

PLAYING WITH THE KERSLEY PLAYERS: CONTEMPORARY FOLK DRAMA
IN A BRITISH COLUMBIA COMMUNITY
A THESIS IN FIVE ACTS

by

©Jessica Grant Jørgensen

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Folklore
Memorial University of Newfoundland

December 2010

St. John's

Newfoundland

In Memory of

Bobbi Grant

1950-1994

John Grimm

1926-1998

Tom Grant

1962-2001

My mother, my papa and my cousin –
three dedicated Kersleyites

Abstract

Examining the amateur community theatre troupe, the Kersley Players, of Kersley, British Columbia, this dissertation is an ethnographic analysis of the community, as accessed by its theatrical play form. In short, I set out to document and analyze, so fully as possible, a contemporary, original, grassroots theatre and its context. This is especially significant considering that much prior folk drama scholarship has tended to focus on the text-centric documentation of vestigial traditional and/or religious forms to the general neglect of the emergent and the contextual. Further, by situating the field of research in the West, this Doctoral thesis addresses the *underrepresentation* of British Columbia in Canadian folklore studies.

Contextualizing this emergent, vernacular theatre, this dissertation roots the plays and the Players in their community, analyzes the significance of the plays as texts and investigates the dynamics of enactment. Since plays do not write themselves nor do they form or perform in a vacuum, it is apparent that they reflect a place – its people, history, culture, sensibilities and values – and I provide an historical and contemporary understanding of the area in which these Kersley Player plays have developed and found form, not forgetting the fertile setting of the playwright himself, Roy Teed. Indeed, this is an area indelibly marked by its frontier placement and the consequent boom ‘n’ bust development of rapacious colonial economics with its alienated workforce. Considering this setting, the plays’ generic, textual form, namely, farce, and all the thematic elements and characteristics of a so-called “Roy” play, are especially significant, since – through their hyperbolic mirroring of the daily mechanization and routinization of an alienated

working class – they cathartically release those fun-seeking workers. Pulling the spatial and textual contexts together, I finally assess the enacted reality of the plays’ playground, looking at the physical and theoretical grounds upon which this play takes place, joining the Players themselves for the performative process and exploring the conflicting audience-performer dialectic over the years, a tense tug of war spurred on as the Players have increasingly moved beyond their roots.

Acknowledgements

When you live in Denmark, are a student housed out of a Newfoundland university doing a dissertation with research based in British Columbia, and do *not* have any cosmic superpowers of which to speak that can manipulate the space-time continuum or clone yourself, well, you need help. This dissertation would never have been completed without an army of research assistants, aides, and cheerleaders scattered across this great globe.

In Newfoundland, I am indebted to Barb Janes, my library gofer and friend, for the photocopied articles sent my way; to my supervisory committee, Dr. Martin Lovelace and Dr. Paul Smith, for their bibliographies, assessments and critiques; and finally, to my supervisor, Dr. Gerald Pocius, for patience.

In British Columbia, this work would never have been completed without the Kersley Players allowing me to play with them. Heartfelt thanks to Judy Arnoldus, Mary Beningfield, Chris Clark, Becky Dale, Pete Drewcock, Rod and Debbie Grimm, Dave Gunn, Bert Koning, Deleenia Lovell, Gary Minnett, Kathie Prentice, Wayne Wark, and Wanda Zacharias for their time, concerns, photographs, reminiscences and observations. They have been invaluable. There would be nothing to study if it were not for the unnatural mind of Roy Teed, so there are no words to express how frighteningly enlightening it has been to pick that brain. I am indebted to Roy's wife, Pam Crocker-Teed, for her friendship, her ideas, and her ceaseless zest for life; to my father, Jack Grant, for his unwavering support; and to my baby brother, Ian Grant, for assisting in research when necessary. I am grateful to Evelyn Galbraith for computer and fax usage;

to Kirsten Grant for scanning privileges; to Kate Grant for continually keeping me on my toes; to Jules Grant and Melia Sorenson for their technological know-how, encouragement, research assistance, editing skills and ideas; and to the ladies of the Quesnel Museum and Archives, for aiding in my enquiries. And last, but by no means least, my two grandmothers, Carolyn Grimm and Irene Grant, continue to be as feisty and vivacious as ever, and that is a perennial inspiration.

In Denmark, my academic relocation has been greatly aided by the impressive folklore collection at *Det Kongelige Bibliotek* (the Royal Library), which used to supply the now-defunct folklore department at Københavns Universitet. I could never have accessed these books without borrowing my husband's borrowing privileges or enlisting my sister-in-law, Louise, as a book gofer, so thank you. And thank you to Søren Beck Nielsen in the Linguistics Department of Københavns Universitet for helping me get my hands on a *transskriptionsmaskine*. It was a godsend. Working on this dissertation was made easier with office space graciously donated by Lars Ravn. It has been fabulous having a room of my very own, with a view no less. I am also grateful to Line Mussegaard and Hellen Folkmann for their friendship and thesis commiseration (since both have written theses while I've been working on this). Misery loves company, as they say. Nonetheless, the company of my new Danish *familie*, the Jørgensen clan, has been decidedly wonderful, so *kram* to Lars, Louise, Henrik, Troels, Anette, Tobias, Oskar, Kåre, Ellen, Erik and, especially, Annelise, who has cooked and cleaned and babysat.

Naturally, there is a lot of space between Denmark, Newfoundland and British Columbia, so there are definitely people to thank in the "in-between" spaces. In Alberta, I am indebted to my brother, Simon Grant, who has been continually supplying me with the

necessary forms to keep the Student Loan officers at bay. In Ontario, Jenna Olender and Dr. Carole Carpenter have both been inspirational – Jenna with her own thesis writing and PhD ponderings and wanderings, and Carole with her Folklore 6610 class, Folklore of Canada, which sent me and my folk drama research into uncharted Canadian waters. Thank you. And thank you to all those others in the cracks, those friends, family, classmates and associates, too numerous to mention, whose love, support and concern are a powerful, sustaining mortar in my life.

And in even more liminal spaces and places, there are those who no longer house bodies on this earth, but who continue to uplift, aid and inspire me nonetheless: Lance Parr, Dorothy Palmer, Jackie Partyka, Ernie Anthony, Pansy Ollerhead, Tom Grant, John Grimm and the first Kersley Player, Bobbi Grant.

