constantly break down, as she falls back into her recursive cycle which just keeps moving along without pause, like the trains she rides on after each session, or the stream of consciousness she is floating down on. This is a different kind of understanding or overseeing, for actually, when one is in the river, there is nothing to *stand under*, or for that matter, *see over*. Yes, perhaps she sees the shores as they pass by....she still remembers her own history and knows that she has a life being lived outside of the session....but inside, these realities are but shadows ....as she is swept along in the encounter with "you."

There is no way to know what the therapist actually does in this session, but it seems quite likely that a videotape would not show much at all, other than looking at and away, moving gently forward and back, opening and closing of eyes, saying a few sentences, mirroring, smiling. The timing is impeccable. That two people could sustain this kind of interaction and share its meanings seems, well, impossible sort of, or mysterious kind of, or awesome, definitely.

The gradual emergence of that expansive feeling of the infinite at the end of the session, the feeling that the river flows forever, is touching. Margot expresses so well the feeling of astonishment: to be given a *minute* to hold onto a feeling of *infinity*! How dare you, DvT! She negotiates^bargains for *ten seconds more*...and if given, perhaps then *another* ten seconds! Indeed, that is our fate: to live this once, upon a time, within a Time that has no end.

I know now that when the end of my time comes, I too will bargain with God, and ask for *ten seconds more*, so that I can say "I love you" one more time. Margot has offered us a gift here, a report from the inside. It is about love. Listen closely.

The Art of Being in Turn: Dimensional Awareness, Dynamic Presence, and the Making of Dramaspheric Composition

Renée Pitre[1]

Author's Certification of Brokenness

This paper demonstrates beyond a doubt that I am very broken. Part of my particular brokenness is that I really want to get things right. Precise. I want to capture the essence of something and make it known. This is obviously a ridiculous task when writing about DvT, where things have moved, changed shape, disappeared, or become something else by the time someone has found the words for it. Still, I keep trying.

I anticipate everyone's response before I have actually offered anything: the laughter, the teasing, the silence, the polite ignoring. I call this preparation. A heads-up. Discernment. It is probably mostly the doubt and fear from my past, informing the present.

I have always been trying to understand how to be with people. How to remain present with all that is bubbling up for me and still look somewhat human. How to be affected without completely disappearing. How to offer something without trying to control what happens to it next. This paper is as far as I have gotten in trying to make sense of that. Apparently, this is what I am doing with my 45th year: making another attempt at mastering the turn.

Sometimes an idea appears strange only because we are still standing inside the arrangement that makes it seem impossible. Then the arrangement turns, and suddenly we see something else. My comparison of DvT to a French pastry (the millefeuille) seems to be a sufficient test of this possibility, as well as my sanity.

So, perhaps this paper is less of a warning and more of an invitation. Perhaps we can make a committed try together. We can notice what emerges, allow it to affect us, give it some temporary form, and then let that form turn again. Maybe we can spend some time together in the sun. With all our strange possibilities, and pastries galore. Bon appétit!

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We begin in the space, when it arrives. When we have *become* our encounter. The playspace. We all, presumably, know how to do this, for better or for worse:

> We enter the playspace…Something arises…We notice…We feel…We animate….We express…Player and playor are both engaged in this activity…These processes overlap and recur, looping around and around until, 'take a minute'.

The recursive cycle is the engine of the encounter. We cannot do much without it. This is where my questions begin. What happens to all of that expression once it has occurred? An expression does not simply disappear when the next expression begins.

A gesture leaves something behind.
An image may return.
A role changes a relationship.
A silence alters what becomes possible.

But it is not quite the same material anymore. It is not fully new. It is not fully old. It has happened between us now. It has been felt, responded to, ignored, transformed, repeated, contradicted, or allowed to hang there for a while.

The playspace is not constant. It moves. The frame shifts. The relationship shifts. The dramatic material shifts. The shape of the encounter itself changes while we are inside it.

The Dramasphere

The Dramasphere was developed to describe the complex, multidimensional terrain of the DvT playspace (Pitre, 2020). Developed through constructivist grounded theory with experienced DvT practitioners, it offers an image of therapeutic space as a dimensional field shaped through the interaction of structure, expression, and relational movement. It was never intended as another model of treatment, but rather as an image large enough to hold the multiplicity of what practitioners seem to be experiencing without flattening it into a sequence.

The concept of the sphere allowed me to imagine transformation as something circulating through shifting relationships rather than progressing neatly through stages. Things can move forward, back, around, underneath. Something

can disappear for a while and return later. Multiple things can be happening at once. The work remains dimensional without having to become orderly. The playspace, then, is not an empty container into which drama is placed. There is a climate to it. A quality. Something developing between and around the people within it.

In my earlier research, practitioners repeatedly spoke about how it feels to be in the playspace. Silence, rhythm, movement, proximity, image, tone, and relationship all participate in creating an atmosphere that can both hold the encounter and shape what becomes possible within it. So, dramasphere is about the living dimensional ecology of the encounter.

Both people arrive with lives that began long before this particular encounter. Histories. Bodies. Relationships. Memories. Expectations. Context. Things that happened this morning. Things that happened twenty years ago. Things that may become relevant and things that may never enter the play at all. Entering the playspace does not erase any of that. We remain people-in-context while also becoming something together.

More recently, David Read Johnson has offered another piece of DvT language that helps give greater specificity to what is moving within this ecology: the *expressive field.* Johnson (tfP3, 2025) describes an expressive field as closely surrounding each person and extending beyond the boundaries of the body. Importantly, it is not proposed as an abstract or invisible field. It is observable in behavior and consists of partially formed bits of experience^imagery^impulse surrounding the person's intended representations. Johnson identifies three primary aspects of the expressive field:

> "*t' space:* the rejected or relinquished possibilities that accompany an action or expression; *emergent imagery:* newly arising ideas, images, and urges moving toward expression; and the *adaptive shield:* the shifting protective^connecting structures through which the person responds to the Other."

These aspects operate somewhat independently while remaining simultaneously present. Johnson also leaves the field deliberately unfinished, noting that there are likely other things still moving around within it that have yet to be discovered.

The expressive field gives us a way to look closely at what is gathering around each person without reducing that person to the representation they are currently performing. And importantly for what I am trying to trace here, the field itself is always moving.