Finally, in my heart and by my side are the dear little people in my life: namely, my son, Elias Ross, whose toothy grin and infectious giggle can illuminate and, thereby, alleviate even the darkest dissertational abyss, and my baby girl, Maren Jane, who is sweet and stubborn and demanding and I wouldn't have her any other way. And I would be truly remiss if I did not thank my own personal Great Dane, my incredible husband, Thure Jørgensen, without whose support, criticism, nagging, editing, kicks up the backside, brainstorming, babysitting and unceasing love, this dissertation would never have come to fruition. Du lærte mig engang dette digt: "Alle disse dage som bare kom og gik – ikke vidste jeg at det var livet." Jeg ved godt, at det er mit liv, og jeg kan ikke tænke på en bedre måde at bruge alle mine dage end sammen med dig. Jeg elsker dig.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
List of Figures	x
List of Appendices	xxi
Act I – The Marquee	1
Scene 1 A Playbill for a PhD	1
1.1. The Acts of the Dissertation.....	9
1.2. Method in the Field Madness.....	12
1.3. A Note on the Process & Product	21
Scene 2 F the M-word!.....	23
2.1. Lolling in Academic Backwaters: A Brief Overview Folk Drama Scholarship	25
2.2. Define Me, Baby, One More Time	30
Act II – The Setting: Where is Here?.....	47
Scene 1 Kersley Unincorporated: An Anglo-Canadian Community	47
1.1. History: Frontier Settlement & Boom ‘n’ Bust Development	55
1.2. The Land & the People	75
1.3. The Society upon the Land & Its Theatre	82
1.4. The Theatrical Season of the Kersley Community Hall	113
1.5. Working-class Worldview: Earth First! Then We’ll Log the Other Planets	130
Act III – The Playwright and His Plots.....	144
Scene 1 Being Roy Teed	144
1.1. The Ugly Duckling Transforms into the Strange Drake	146
1.2. The Gruff Artist’s Straddle Writing.....	159
1.3. Clowning on the Transcendental Cusp	164
Scene 2 What a Farce!	169
2.1. The Meaningful Mechanics of Farce	171
2.2. If We Couldn’t Laugh We’d be Crying All the Time: The Cariboo’s Comic Catharsis	178

Scene 3 Madly Off in All Directions: A “Roy” Play	188
3.1. Prolonged Introductory Nonsense	191
3.2. Shockingly Off-the-wall.....	196
3.3. Contrast	199
3.4. Big Word Babble.....	208
3.5. Break-ups and Make-ups.....	223
3.6. In and Out.....	235
3.7. Gender Bending	240
3.8. I Am. Canadian	257
Act IV – The Enactment, or, Everybody is in Everything.....	269
Scene 1 The Theoretical Playground	269
1.1. Play Theory & the Performative Stage	270
Scene 2 The Players	284
2.1. Recruits & Their ‘Little Bits’	285
2.2. Positioning the Parrot & Peeing in the Pumpkin: Communitas & the Practical Playground Vernacular of the Performative Process.....	295
2.3. ‘At Least It Keeps You Thinking’: Personal Transportations & Transformations	316
Scene 3 The Audience(s)	326
3.1. For the Edification of the Neighbourhood?: Communal Allowance, Expectations, Conflicts & Avoidance.....	328
3.2. The World in a Wink: Binocular Dipopia & the Reading of the ‘Little Bits’	353
3.3. Acting Away: They Took It Further & Got More Serious...373	
3.4. The Big But: The Christmas Play Exception	388
Act V – Lights Down: Dissertational Conclusions and Directions	396
Scene 1 Tooling about the Toolies: A Summation of the Journey to Somewhere.....	396
1.1. Where is Here Now?: Imaginative, Folkloristic and Theatrical Significance.....	397
References	409

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1.	Fanny (Wanda Zacharias), the strip-o-gram from <i>Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step</i> (1990), performing for an alarmed Miles Myers (Pete Drewcock).....	6
Fig. 1.2.	The vampire, Julio Hugybudy (Gary Minnett, left), and the hunchbacked bellhop, Francis (Paul Nichols) from <i>Hotel Hysterium</i> (1998).....	7
Fig. 1.3.	Basil Calhoun (Wayne Wark) exhibiting his sexual perversion in <i>All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round</i> (1991)	8
Fig. 1.4.	A cartographic overview of “the true north, strong and free.”	41
Fig. 1.5.	Map of Canada’s westernmost province, British Columbia.....	42
Fig. 1.6.	Map of the central interior region of British Columbia, the Cariboo	43
Fig. 1.7.	1896 map of the northeast Cariboo	44
Fig. 1.8.	Map of the community of Kersley, British Columbia.....	45
Fig. 1.9.	Kersley sign along Highway 97 heading south	46
Fig. 2.1.	Southern end of Edwards Road – the “business” quarter of Kersley with The Alamo and the General Store	49
Fig. 2.2.	The Alamo Grill or Diner, as it is now called	49
Fig. 2.3.	The Alamo’s motel.....	50
Fig. 2.4.	The Kersley General Store, formerly The Kersley Kupboard.....	50
Fig. 2.5.	Kersley Elementary School, as looking northwest from the mailboxes at the junction of Edwards and Arnoldus Roads.....	51
Fig. 2.6.	New fire hall of the Kersley Volunteer Fire Department, as viewed from the south.....	51
Fig. 2.7.	Entrance to the Kersley Community Complex from Edwards Road, looking south, with the hall to the left and the fire hall in the distant right.....	52

Fig. 2.8.	Looking southeast, the Kersley Community Hall in 2004	52
Fig. 2.9.	The Mud Hut or Pottery Shack for the Kersley Mudhens as situated in the Kersley Community Complex	53
Fig. 2.10.	The arena and former fire hall, as seen from the south across the parking lot from the hall.....	53
Fig. 2.11.	Park, hall and arena of the Kersley Community Complex, as viewed from the south	54
Fig. 2.12.	The snowed-in hall during a good winter blow	54
Fig. 2.13.	Fort Alexandria.....	69
Fig. 2.14.	Facing north, the confluence of the Fraser and Quesnel Rivers at Quesnel, BC.....	70
Fig. 2.15.	The abandoned remains of the busted Quesnel Forks	70
Fig. 2.16.	The scars of hydraulic mining at Quesnel Forks in 1895	71
Fig. 2.17.	The famous Cariboo boomtown of Barkerville before the fire of 1868.....	71
Fig. 2.18.	Pre-fire street scene in Barkerville	72
Fig. 2.19.	Cariboo Wagon Road near Quesnel in 1912	72
Fig. 2.20.	Kersley House	73
Fig. 2.21.	Hockey at The Kersley	73
Fig. 2.22.	Lumbering operations in Quesnel in 1967	74
Fig. 2.23.	Skidding logs after a clearcut in the Quesnel area in 1952	74
Fig. 2.24.	Looking east, an aerial overview of the landscape in the Quesnel area – bush, lakes, rivers, streams, mountains.....	81
Fig. 2.25.	The boreal forest of the Cariboo surrounding Quesnel	82
Fig. 2.26.	Barkerville’s Williams Creek Fire Brigade Hall and Theatre Royal, home of CADA	108

Fig. 2.27.	Occidental Hotel in Quesnel.....	109
Fig. 2.28.	New Cariboo Hotel in Quesnel – the Empress Theatre, commonly called the Strand Theatre, is to the left	109
Fig. 2.29.	Quesnel’s Rex Theatre on the right	110
Fig. 2.30.	Dance inside the Rex Theatre, Quesnel, circa 1920’s	110
Fig. 2.31.	The Legion Hall in Quesnel	111
Fig. 2.32.	Expansion on the original Kersley Hall, circa 1930’s	111
Fig. 2.32.	The old Kersley Hall, as it currently stands disused and abandoned today	112
Fig. 2.34.	Rick Hansen receiving the proceeds from <i>The Dinner Party</i> performances, along with a VHS of the play	112
Fig. 2.35.	Map of British Columbia showing the ten regional zones of Theatre BC	113
Fig. 2.36.	Kersley Community Hall, as seen looking southeast	121
Fig. 2.37.	Addition to the Kersley Hall in 1990, as seen from the north.....	121
Fig. 2.38.	Floor plan and dimensions of the Kersley Hall	122
Fig. 2.39.	Stage of the Kersley Hall.....	123
Fig. 2.40.	Interior of the Kersley Hall, facing west and as viewed from the stage	123
Fig. 2.41.	Bert Koning mounting the lights for the 2004 production of <i>Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrier</i>	124
Fig. 2.42.	Interior of the Kersley Hall, facing northeast and looking at the entranceway to the kitchen and, further along, the bathrooms and the basement	124
Fig. 2.43.	The cluttered and cramped Green Room as seen entering from the stage and, therefore, facing north	125
Fig. 2.44.	Looking from the Green Room onto the stage	126

Fig. 2.45.	The trapdoor in the Green Room.....	127
Fig. 2.46.	Entrance to Studio P in the former fire hall bay, as seen from the south	128
Fig. 2.47.	Sign above the door to Studio P	128
Fig. 2.48.	Facing southwest, the rehearsal stage of Studio P.....	129
Fig. 2.49.	Studio P spotlights and wardrobe.....	129
Fig. 3.1.	Roy Teed's former cabin, as situated on the north side of Arnoldus Road.....	159
Fig. 3.2.	Mr.Tubble (John Foreman) adjusting his g-string after the transmogrifier meltdown, while a suit-clad Ms. Sloan (Amanda Cherry) looks on	253
Fig. 3.3.	The Schickerbickers (Kat Popein and Pete Drewcock) stop bickering to finally make up at the end of <i>The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues</i> (1995)	254
Fig. 3.4.	Pete Drewcock, the director of <i>The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee</i> (2000), trying on a bra backstage	255
Fig. 3.5.	Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn) sporting a not-to-be-missed bra, during a rehearsal for <i>Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step</i> (1990)	255
Fig. 3.6.	The cross-dressers of <i>Lace Drakes</i> (1997), Lulu/Herschel (Wayne Wark) challenging Charlie/Sharon (Deborah Armstrong Borisenkoff) to be a woman, while Desdemona/Frank (Dave Gunn) looks on in his little black number	256
Fig. 3.7.	A Babette-clad Bonecrusher Wickham (Rory Parr) finally finding his Angie (Paul Nichols) in the 2005 production of <i>The Incredible Pickled Pirate Chase</i>	256
Fig. 4.1.	Victor Turner's schematic overview of the interrelationship between stage and social dramas.....	283
Fig. 4.2.	Shelves of stuff in Studio P	310
Fig. 4.3.	From his lofty perch, the parrot observes the 2008 Kersley Player production, <i>The Good Game</i>	311

Fig. 4.3.	Play practice for <i>All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round</i> (1991) in the Kersley Hall.....	311
Fig. 4.5.	Judy Arnoldus and Nick Verbenkov constructing a rock for the set of <i>Strangers on a Glade</i> (1994)	312
Fig. 4.6.	Warm-up for <i>An Evening With Myron</i> (2002), with a table full of chips, crackers and beer, over in an arena room	312
Fig. 4.7.	Dave Gunn getting ready for his portrayal of Pericles Mavenbrook in <i>The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles</i> (1994)	313
Fig. 4.8.	Pre-performance making up of Pete Drewcock by Bobbi Grant for <i>All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round</i> (1991)	313
Fig. 4.9.	Wayne Wark's for-Players'-pleasure-only, undercoat attire as Basil Calhoun in <i>All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round</i> (1991).....	314
Fig. 4.10.	Deleenia Lovell, in full costume, mingling with audience members after a performance of <i>Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier</i> (2004)	315
Fig. 4.11.	The famous peg-leg scene from <i>The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase</i> (1993), as Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett) take a breather	372
Fig. 4.12.	Simon Zeegers preparing for his role as Ernie Bunwallop in the 2005 production of <i>The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase</i>	372
Fig. 4.13.	A Christmas play classic – the entire cast of <i>A Quiet Christmas</i> (2005) stand onstage reading their scripts.....	394
Fig. 4.14.	The elves and Birdwing playing cards in <i>A Quiet Christmas</i> (2005)	394
Fig. 5.1.	When the one being watched throws the gaze back on the ever-watching, clipboard-toting ethnographer and decides to document her instead.....	407
Fig. A1.1.	Cast of <i>The Dinner Party</i>	435
Fig. A1.2.	Felicity Rothbottom (Bobbi Grant) confronting Millicent Primrose (Debbie Grimm), while Reginald Rothbottom (Pete Drewcock) attempts to intervene.	446