Something has just been relinquished.
Something else is beginning to form.
Something opens.
Something protects.
Something responds to what the Other has just done.

The expressive field is not simply a cloud of content surrounding a stationary person. It moves with the encounter. Johnson even locates its different aspects in relation to action: t' space becomes particularly observable just after an expression, emergent imagery just before the next one, and elements of the adaptive shield in the player's response to the playor. This begins to place the expressive field very close to the recursive movement (Johnson, 2013): noticing → feeling → animating → expressing → …

The dramasphere represents both a culmination and a beginning. The sphere makes visible the simultaneous structural, expressive, embodied, and relational dimensions of the encounter. But making the environment visible also makes another problem visible. There is still so much happening *inside it.*

In a later conversation with Johnson about whether DvT needs theory, I returned directly to this limitation: the dramasphere no longer feels like the thing itself, or the only piece, but one way of making part of the encounter visible (Johnson, 2025). The sphere provides a place to put the complexity, but not what is happening to all of it.

The expressive field reveals the motion surrounding each person. There is some surrender in it all. Images are emerging. Protections and openings are shifting. Player and playor are responding to one another while the recursive cycle continues to generate expression. But that brings us back to the gesture. The image. The role. The silence. What happens to these once they have happened? Perhaps each DvT encounter can become its own work of dramatic art, creating a *dramaspheric composition.* The composition is not simply something that exists at the end of the encounter. It is continually being made while we are inside it. Expressions form, influence what is already there, and alter what happens next. The encounter is not merely holding all of these things; it is *composing* with them.
What Happens to What We Make?

An expression does not disappear because another one arrives. Something has happened between us, and what becomes possible next is no longer quite the same. The expression enters an encounter already filled with what has happened before, and the whole thing keeps moving. Expression becomes material. Maybe more precisely, *expression joins the material already in motion.* There is so much

material. Some of it has just arrived. Some of it has been around for a while. Some of it may have disappeared from view and suddenly becomes relevant again because of one look, one sound, one movement, one completely unexpected thing. Some of it remains barely graspable. Some may never become explicit at all. This is where composition becomes different from simple accumulation. The encounter is not collecting material. New material does not arrive, take a number, and politely stand beside everything that came before it; rather, it affects the arrangement. A gesture may bring an earlier image forward. A role may push something else into the background. A sound may connect two things that had seemed unrelated. Something may deepen. Something may loosen. Something may disappear. Something may return differently. An expression can even change how we understand something that has already happened.

Pendzik's (2008) concept of *dramatic resonances* gives us some nearby language. Dramatic resonances remain connected to an earlier stimulus while extending, deepening, or transforming what can be made from it. They are not simply repetitions or reflections of what came before. Something persists, but it persists differently.

Complexity theory offers another useful way in (Lansing, 2003; Shapiro, 2015). In nonlinear, self-organizing systems, change may emerge through the interaction of many small movements rather than one central directing action. DvT feels deeply familiar from that angle. A slight change in rhythm, a glance, a hand that does not move, or something introduced much earlier can reorganize what becomes possible without ever announcing itself as the "important moment."

The dramasphere holds dimensionality and movement together; the possibilities within it are almost kaleidoscopic in their number and combination. The dramatic relationship, its various dimensions, and its interwoven layers continually form and re-form through the encounter (Pitre, 2020). It becomes a composition, or better yet, a composing. Each recursive cycle contributes something, and each new expression enters in relation to what is already there. It may bring something forward, push something back, connect, deepen, release, transform, or change the meaning of something that came before. The whole is never quite the same whole twice. An image can return and no longer mean what it meant when it first appeared. A role can be altered by something that happened outside of the role. A silence may acquire meaning because of what preceded it. Something seemingly incidental may suddenly become central. Something that felt central may simply disappear.

When I try to imagine this, something accumulating without becoming fixed, earlier material remaining available while being continually repositioned, foregrounded, backgrounded, connected, and transformed, I imagine layers.

Within the Layers: The Millefeuille

When I imagine the dramaspheric composition, not only as a whole, but as something continually being made, my mind does not give me a stack of paper; it gives me a *millefeuille*. Why a millefeuille? A millefeuille is made by the repeated working of material. Folding. Turning. Resting. Pressure. Heat. More resting. More assembling. What begins as separate ingredients is worked again and again until the distinctions among them remain, but their relationship to one another has changed. That feels much closer to what I am trying to describe. Millefeuille highlights the dramaspheric composition as layered, accumulating, and recursively reorganized.