Fig. A1.3.	Millicent Primrose (Debbie Grimm) attempting to seduce Reginald Rothbottom (Pete Drewcock)	450
Fig. A1.4.	Charles, the Rothbottom butler (Dave Gunn), arriving with the luggage	450
Fig. A1.5.	Vic “The Stick” Stewert (Wayne Wark) with his ski bunnies (Becky Dale and Wanda Zacharias).....	451
Fig. A1.6.	Charles (Dave Gunn) and Felicity Rothbottom (Bobbi Grant) share a pointed moment.....	451
Fig. A1.7.	Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn) as Doc Spiggot examining Buster Hipchek (Lester Pettyjohn)	452
Fig. A1.8.	An exchange between Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn) and Miles Myers (Pete Drewcock).....	458
Fig. A1.9.	Phoebe Hipchek (Bobbi Grant) reuniting with her old flame, Big Al (Wayne Wark)	459
Fig. A1.10.	The Hipcheks (Bobbi Grant and Lester Pettyjohn) having a dispute.	459
Fig. A1.11.	The famous panty-losing scene, where an unseen Buggers does his business under the table, while a clueless Miles (Pete Drewcock) pours the wine and a shocked Fiona (Diane Crain) is upset, to say the least.....	460
Fig. A1.12.	Humphrey Hurliburton’s (Roy Teed) first meeting with Daisy (Lori Arnoldus), Basil Calhoun’s (Wayne Wark) model	465
Fig. A1.13.	The poet, Myron (Pete Drewcock), meeting the literary critic, Mr. Philistine, a.k.a. Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn)	466
Fig. A1.14.	Basil Calhoun (Wayne Wark) saying hello to Harry (Dennis Holbrook)	466
Fig. A1.15.	Buggers (Dave Gunn) making the acquaintance of Daisy (Lori Arnoldus), while Myron (Pete Drewcock) sips his Scottish tea.....	467
Fig. A1.16.	Mona (Deleenia Lovell) heading off with her match, the bartender (Dennis Holbrook).....	468

Fig. A1.17.	Tooley's (Pete Drewcock) transformation is about to begin. Ackers (Dave Gunn) manhandles him, while Blanche (Maz Holbrook) deals with B. Bertram Bighorn Smith (Wayne Wark).....	474
Fig. A1.18.	Tooley (Pete Drewcock) begins the process of cleaning up to be a proper paramour, with help from Mona (Deleenia Lovell)	474
Fig. A1.190.	Tooley (Pete Drewcock), as the ever-plugging Chicken Merango Kid, is assaulted by Blanche (Maz Holbrook) while Peaches (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), whose creation this is, tries to pull her off	475
Fig. A1.20.	Tooley (Pete Drewcock) as milord, the 17 th Earl of Tooleywood on Avon, no doubt being saucy to Mona (Deleenia Lovell)	475
Fig. A1.21.	Blanche (Maz Holbrook), Miss Birdie (Wanda Zacharias) and Ackers (Dave Gunn) hiding behind B. Bertram Bighorn Smith (Wayne Wark) as the Chicken Merango Kid threatens to do some plugging.....	476
Fig. A1.22.	Cast of <i>The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase</i>	477
Fig. A1.23.	Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett) storming the office of Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn), as Angie Bunwallop (Deleenia Lovell) and Bonecrusher Wickham (Pete Drewcock) look on	482
Fig. A1.24.	The pirate lair with Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark) and his jolly pirates, Ernie Bunwallop (Jarret Hannas) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett)	483
Fig. A1.25.	The pirate wench, Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), greets Bonecrusher Wickham (Pete Drewcock) and Buggers (Dave Gunn).....	483
Fig. A1.26.	Buggers (Dave Gunn) trying to maintain his pirate cover, as Louis (Mike Whalen) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett) question him	484
Fig. A1.27.	Cast of <i>The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles</i> at Mainstage in Cranbrook, BC.....	485
Fig. A1.28.	Gary Minnett stuffs himself into those pants as he gets ready to portray Will-Bill Bonnigan. He gets a little assistance from Wayne Wark.....	493

Fig. A1.29.	Will-Bill (Gary Minnett) with his brassiere and his guitar, as the director, Steve Koning, smilingly looks on	494
Fig. A1.30.	The meeting of Hortensia Fussell (Wanda Zacharias) with her Will-Bill (Gary Minnett)	494
Fig. A1.31.	Pericles “Perkles” Mavenbrook (Dave Gunn) is less than pleased with the camaraderie of Will-Bill Bonnigan (Gary Minnett)	495
Fig. A1.32.	Cast and director of <i>Strangers on a Glade</i>	496
Fig. A1.33.	Marnie (Deleenia Lovell) complaining about the great outdoors to her sister, Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf)	500
Fig. A1.34.	Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf) having a reflective moment	500
Fig. A1.35.	Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf) erecting the tent, as Marnie (Deleenia Lovell) insists on leaving	501
Fig. A1.36.	The Schickerbickers (Pete Drewcock and Kat Popein) checking into their room	502
Fig. A1.37.	The motel nymphomaniac, Daphne (Kathie Ardell Prentice), forcing herself upon Phil Schickerbicker (Pete Drewcock)	506
Fig. A1.38.	Roy Teed as Hugo, the short-order cook	507
Fig. A1.39.	Helen Schickerbicker (Kat Popein) pleading with Hugo, the escort (Roy Teed), to vacate the premises	507
Fig. A1.40.	Craddock, the maid (Mike Webb), preparing to take out dust bunnies and environmentalists	508
Fig. A1.41.	Cast of <i>Har! (The Pirate Play)</i>	509
Fig. A1.42.	Pirates Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), Cuticle Clyde (Steve Koning) and Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark) posing as the family Smith in order to infiltrate the SS Royal Gorge	514
Fig. A1.43.	The pirates, Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), Cuticle Clyde (Steve Koning) and Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark), in their full piracy garb	514