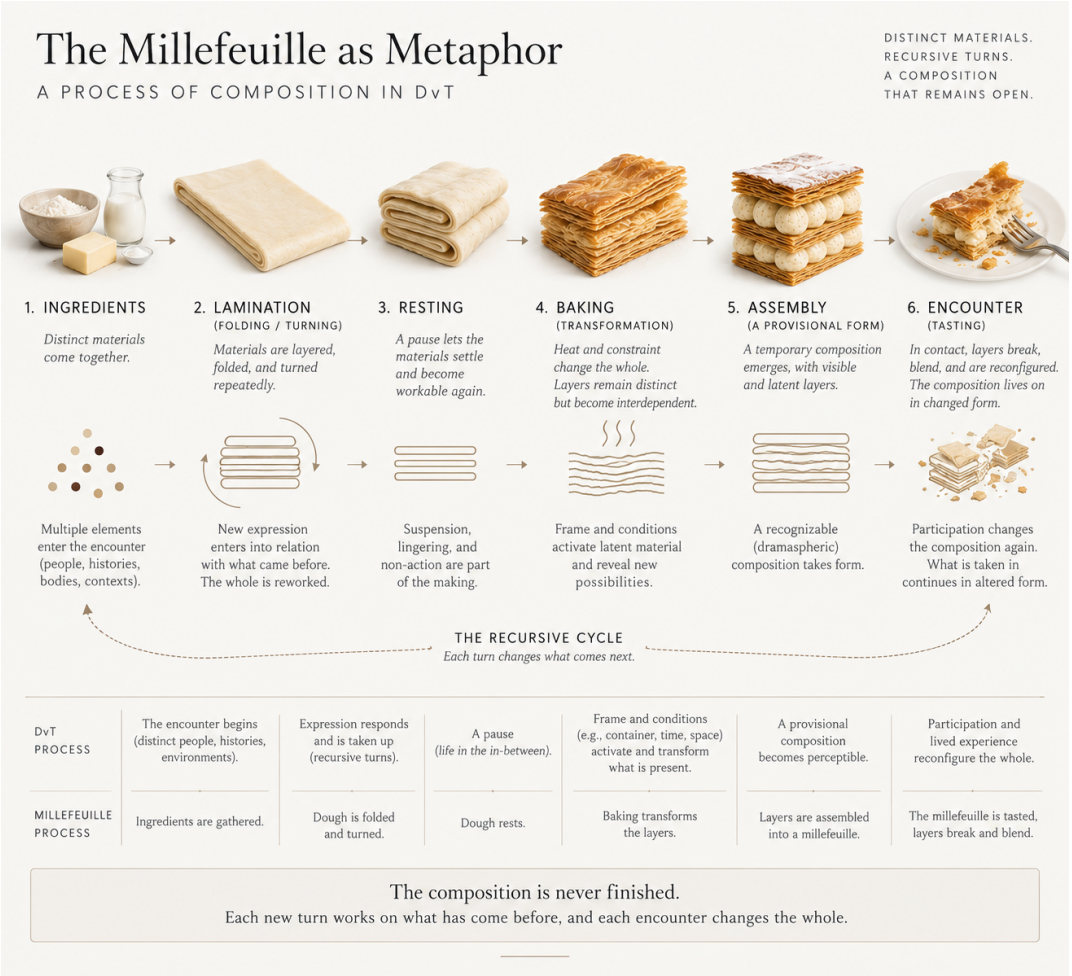
The Millefeuille is not a static stack. Its layers remain available. They move forward and backward in significance, enter new relationships, and retain traces of where they have been. Something arriving later may alter how an earlier layer is experienced. Something central may recede almost entirely. The layers accumulate, but accumulation alone is not the point. They are continually being worked. Consider the ingredients. Different things enter with different properties. They do not become interchangeable simply because they are now part of the same composition. A sensation is not an image. An image is not a role. A role is not a relationship. A memory is not the frame. A silence is not a nothing. Each arrives as itself, with its own qualities, histories, affordances, intensities, and possibilities. Then it encounters everything else that is already there.

Then comes the folding, or more accurately, the *turn*. A turn does not simply add another layer to the top. It works the existing material again. What was beside something may now be folded into relation with it. What had been distant may become adjacent. Something hidden may move closer to the surface. Something prominent may become tucked inside. The whole packet changes. Then, importantly, you stop. You rest it. Because rest is not what happens when the making has failed. Rest is part of the making. Sometimes the material needs to be left alone long enough for what has already happened to matter. I think we know this in DvT. There are moments when another move is exactly what is needed. Then there are moments when another move is just…another move. Something may need to linger. A silence may need to remain a silence for a second. An image may need to stay where it is. A form may need enough time

around it to become perceptible before we change it again. The making continues, even there. Then there is pressure. A millefeuille requires constraint in order to take form. Without enough structure, expansion becomes something else entirely. DvT knows this too. There is always a frame. There are conditions. Boundaries. Agreements. Restraint. The pressure is not there simply to stop movement; it gives movement something against which to form.

Then there is *heat*. Things respond differently once they are activated. Affect. Surprise. Discrepancy. Contact. Play. Risk. Something that had been lying quietly within the composition can suddenly expand, separate, collapse, sharpen, or become visible in a way that it was not before. The material was there. But the conditions change what it can do. Finally, there is the assembled thing. Except *finally* is probably the wrong word here. Because a dramaspheric composition is never quite a finished pastry sitting beautifully behind glass, waiting for someone to admire its excellent lamination. *We are eating the thing while we are making it*; which seems structurally unsound, but theoretically accurate. In the eating, the layers do not remain pristine. They crack, mix, and are encountered together. The composition takes form only to be reorganized again through contact. What emerges has qualities that none of its pieces possessed independently.

The image changes the role.
The role changes the relationship.
The relationship changes the silence.
The silence changes how the earlier image is now understood.
And around we go.



The millefeuille does not simply preserve the past; it keeps it available to the present. A trace is not a fossil. It can become active again. The millefeuille is therefore both an ongoing making and its provisional product. For a moment, this is the mixture. Then someone does something. We turn again. Which leaves me with another question: if this composition is continually being made, what are we actually doing with it?

Shaping the Composition

How do we recognize what we are actually doing while the play is moving? Each offer carries more than one identifiable piece^meaning at once. Multiple pieces remain distinguishable while occupying the same expression. The term *stacking* had teeth for me, one of several pulls toward what became known, somewhat affectionately, as *ing theory.* That phrase came from my dear friend Marc, during a time I still remember almost atmospherically: *versemuntthee*,

Dutch bicycles, evening chocolate, and late-night conversations about theory, practice, and life. We were interested in rhythm, tracking, movement, and how something perceived might move through us and take form outwardly before we completely knew what it was. Marc called it ing theory. The phrase remains strangely permanent in my mind. Imprinted. Which is, ironically, almost the opposite of *-ing*.

That orientation toward the *-ing* was also underneath my pilot study, *Languaging a Dramatic Conversation* (Pitre, 2019). I was trying to develop language for the making of the play rather than only describing its content. I reviewed videotaped DvT encounters, isolated small segments, and developed a Working Language Document (Pitre, 2018b) centered intentionally on verbs: what was happening in the action^reaction of the dramatic conversation while it was happening. Richard Serra's (1967) *Verb List* was hugely permissive and inspirational: Someone else had found enormous possibility in attending to the *doing* rather than the thing being made.

Serra was hardly the only place I eventually found echoes of these ideas (Honig, 2017; Laban, 2011; Salazar Sutil, 2012; Sheets-Johnstone, 2010). *Shaping* became the larger umbrella, with four original spectrums:

scaffolding → framing
tracing → marking
tucking → blending
threading → weaving

and *signaling*, which I knew was important but also knew was probably a layered process of its own. At the time, I described shaping as taking loosely formed dramatic imagery within the dramatic conversation and guiding it toward further playspace possibilities. Dramatic material could take form, re-form, combine, and create pathways toward what happened next, never in a linear sequence. The practitioners in the pilot study agreed: Shaping was "the way you are creating the play," or "building the play" (Pitre, 2020). The definition that gained the greatest agreement was: "Shaping is a generative process of play creation." They also described something being "created and recreated and recreated and recreated." They talked about course-correcting, tracking, mapping, checking, modeling, holding attention. One participant described the movement as something like an offer and response, followed by another move.

Shaping is compositional activity within the dramaspheric composition. It is part of what we are doing with the material while the encounter is becoming what it becomes. We may scaffold and frame what is forming; trace or mark it;

tuck and blend pieces; thread and weave possible pathways; signal, receive, respond, and signal again. The words are useful. The list is less important. The "-ings" are not a list; they are a way of noticing the making. The gerund keeps us in motion. The word itself refuses to let the action become finished. There may always be other *-ings*. Two that are especially useful to me in this particular formulation are lingering and stacking.

Lingering

Sometimes shaping happens through time. We do not necessarily add another thing. We remain with what is already there: an image, a tension, a silence, a relationship, a strange little edge of something that has not quite decided what it is yet. *Lingering is shaping through time.* It suspends premature closure long enough for contact with a form, threshold, tension, or possibility to continue. This does not mean passively waiting for something important to happen. Sometimes the active move is not moving the material too quickly. Sometimes another expression opens the play. Sometimes shaping is allowing the current one to remain long enough for something else to become possible.

Stacking

Stacking notices something different: multiple pieces of material can remain distinguishable while being held together, both in single expressions and in more complex dimensions and frames within the dramasphere, where they are entangled, mixed, stacked, and reorganized. Within the millefeuille, layers coexist, collide, become newly adjacent, disappear beneath one another, or alter one another through combination. Stacking helps us notice what is being preserved. Shaping helps me notice what we are doing with what is preserved.

Neither lingering nor stacking need to become prescribed DvT techniques. They are provisional words for noticing particular qualities of composition within the larger activity of Shaping. In the pilot, shaping was described as an umbrella, even an underbelly, beneath DvT interventions. In this formulation, shaping is not something applied to the dramaspheric composition; it is part of its making. It gives the evolving composition contour without determining in advance what it must become.

Varielation: Keeping the Material Moving

I am not going to take *varielation* apart and put it back together here. It is established DvT language. Varielation describes the playor's purposeful variation

in response to and around the player's representations: congruent, faithful, emergent, and divergent (Johnson, 2013). It is one of the ways the dramatic material keeps moving. Something is offered. Something about it is repeated, altered, extended, mismatched, moved away from, or returned differently. The representation does not have to remain exactly as it arrived. In fact, the movement around and through representation is fundamental to how DvT understands transformation. What interests me here is what becomes visible when varielation is placed inside the dramaspheric composition we have been building. Because now the thing being varied is not floating alone. It arrives inside a composition with layers.

A variation of one image may touch something that happened much earlier. A divergent response may unexpectedly bring another piece of material forward. A faithful variation may give something enough continuity to remain available a little longer. What changes in the immediate representation may also change its relationship to the rest of the composition. This helps me keep shaping and varielation distinct. Varielation moves dramatic material through variation of form. Shaping gives the evolving composition contour. They interact. A variation may shape what is forming, and the way something has been shaped will affect what becomes available to vary next. But they are not synonyms. One helps us understand how dramatic material is varied and transformed; the other, how the composition itself is being made. By now, we have created a rather busy place. All of this is happening at once. How can either person perceive enough of it to remain responsive?

Dimensional Awareness: Perceiving Within Motion

Enough matters here, because no one can perceive all of it. With the concept of the dramasphere, I was trying to make dimensionality visible. Visualizing the work as a sphere rather than a sequence offered DvT practitioners the opportunity to perceive how transformation circulates through shifting relationships rather than linear stages (Pitre, 2020). The sphere gives a way to see multiplicity without requiring transformation to unfold as a sequence. Small relational movements can feed back into the encounter: a gesture shifts a relationship, a change in rhythm alters a scene, something barely perceptible reorganizes what becomes possible next.

Seen through complexity, the work becomes less about control and more about participatory navigation: process over procedure, responsiveness over control. The task is not simply to decode what is happening or produce the correct

next move, but to sense and then adapt to the subtle shifts. It also requires sensing the quality of the environment in which those changes are occurring.

The relational field has an atmosphere: an evolving, felt climate that shapes what is possible within the play. It is not simply emotional tone, but something closer to the shared experiential condition of the encounter. A space may feel open or constricted, spacious or dense, safe, charged, tentative, playful. These qualities appear through silence, rhythm, eye contact, movement, proximity, pace, gesture, and countless other small signals. In earlier fieldwork, practitioners repeatedly described how it feels to be in the playspace as something that informed timing, pacing, and engagement (Pitre, 2020).

Böhme's (1993) phenomenological work on atmosphere is useful here because it allows feeling to be understood as environmental and shared, rather than located entirely inside one person. Once the dramasphere is understood this way, as an environment rather than simply a container holding two separate people, something important follows: what happens there is necessarily mutual, co-created, and entangled. We are not only perceiving things. We are perceiving relationships among things, and the conditions those relationships create. This is also where an enactive view becomes particularly useful. The playspace can be understood as a living field in which people co-create sensation through movement, gesture, attention, and response (De Jaegher & Di Paolo, 2007; Fuchs & De Jaegher, 2009; Di Paolo, Cuffari, & De Jaegher, 2018). Meaning does not pre-exist; rather, it is brought forth through the dynamics of interaction. That matters enormously here. An expression does not arrive carrying one completely consolidated meaning that the other person then attempts to perceive. Contact changes it. Response changes it. What preceded it changes it. What follows may change it again. The composition changes it. Meaning is made *in relationship*. So, the perceptual problem becomes clearer: how do we become more capable of noticing what is happening while we are participating in its happening? I call this capacity *Dimensional Awareness.*

Dimensional Awareness is a cultivated perceptual capacity for perceiving and orienting across dimensions, accumulated layers, relationships, and transitions between forms while remaining within the encounter. Dimensional Awareness does not replace noticing within the recursive cycle. Noticing names a movement within that cycle; Dimensional Awareness names a cultivated capacity that may expand what becomes available to notice and how we orient to what is perceived. It shifts attention from classification toward perception; from describing *what happens* toward perceiving *how it is happening*. That may

include noticing what has receded or been foregrounded, what is returning or changing form, which layers have come into relationship, or how earlier material has acquired new meaning. It also includes sensing the qualities of the field itself. A change in rhythm. The density of a silence. A sudden expansion or constriction of space. A shift in atmosphere. Something becoming more available. Something closing. Noticing the composition while it is composing.