Fig. A1.44.	Dusty Fairweather (Penny Krebs) attempts to seductively snap Captain Jack (Wayne Wark) out of his catatonic state, as Captain Packard (Pete Drewcock) and Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf) offer suggestions.....	515
Fig. A1.45.	Sydney (Sean Morin), Frank (Dave Gunn) and Herschel (Wayne Wark) transforming themselves for the Happy Hunting Lodge Maid of the Hunt Miss Buckshot Beauty Contest.....	516
Fig. A1.46.	Stan/Marie (Kathie Ardell Prentice) carousing with the boys, Cabot McDingus (Gary Minnett) and Sydney (Sean Morin).....	521
Fig. A1.47.	Sydney (Sean Morin) as the helpless Annabelle lost in the woods....	522
Fig. A1.48.	Annabelle/Sydney (Sean Morin) attempting to talk Stan/Marie (Kathie Ardell Prentice) into handing over his/her underwear	522
Fig. A1.49.	Cast of <i>Hotel Hysterium</i>	523
Fig. A1.50.	Julio Hugybudy (Gary Minnett) unsuccessfully attempting to intimidate the no-nonsense Snoggins (Deleenia Lovell).....	527
Fig. A1.51.	Mr. Bog (Roy Teed) attempting to conceal the vampire convention sign from Mrs. Venables (Marty Duffy)	528
Fig. A1.52.	Art thieves, Tunella (Kendra Hesketh) and Roxy (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), capturing a man, the Hot Dog Vendor (Stuart Graham), for their boss, the sexually hungry HJ (Laureen Livingstone).....	528
Fig. A1.53.	The cast of <i>The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee</i>	529
Fig. A1.54.	Donegal Hetch (Gary Minnett) haunting his sister, the witch Gazelle (Anna Arnett)	534
Fig. A1.55.	A Hetch family gathering with Angle-Iron (Mike Giesbrecht), Gerbil (Paul Nichols) and Gazelle (Anna Arnett), as Grimaldi, the cook, and Herpes, the wormkeeper (Stuart Graham and Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), look on	534
Fig. A1.56.	Gerbil (Paul Nichols) being suitably impressed with the mighty war axe, Bruce, held by her frog-transformed love, Ouch (Steve Koning).....	535
Fig. A1.57.	Amber (Christina McLaughlin) observing the primitives, Schmegley (Anna Arnett) and Trog (Pete Drewcock)	536

Fig. A1.58.	Schmegley (Anna Arnett) casting herself on Golombek (Steve Koning).....	537
Fig. A1.59.	Trog (Pete Drewcock) ogles the transformed Schmegley (Anna Arnett), as Johnny (Lannie Mycock), Amber (Christina McLaughlin) and Golombek (Steve Koning) look on.....	537
Fig. A1.60.	Jack (Pete Drewcock) having a conversation with his long-gone friend, Archie (Paul Nichols)	538
Fig. A1.61.	Playbill cover for <i>Shadows From a Low Stone Wall</i>	543
Fig. A1.62.	Playbill for <i>Shadows From a Low Stone Wall</i>	544
Fig. A1.63.	Playbill for <i>Shadows From a Low Stone Wall</i>	545
Fig. A1.64.	Playbill for <i>Shadows From a Low Stone Wall</i>	546
Fig. A1.65.	Janey (Deleenia Lovell) comforting her father, or rather stepfather, Jack (Pete Drewcock).....	547
Fig. A1.66.	The young soldier, Archie (Paul Nichols), talking to his old friend, Jack (Pete Drewcock).....	547
Fig. A1.67.	Florentia Bigsby-Barnes (Mary Beningfield) trying to patiently deal with the intrusive heckler and chair stealer, Heckal (Paul Nichols)	548
Fig. A1.68.	The stagehand, Bruno (Rory Parr), performing spontaneously on centre-stage, as Breeze (Anna Arnett), Florentia (Mary Beningfield) and Myron (Stuart Graham) look on.....	552
Fig. A1.69.	Heckal's (Paul Nichols) imitation of a cat during Myron's (Stuart Graham) poetry recitation	552
Fig. A1.70.	Playbill cover for <i>An Evening With Myron and Tales From Me and Irmie</i>	553
Fig. A1.71.	Playbill for <i>An Evening With Myron and Tales From Me and Irmie</i>	554
Fig. A1.72.	Playbill for <i>An Evening With Myron and Tales From Me and Irmie</i>	555

Fig. A1.73.	Playbill for <i>An Evening With Myron</i> and <i>Tales From Me and Irmie</i>	556
Fig. A1.74.	John Stuart behind-the-scenes as Sam from <i>Tales From Me and Irmie</i>	557
Fig. A1.75.	T. Bannock Muldoon (Pete Drewcock) offering his services to the bereaved widow, Molly (Heather Shippitt)	560
Fig. A1.76.	Playbill for <i>The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon</i>	566
Fig. A1.77.	Ezekial (Gary Minnett) trying on Harry's (Stuart Graham) pants, as Sarah (Jennie Gardiner) watches.....	567
Fig. A1.78.	Bannock Muldoon (Pete Drewcock) using Harry (Stuart Graham) as a tea tray holder.....	567
Fig. A1.79.	Ezekial (Gary Minnett) enjoying Molly's (Heather Shippitt) biscuits.....	568
Fig. A1.80.	Gary Minnett as the simple miner, Ezekial, and Jennie Gardiner as the prostitute, Sarah.....	568
Fig. A1.81.	Cast of <i>Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier</i>	579
Fig. A1.82.	Dr. Pernicious Broom (Sue Mathison) scientifically determining the placement of the bucket with the aid of her assistant, Bridgett (Elodieanne Browning)	583
Fig. A1.83.	Dr. Hercules Pointeteau (Roy Teed) with his devoted hunchback, Gumbelle (Deleenia Lovell).....	583
Fig. A1.84.	The transformations of Mother Broom (Mary Beningfield) and Dr. Pointeteau (Roy Teed) after the meltdown of the atomic transmogrifier	584
Fig. A1.85.	Cast of <i>The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase</i>	585
Fig. A1.86.	Cuticle Clyde (Ron Potter) busting into Buggers' office, much to Angie Bunwallop's (Paul Nichols) horror.....	586
Fig. A1.87.	CJ MacDonald (Gino de Rose), Samantha Brown (Deleenia Lovell) and Charlie Boyd (Rory Parr)	589

List of Appendices

Appendix I	Play Synopses, Casts, Excerpts & Pics, 1987-2008	432
Appendix II	Kersley Players, 1987-2008	591
Appendix III	A Sampling of Glen Fillmore Poems	597
Appendix IV	Sample Consent Form	601

Act I

The Marquee

Scene 1 – A Playbill for a PhD

In which – in keeping with the nature of introductions – the dissertation’s subject matter is duly introduced, the sections are outlined and the methodological guidelines are set forth.

Lights up on an unadorned blank stage. A dishevelled character, BOOB, fritters around muttering incoherently to himself. Suddenly bursting onto the stage are 4 well-clad, but obviously confused, travellers: JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE and RINGO. Arguing amongst themselves and consulting maps, they finally take notice of BOOB.