Perception here is not exclusively visual. We perceive through bodies, sensation, movement, sound, rhythm, spatial relationship, and attention. Dimensional Awareness registers qualities and patterns without converting them into explanation. There is an important limitation here. Dimensional Awareness does not mean becoming an omniscient DvT creature, hovering somewhere above the dramasphere with an excellent view. We remain inside it. Perception is partial, situated, unstable, and revisable. We perceive from a particular body, history, position, relationship, and moment. Something will escape us. Something we barely notice may later become central. Something we think we understand may change meaning when another layer arrives.

As a capacity, Dimensional Awareness can be cultivated. We can practice slowing perception down. We can become more capable of noticing form, relationship, rhythm, atmosphere, accumulated material, and change without ever perceiving the whole. Cultivation is not a reach toward omniscience. It is an expansion of what becomes available to perception and of our ability to orient within what we perceive.

This is where the implications for training and supervision become particularly important. The dramasphere gives trainees reference points for development and offer practitioners and supervisors a way to return to encounters and examine how dimensions combined and changed (Pitre, 2020); Dimensional Awareness makes that possibility more explicit.

Reflective slowing can cultivate this capacity. Before rushing toward, What did that mean? or What should you have done?, we might ask: What did you notice? What changed? What happened to the space? What became louder or quieter? What disappeared? What returned? These questions teach people how to notice. Expertise emerges not from control but from the capacity to stay in relationship with complexity.

Greater awareness, then, should not produce greater certainty. Ideally, it produces greater responsiveness. Dimensional Awareness expands what can be perceived. But seeing more does not yet tell us how to remain inside what we see. Because we are not merely perceiving the field. We are being affected by it too.

Seeing Is Not Yet Being: Dynamic Presence

In *Dynamic Presence Theory (*Pitre, 2025), I propose that adaptive human action emerges, in part, from how we perceive relational environments: the possibility of responding to the particular conditions of a moment rather than relying entirely upon stored scripts, habits, or predetermined sequences. That work emerged partly from DvT and from the observation that relational environments contain multiple simultaneous dimensions of information that must somehow be perceived and interacted with dynamically. Here, I am locating Dynamic Presence more specifically as a participatory capacity. *Dynamic Presence is porous, grounded, embodied relational participation within recursively changing layered complexity.* Dynamic Presence is not another name for DvT's emphasis on being in the present moment. Being in the present moment names a foundational orientation of the practice. Dynamic Presence names something more particular within it: the capacity to remain grounded, embodied, relationally permeable, and responsive while what is present continues to change.

Porous means that each player will be affected. Something you do will alter what I feel, perceive, understand, or become able to do next. I will not be interacting with you from behind a wall of expertise. Neither does porous mean boundaryless. If I am impermeable, I cannot really be in relationship with you. If I become so permeable that I lose contact with myself, the frame, or the present conditions of the encounter, I cannot remain responsive either. Dynamic Presence requires enough openness to be changed and enough grounding to remain here while change is occurring.

Grounded means that participation remains tethered to what is happening now. However, many images, histories, roles, associations, meanings, and layers are circulating, bodies are somewhere. A voice has a volume. Distance exists between us. Someone has moved closer or farther away. The frame is holding, shifting, or straining.

Embodied means that participation does not occur only through cognition. We register and respond through sensation, posture, movement, rhythm, breath, impulse, orientation, tension, proximity, and other forms of bodily knowing.

Relational means that Dynamic Presence is not an individual accomplishment carried out in isolation. I am dynamically present *with*. My participation changes what becomes possible for you; yours changes what becomes possible for me. As we have already seen, meaning itself is brought forth through interaction. We participate without fully possessing the outcome. That is central to what I mean by Dynamic Presence: remaining connected to self,

connected to the other, and available to the relationship; remaining open to being affected without surrendering one's grounding; and responding without assuming control over what happens next. *Responsiveness is not control with better timing.*

Present-Reality Anchors

Because presence can become a wonderfully vague word if we let it, Dynamic Presence needs somewhere concrete to stand. I am proposing three present-reality anchors: *sensory-observable, relational, and frame/safety.* These are not stages or a checklist. They are realities to which a person can continually orient and reorient while the encounter is moving.

The *sensory-observable* anchor concerns what is perceptibly happening now, before explanation is required. A body turns. A voice becomes quiet. The distance between us changes. Someone stops moving. My chest tightens. Your hand reaches toward the chair.

The *relational* anchor concerns what is happening *between*: contact, distance, invitation, withdrawal, synchrony, interruption, tension, mutuality, difference, influence. The same gesture may function very differently depending upon the relationship in which it occurs and what happens in response.

The *frame/safety* anchor keeps participation connected to the conditions that allow the encounter to continue. The playspace is something we are making and maintaining together. Dynamic Presence therefore includes ongoing sensitivity to whether those conditions are holding, changing, or requiring attention.

The relative weight of these anchors changes from moment to moment. One may move sharply into the foreground while the others recede. At other times they may be held in parallel. This is part of how Dynamic Presence remains porous and grounded at once.

A Working Scaffold for Dynamic Presence

One way I am trying to make participation more visible is through a provisional scaffold of eight movements: receiving → orienting → holding → organizing → reconfiguring → testing → coordinating → updating. These are not eight stages through which a person progresses, and they are certainly not another staircase. They are temporary supports for noticing how participation moves: overlapping, recurring, interrupting, foregrounding, and receding.

Receiving concerns what enters. *Orienting* concerns how we locate ourselves in relation to it. *Holding* keeps multiple possibilities available without

immediate closure. *Organizing* groups, stacks, weights, contrasts, or relates what is present. *Reconfiguring* allows those relationships themselves to change. *Testing* lets a possibility meet the conditions of the encounter. *Coordinating* concerns how action becomes possible in relation to self, other, relationship, and frame. *Updating* occurs when the encounter answers back and what we thought we knew must be reorganized.

Receiving may continue while I am organizing. Holding may become necessary again while testing. Coordinating may reveal that I have misunderstood something and need to reorient. Updating changes what becomes available to receive. Updating becomes receiving.

The DvT recursive cycle continues through all of this: noticing → feeling → animating → expressing. This scaffold does not replace it. The recursive cycle remains the engine. It offers another way of noticing what may be happening as someone remains participatory while that engine is running. For now, the distinction I want to hold is simpler:

Dimensional Awareness expands what can be perceived. Dynamic Presence expands how one can participate. They inform one another continuously, but they are not the same capacity.

Like Dimensional Awareness, Dynamic Presence is a capacity that can be cultivated. Dynamic Presence Theory proposes that it can be strengthened through attention, reflective practice, relational experience, and supportive environments rather than understood as fixed or simply possessed. We can become more able to remain porous without becoming ungrounded, hold multiple possibilities without collapsing them too quickly, remain available to another while registering ourselves, and respond from what is happening rather than automatically from what usually happens. Dynamic Presence does not require perfect presence. Losing contact and returning are part of the capacity. Eventually, however, participation takes temporary form.

This brings me to the committed try.

The Committed Try

A committed try is not another capacity. It is an event. A committed try is a provisional expression offered with enough investment to generate form and enough openness to be revised, released, or transformed. Either person can make one. The word *committed* matters because something has to actually enter the encounter. A possibility endlessly-held but never offered cannot become shared dramatic material. The try requires enough investment to take form. But try

matters just as much. The expression is not a declaration of certainty. It remains revisable. It can be taken up, altered, ignored, refused, amplified, transformed, or released altogether. A gesture. A sound. A role. A word. A silence deliberately held. A movement toward or away. Something is offered. Dimensional Awareness helps inform what becomes available to try. Dynamic Presence supports how the try is offered: from within relationship, grounded in present conditions, open to being affected by what happens next. Then the try becomes expression.

Committed Try → Expression → Expression enters the field as new material.

Now the recursive movement becomes easier to track:

I perceive what I can.

I participate in what is happening.

I make a committed try.

The try becomes expression.

Expression enters the composition.

The composition changes.

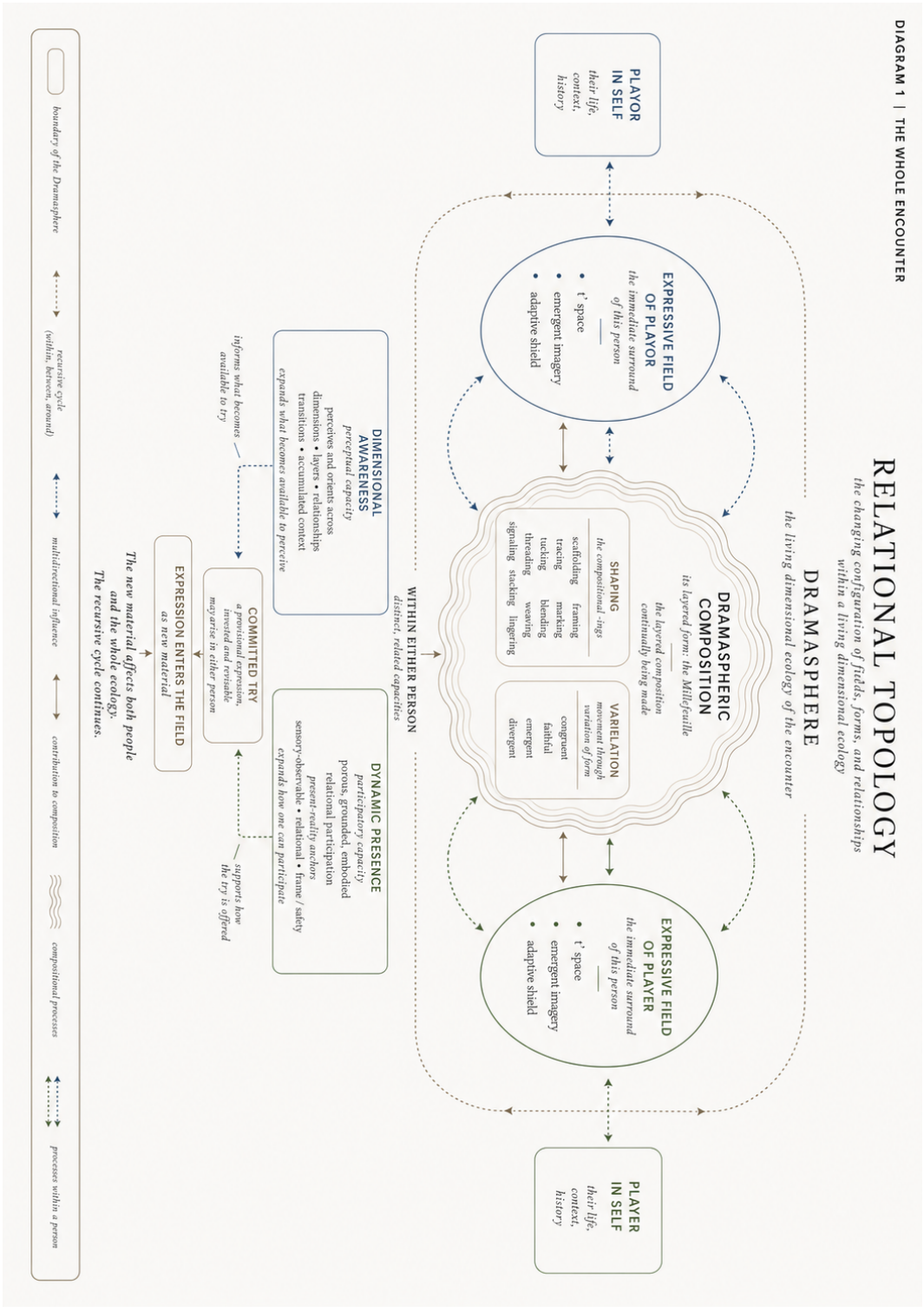
What becomes perceivable changes.

We turn again.

Relational Topology: The Whole Encounter

We have accumulated quite a few pieces. The dramasphere. Expressive field. The recursive cycle. Dramaspheric composition and its millefeuille. Shaping. Varielation. Dimensional awareness. Dynamic presence. Committed tries. I would like to put them together for a moment. Not because this is the *aha* in which everything finally falls into place. Quite the opposite. I need somewhere to stand long enough to get the perspective of the whole.