BOOB

Ad hoc, ad loc and quid pro quo.
So little time, so much to know.

JOHN

Look, can you tell us where we’re at?

BOOB

(Offhandedly) A true Socratic inquiry that.

JOHN

Oh yeah, and who the Billy Shears are you?

BOOB

Who? Who indeed am I? *(Takes out business cards and passes them around.)*

JOHN

Jeremy?

PAUL

Hillary?

GEORGE

Boob?

RINGO

PhD? *(pronounced FUDD)*

JOHN/PAUL/GEORGE

Who?¹

RINGO

What?

BOOB

Jeremy Hilary Boob, PhD (*each letter pronounced separately as he gallantly bows*). The meaning of this degree, a doctor of philosophy (*turning to acknowledge the audience*), ladies and gents, is that the recipient of instruction, i.e. moi, has been examined for the last time in his or her life, and been pronounced completely full. After this, no new ideas can be imparted to him or her.² You see, I've developed a great reputation for wisdom by ordering more books than I ever had time to read, and reading more books, by far, than I learned anything useful from, except, of course, that some very tedious gentlemen have written books. This is not a new insight, but the truth of it is something you have to experience to fully grasp.³ Ad hoc, ad loc and quid pro quo. So little time, so much to know.

The travellers look at each other blankly, shrug, and depart, as "Nowhere Man" begins to play. BOOB returns to his incoherent mumblings and excessive wanderings. Lights down.

There's an old pithy observation, often attributed to Plato, that one can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation. This notion of the revelatory power of play is the basis of this work on folk drama, because, when it comes right down to it, this is a dissertation about play – playgrounds, playwrights, players and non-players, and naturally, plays. It is about play's liberating irreverence, its vital liminality and its potentially spoilsportive contestation and tedium. It is an ethnography of community dynamics – dynamics reflected, mocked, challenged, reinforced through its dramatic play form. Since, as J.L. Styan astutely observes, "the activity of theatre is

¹ The preceding dialogue is from the memorable meeting of the Fab Four with Nowhere Man in *The Beatles' Yellow Submarine* (1968).

² With a few minor additions, the preceding citation is from the preface to Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912, viii-ix).

³ Words of wisdom from the Rev. John Ames in Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* (2006, 45).

designed expressly to touch and involve an audience, a segment of society, *that* audience and *that* society must in part control the kind of activity found in the theatre. Since society gets the theatre it deserves, its drama therefore tells us a great deal about the people who go there, why they go and what happens to them” (1975, 109; emphasis added). Indeed, as Johan Huizinga succinctly states, “All play *means* something” (1950, 1; emphasis added). It is the meaningfulness of play – individually, collectively, communally – which this work intends to explore, specifically examining the amateur theatre troupe, the Kersley Players, of Kersley, British Columbia.

Situated in the north-central region of British Columbia known as the Cariboo (see fig. 1.4-1.8 for maps of the area), Kersley is a small, working-class, Anglo-Canadian community of approximately 400 people. The creation of the Kersley Players, an amateur theatre troupe, in 1987, marked the culmination of years of community merry-making. Everything from picnics to baseball games, potluck dinners to dances, Christmas skits to Halloween haunted houses, has been and continues to be a regular part of community life. Over the years, the local talent who have been drawn upon to perform in these plays has included everyone from teachers and electricians to millwrights and auctioneers, vacuum cleaner salesmen and stay-at-home mothers to high-school students and loggers. All plays performed are original, written by a local resident, Roy Teed, and tend toward the farcical and bawdier side of life. The cast of characters have included cuckolded husbands, ghosts, prostitutes, private detectives, assassins, drunken butlers, hunchbacks, pirates, transvestites, mad scientists, Viking Canadians, goldminers, wenches, flashers, and this is

just a sampling⁴ (see fig. 1.1-1.3 and Appendix I for an overview of all the plays, as well as <<http://www.youtube.com/user/kersleyplayers#g/u>> for a few audio-visual examples). The plays are performed annually every spring and/or fall at the local community hall,⁵ and raise funds through the dinner theatres for various community organizations, including, among others, the elementary school, the volunteer fire department, the Girl Guides/Boy Scouts, the 4-H club, the Kersley Community Association, the Mudhens (the pottery/ceramics club) and the Women's Institute.

In order to gain an understanding of this dramatic form for human interaction and its meaning, I must cast a wide contextual net, situating these Kersley plays within the greater social, cultural, political, economic, historical and ideological processes at play. These dynamic processes are necessarily shaping the play form and its meaning, as anthropologist Victor Turner so keenly observes:

[T]he aesthetic drama of an age can be only partially understood and hence appreciated if the social, political, and economic factors are overlooked. What we are looking for here is not so much the traditional preoccupation with text alone but text in context, and not in a static structuralist context but in the living context of dialectic between aesthetic dramatic processes and sociocultural processes in a given place and time. In other words, it would be necessary to do some homework on the history, social history, and cultural history of the "worlds" which encompass the dramatic traditions we are considering. And also on the history and sociology of the "ideas" which impregnate these dramas. This does not mean any rejection of the pleasures of the text, but rather a refinement of those pleasures through the increased intelligibility gained by study of the cultures in which dramas arose...through an understanding

⁴ Please note that these categories are definitely not mutually exclusive. There have been flashing private dicks (pun intended) and cross-dressing assassins, among many more zany characters.

⁵ This is not including the annual Christmas plays, which are entertainment at the community's Christmas party while kids await Santa's arrival. Emically, these are not considered "real" Kersley Player plays, although they are still written by Roy Teed and often have recognizable and stalwart Players in them. Indeed, the first play Roy wrote, which got the whole thing started, was a Christmas one in 1986. Rest assured, these plays will receive much more attention than merely a footnote as the dissertation develops, although the main focus remains on the larger, "official" spring/fall productions.

of the social and political processes to which the dramas bear direct or oblique witness. (1987, 28-9)

Essentially using Turner's above-listed guidelines as a template for how to conduct a thorough folk drama study, this very long homework assignment (a.k.a. dissertation) sets out to provide a complete a setting as possible for Kersley, the Kersley Players and their plays, establishing a solid base upon which to ground any eventual interpretations. This has meant expeditions into the figurative, literal and, at times, very dramatic Canadian bush, philosophical sojourns contemplating the great doubled ironies of life, western-moving quests for golden frontiers, investigations into folkloristic ur-motivations, odysseys, both personal and communal, and always, adventures and misadventures inherent to playful intercourse. Theorists consulted throughout this journey include, in no particular order, Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, Mikhail Bakhtin, Bertolt Brecht, Johan Huizinga, my dad, Gregory Bateson, Roland Barthes, Linda Hutcheon, Roger Abrahams, Northrop Frye, Michael Taft, Pauline Greenhill, Richard Bauman, Nowhere Man, Carole Carpenter, Sandy Ives and many, many more. My works cited is something of a procedural map.