Relational Topology describes the changing arrangement of fields, forms, and relationships within the living dimensional ecology of the encounter. It is not another DvT intervention, technique, or process. It is an architecture for seeing the relationships among the processes and capacities already described. Like everything else here, I do not want the architecture to become too solid. A map is useful because we can look at it. We can also go back into it, pull something apart, take a piece out, move another one, discover that two things do not relate quite as neatly as we thought, and try again. So let us call this a resting place. For now, the whole encounter looks something like this:



No single part of this diagram owns the encounter. Player and playor remain distinct people-in-context, each with an expressive field, within the living

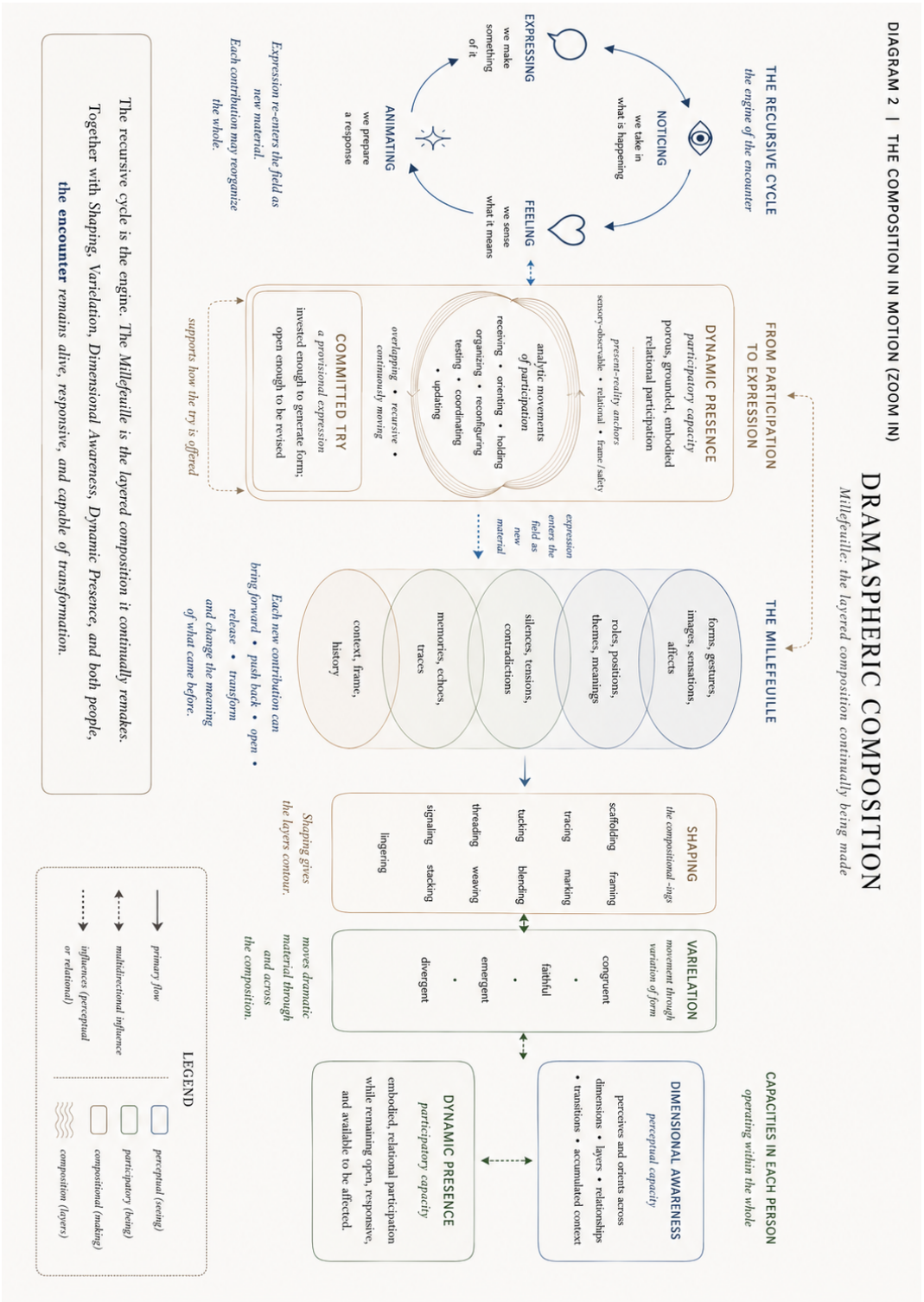
ecology of the dramasphere. Between and around them, dramaspheric composition is continually being made. Shaping and varielation move within that composition, while dimensional awareness and dynamic presence concern perception and participation. Participation may take provisional form in a committed try whose expression enters the encounter as new material.

The recursive cycle keeps moving through it all. Nothing here operates alone. The arrows matter. Influence moves in multiple directions. A changed composition affects what I perceive. What I perceive affects how I participate. Your response affects my expressive field. My response may alter the atmosphere. Something newly emerging may reorganize material that arrived much earlier. The frame may suddenly move into the foreground and alter everything else.

Relational Topology is my attempt to hold those relationships visibly without pretending that the diagram freezes them. It is a topology because the arrangement changes.

The Composition in Motion

The first figure gives us the whole ecology. The second presents what happens when we zoom into its actual workings:



Throughout, the recursive cycle remains the engine. Participation may take provisional form in a committed try, whose expression enters the encounter

as new material. The composition changes, and what becomes available to perceive and participate within changes with it. We turn again. Neither the cycle nor the composition ever really sits still long enough to look like these diagrams. Fortunately, we do. At least for a minute.

The Art of Being in Turn

There is something about DvT that has always seemed to ask more of us than simply being present with another person. We are taking turns, certainly. But *turn* keeps doing other things here. We turn toward one another. We turn with one another. We turn away and sometimes back again. A player takes a turn. A playor offers a turn. A role may become someone else's turn for a while. We can make a dramatic turn: a small act, bit, gesture, role, or offering that temporarily gives experience form. Something happens and, *in turn*, alters what follows. Sometimes we are turned ourselves. Something offered by another person changes our position, our understanding, our feeling, or what becomes possible for us to do next.