Since it is expected of such an extensive PhD homework assignment to “demonstrate original scholarship that makes a significant contribution to knowledge in the candidate's field of study” (School of Graduate Studies 2001, 1), the attempt at significance with this dissertation lies in its desire to document and analyze, so fully as possible, a contemporary, original, grassroots theatre and its context. This is especially significant considering that much prior folk drama scholarship has tended to focus on the text-centric documentation of vestigial traditional and/or religious forms to the general

neglect of the emergent and the contextual – a scholastic tendency that will be addressed in Scene 2 of this Act. Further, by situating the field of research in the West, this Doctoral thesis will address the *underrepresentation* of British Columbia in Canadian folklore studies. Indeed, as Edith Fowke acknowledges,

Because western Canada was settled later, collecting there has been, and still is, very spotty. Before the 1940s, the only publications were some limited studies of minority groups, place-name collections, and articles, pamphlets, and books of pioneer life. Since then a few more significant items have appeared, although the coverage of Anglo Canadian material is still poor. Most collecting in the four western provinces has been of other ethnic groups. (1996, 119)

So there is decidedly a place in the folklore scholarship for a BC-based study of an Anglo-Canadian community and its theatre. Indeed, folk drama is alive and well if willing to expand the traditionalist parameters and can be an invaluable point of access into the ethnographic dynamics of a community.



Fig. 1.1. Fanny (Wanda Zacharias), the strip-o-gram from *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step* (1990), performing for an alarmed Miles Myers (Pete Drewcock). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 1.2. The vampire, Julio Hugybudy (Gary Minnett, left), and the hunchbacked bellhop, Francis (Paul Nichols) from *Hotel Hysterium* (1998). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 1.3. Basil Calhoun (Wayne Wark) exhibiting his sexual perversion in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* (1991). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Acts of the Dissertation

In which the five Acts or parts and their ten Scenes or chapters are broken down and briefly summarized for hopefully helpful purposes.

Following loosely the thematic structure of the theatre critic Eric Bentley's book, *The Life of the Drama*,⁶ this dissertation comprises five parts which, in keeping with the dramatic and playful nature of this study, are called Acts. The Acts are further broken down into Scenes or chapters.

The Marquee, as the opening and currently being read Act, naturally has sought and seeks to introduce the subject matter of the thesis, outlining its objectives and goals and situating the work within general folk drama studies and folk drama definitions. Scene 2 of Act I, *F the M-word!*, examines the oft-times, myopic mummer-centrism of folk drama studies and its generic delineations, which have declared something of a widespread folk drama drought throughout the New World (especially in the newest part of the New – the West), furthering the intellectual colonialism apparent in much of Canadian folklore studies.

Act II, *The Setting: Where is Here?*, provides an historical and contemporary understanding of the area in which these Kersley Player plays have developed and found form. Since plays do not write themselves nor do they form or perform in a vacuum, it is apparent that they reflect a place – its people, history, culture, sensibilities and values. Indeed, Margaret Atwood notes that “[p]art of where you are is where you’ve been. If you’re not too sure where you are, or if you’re sure but don’t like it, there’s a tendency, both in psychotherapy and in literature, to retrace your history to see how you got there”

⁶ Divided into two parts, this book starts by examining the various aspects of a play, namely, plot, character, dialogue, thought and enactment. The second half looks at different kinds of plays: melodrama, farce, tragedy, comedy and tragic-comedy.

(1972, 112). Providing such a historical retracing, Scene 1 of Act II, *Kersley Unincorporated: An Anglo-Canadian Community*, examines Kersley as a place, looking at its frontier placement and development, its geography and demographics, its social networks and theatrical endeavours, including the physical structure of its theatre/hall, and, finally, its pragmatic and ironic worldview, which is bred out of its alienated working conditions and colonial economics.

Act III, *The Playwright and His Plots*, is an analysis of the playwright himself, as well as his plays as texts, investigating the characteristics and ongoing themes of a so-called “Roy” play, illuminating the serious nature of farce and the cathartic pleasures of a good laugh. Following the contextualization provided in Act II, Scene 1 of Act III, *Being Roy Teed*, expounds upon the connection between the playwright, his plays and his sense of place. After a brief life history of the playwright, I analyze his clowning cusp position, his interstitial role, within the community, and how this threatening position ultimately reifies communal relations, even as it feeds the comic contrasts so evident in Roy’s farces. Investigating the generic mechanics of farce – its superficial stereotypes, its repetitive predictability, its hyperbolic speed and its aggressive relations – Scene 2 of Act III, *What a Farce!*, situates this form within Kersley and the Cariboo, analyzing the contextualized and comic significance and meaningfulness of this exaggerated genre to the frontier, with its boom ‘n’ bust mentality and reality. Act III, Scene 3, *A “Roy” Play*, localizes the farcical form even further, as it investigates the emic characteristics of Roy’s plays. Relying heavily upon textual examples from the plays themselves, I examine the eight qualities so defining a “Roy” play, namely: (1) slow, nonsensical introductions, (2) off-the-wall shock factors, (3) contrasts, (4) language play, (5) the break-ups and make-

ups of human relations, (6) going speedily in and out of doors, (7) cross-dressing and, finally, (8) their apparent Canadianness. During this textual examination of polysyllabic madness, drag queens and multi-doored realms, the significance of this particular farcical form to its locale is highlighted.