There is, conveniently, also the pastry. A turn in laminated pastry does not simply add another layer to the top. The existing packet is folded, worked, and reorganized. What was already there changes its relationship to what surrounds it. Across all of these meanings, *turn* carries movement, relation, consequence, and return. That gives us a slightly different way to understand *being with.* Being with is a relational orientation. *Being in turn* is the dynamic practice of that orientation within an encounter that continues to move. To be in turn is to participate fully in the recursive transformation of self, other, relationship, and dramatic form while remaining available to be turned again. That does not require perpetual openness, perfect attunement, or some heroic capacity to tolerate infinite complexity. We lose our bearings. We miss material. We become certain too quickly. We retreat. Frames require attention. Sometimes the most responsive move is to stop. *Being in turn asks that we remain capable of returning.* This has implications for how we practice, teach, and reflect upon DvT. Training and supervision can cultivate both perception and participation. We might return to an encounter and ask: What became perceptible? What did you hold? What did you organize quickly? What else might have remained available? What happened when you acted, and what became perceptible afterward? The goal is not greater control, but greater capacity to stay in relationship with complexity.

These ideas remain conceptual. Whether dimensional awareness, dynamic presence, or the broader relational topology can be reliably taught, observed, or

studied requires further inquiry. What I am offering here is language for some of the movements I believe are occurring within DvT, and a way of placing them in relationship long enough that we might examine them together. Then, of course, we should take the whole thing apart again! Move something. Lose something. Find something we did not know was there. See whether it still works.

This is not the finished composition.
It is a committed try.

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Commentary on
"The Art of Being in Turn"

Mathieu Van der Straeten[1]

After reading Renée's paper, I went to the bakery. I told myself it was research. I was looking for a *millefeuille*, but my eye fell on something else in the window: *een zwaantje*, a little swan, as we call it in Flanders, in the north of Belgium. I had not eaten one since I was a child. Pastry and bird in one, my favourite combination. It seemed the perfect image for a commentary. Then I did some actual research, and learned that a *zwaantje* is not made of puff pastry at all. It is choux: no layers, no lamination. In the oven, steam inflates it from within and leaves a hollow behind, which is later filled with cream. I bought both.

I will come back to the swan. What moved me most is a question Renée asks halfway through: "What happens to what we make?" Her metaphoric answer is a millefeuille. I think a baker would agree, but have a few remarks.

The first is that laminated dough only works if the butter stays cold. Fat and dough are folded together again and again, but they must not melt into each other. If they do, there are no thousand leaves, merely bread. Heat belongs at the very end, in the oven, where steam lifts the layers apart. Too early, and the layers are lost. Renée writes about the pressure of the frame. But what keeps the butter cold in the playspace? I think it is the awareness of play, which allows rage and tenderness to lie side by side without melting into one another, preserving their individual meanings. Her *dynamic presence* requires us to be porous without becoming boundaryless. Cold butter is rather good at that.

The baker will also say that you should rest the dough so it does not tear, and not to fold too often. Past a certain number of turns, the layers get so thin that they can break through each other, and the pastry no longer rises.

Mathematicians who study chaos have a classic mind experiment called the *baker's map*: stretch a square of dough, cut it, stack the halves, and repeat.

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Each step is simple, yet after a few rounds, neighbouring points end up far apart, and a drop of colour spreads through the whole square. In this mathematics, folding does preserve the layers, but each fold makes them thinner, until at any scale you care to examine, they appear perfectly mixed. So laminating and mixing are not the opposites one might think they are. It is the same folding, just done more often.

I am left with a question: how many turns does the material need? Some material (a rigid role, a fixed picture of a parent) needs folding until it loosens and can move again. A baker will not like this. But with some images, I think, the DvT playor may have to overdo it. Other material (a fragile image just beginning to form) may need cold butter and only a few careful turns. Sensing which approach the material is asking for may be part of what Renée calls *dimensional awareness*.

I am reminded of a young man who brought his father into the playspace. We played that father in every variation we could find: dominant, drunk, absent, clownish, involved, broken, a child himself, unpredictable, boring. Again and again we turned him, and each turn made him a little thinner, a little less solid. Somewhere along the way the father stopped being a fixed point against which every move had to be measured. Only then could we let him rest. The young man said goodbye to him the way one might at a wake: a final greeting, quiet and unhurried. He did it almost like a father himself. I do not think anything was resolved. But the father could rest. He had not disappeared; he had become a layer. And this allowed the young man to begin walking his own path.

Reading Renée's description of dimensional awareness, I thought of an encounter with a short-eared owl. I once went looking for one in a field where I knew it had been hunting. I found its pellets, but not the little fellow himself. I searched for a long time. Suddenly the owl flew up from the grass, less than a meter from my feet. I had nearly stepped on it. Renée is correct that "something will always escape us." But the owl had been there all along. DvT has a word for this: *po'a*, which Johnson (2013) describes in several degrees of absence. There is the *hidden*, which is present but not perceived, like the owl in the grass, or a bittern standing in the reeds twenty meters away. There is also the *unknown*, which exists but has never been perceived. Wolfgang Pauli proposed the neutrino in 1930. It was not actually detected until 1956, and all that time trillions of them were passing through our bodies every second. Johnson notes that this kind of absence evokes curiosity and wonder. That comforts me as a playor. I will miss things in the play, but they are still there.

Renée's reflective questions ("What changed? What disappeared? What returned?") are what I will take into my own work. They teach us to hold a softer gaze without requiring any new vocabulary. Renée does delight in new vocabulary! This paper gathers many words, some new, some newly arranged: dramasphere, composition, shaping, lingering, stacking, dimensional awareness, dynamic presence, three anchors, eight movements, the committed try, relational topology. She offers each of them lightly and invites us to take them apart. But playors, trainees especially, do not always take in new words so lightly. I can imagine a trainee pausing mid-play to check which of the eight movements they are in, as the butter melts.

I confess that while writing this, I fell into the very trap I am describing. Cold butter, a chaos map, an owl, a bittern, a neutrino, a swan: I noticed I was folding one image too many, and the commentary was starting not to rise. When Proust's madeleine strikes, a trace returning exactly as Renée describes, I leave it in the tin. Then again, perhaps the swan has been my madeleine all along. I will be on Swann's Way before I know it.

So back to the swan, and its hollow nature. Po'a is why our representations are never complete. Johnson's example is the family photo: we always feel the need to take another one, because the first does not quite capture the moment…and neither will the second. Inside Renée's layers, I want to place the swan's emptiness. Without its hollow, a swan is just a heavy little cake. I suspect the same is true of a session.

Thank you, Renée, for these rich desserts. Bon appétit!

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