While the previous Acts have set the stage with spatial and textual context of this play form, Act IV, *The Enactment, or, Everybody is in Everything*, puts it on the stage, assessing the lived reality of the plays' playground, looking at the physical and theoretical grounds upon which this play-form takes place, joining the Players themselves for the performative process, including its aftermath, and exploring the conflicting audience-performer dialectic over the years with its double vision. Heavy on the theorists, Scene I of Act IV, *The Theoretical Playground*, investigates play theory, especially as it meshes with performance theory and the theatrical arts. Act IV, Scene 2, *The Players*, examines just that, the players on this playground, as individuals and a collective, looking at how and why they got involved, what they have brought to the play, what they have taken from the play, and how and why they play. Following this investigation into the performative process of the Players, Act IV, Scene 3, *The Audience(s)*, adds a key ingredient to any performance, namely those supporting, watching, avoiding and interpreting the play. It illuminates the controlling communal framework for the performances and demands for fundraisers and farces, which naturally lead to tension between an artistic playwright and his patron, and observes the simmering, intra-community conflict between the Players and the Kersley Musical Theatre. Scene 3 further investigates the double vision of audience members and the dialogic discourse that occurs at performances as audience members see workmates, family members, neighbours, not

to mention all the props absconded from local homes and workplaces onstage doing and being used for very silly purposes. While this doubleness often creates comedic tension, as community roles and play roles juxtapose, it also has the potential to dangerously collapse into a monologic, tunnel vision, especially in the case of many female Players, in which a play role becomes equated with reality and the once playful discourse has very serious and real consequences. Expanding from the local audiences, Scene 3 also examines the Players' increased involvement with Theatre BC and its professional audiences and how this interaction has changed the very play form itself, as well as the Players, uprooting a grassroots form, spawning a group schism and community tension. Countering this serious professionalization and apparent sophistication, Act IV ends with an analysis of the Kersley Christmas plays, a decidedly fun and rooted Kersley tradition.

Act V, *Lights Down: Dissertational Conclusions and Directions*, as the concluding section, acts as a summation of the research, drawing conclusions from what has been presented about this society and its play, and extending those observations more generally into ideas and suggestions for folk drama studies and ethnographic opportunities.

Method in the Field Madness

In which research strategies, fieldwork timeframes and ethical guidelines are discussed, along with all their hiccoughs, guffaws and vexations.

It is difficult to assess exactly when research for this project began. Seeing as the field of study, Kersley, is my hometown, it could be easy enough to argue that this dissertation has been thirty-plus years⁷ in the making. Every saskatoon berry consumed, pinecone thrown, Christmas concert performed, relay raced, work bee attended, Girl

⁷ And, as the years have gone by, the number of plusses being added there has definitely increased.

Guide oath recited, figure skating lesson rejected, potluck dish cautiously eaten, parental story overheard, has been a part of forming my own personal sense of place. And this intimacy with Kersley, its environs and inhabitants, has naturally foddered this study. Indeed, my parents were founding members of the Kersley Players. My mother is communally considered the first and best Kersley Player and my father continues to play the perennial Grinch, Dr. Birdwing W. Bliffen, M.S. (Mad Scientist), for the annual Christmas plays. It is a role he has reprised for over two decades. As the playwright himself admits, “There’s only one Bliffen in the world” (Teed 2004b). So, it is not just the place with which I am familiar, but also its theatre. I have rehearsed lines with my parents, helped cater the dinner theatres, loaned my clothes for costuming purposes, babysat cast members’ kids and even had a brief appearance, at the age of twelve, in a Christmas play opposite my bah-humbugging father. As is often the case with research based upon participant observation, this work is grounded upon years of prolonged observation and ongoing familiarity (although not officially recognized as a potential PhD project at the time), benefiting from an auto-ethnographic intimacy and knowledge.

All this said, it has certainly not just been upon past experience or fluid, ongoing project lines that this work relies. Having left Kersley very much as a girl of seventeen to attend university in Vancouver, I returned nearly a decade later, in December 2002, carting two university degrees and a third in progress. So, with more mature, folkloristically attuned eyes, I came home to live in my father’s house with my older sister, my youngest brother and a veritable pack of dogs. And, like any solid returning romantic hero, home was not the same as I had left it. For the next year-and-a-half, the rosy-hued, self-absorbed, pastoral memories of my youth yoked with a more critical,

nuanced picture of a community's dynamics, developing a multi-faceted appreciation of Kersley and its Players. Having spent my youth blissfully unaware of the adult world to a certain extent, I discovered a Kersley and a theatre, which were home to squabbles, divisions, hurt feelings, tensions, disloyalties and dissatisfactions as well as the generosity, compassion, *communitas*, fun times and dedication so glorified in my memories.

This process of discovery was greatly aided and abetted by my involvement, throughout much of 2003, in the compiling, editing and writing of a Kersley history book, *Kersley: The Growth of a Community, 1867-2003*. Eager to apply my folkloristic training in the *real* world after so many years of ivory tower isolation, I was ever so pleased when I was invited to join the ranks of the history-writing dames of Kersley. The idea of *real* women speaking for themselves was empowering. The reality of the project was muddier and uglier than I ever could have imagined and had me yearning for my clean, ivory tower.⁸ What to do when these *real* women were *really* racist, misogynistic, highly selective, editing out anything they felt was untoward in this “celebration” of Kersley, including divorces, women’s first names, untimely deaths, entire families and years, nearly all non-farming related settlement, and I could quite literally go on and on? I cried, they cried, and my father tried not to show his “I told you so” face very often. An entire thesis could have been devoted to the Kersley Cleaners,⁹ as I have since dubbed them, and this history-edification process. It all ended, though, with the publication of the book

⁸ I know, academics is not so clean either, but that is all forgotten when one is getting dirty someplace else.

⁹ I have this vision of them working like the “cleaners” in a Quentin Tarantino film or something – coming in to clean up after a botched hit. “Mess up your life? No worries, the Kersley Cleaners will make sure that nothing improper will be written down about you for posterity.” Of course, their idea of what constituted a mess differed greatly from my own, and therein laid the conflict.

for the Kersley Reunion in August 2003, a mutual parting of the ways and, in retrospect, a solid source of information and research for this particular dissertation, not to mention some very entertaining stories.

Besides embroiling myself in community and history-writing politics, as well as the everyday Kersley existence, I kept an eye specially focused on the local theatre milieu. With the Kersley Players' 2003 production, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*, I attended all showings, spending time in the kitchen, the audience and backstage, taking notes and keeping a journal, an exercise that continued throughout my time in the field. I saw the joint production between the Kersley Players and the Kersley Musical Theatre for the Kersley Reunion, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley*. I watched the Kersley Musical Theatre's shows for 2003 and 2004, *Annie* and *Wagon Wheels West*, and the Quesnel Women's Centre's 2004 production of *The Vagina Monologues*. Naturally, I participated in the community Christmas parties of 2002 and 2005, appreciating, as always, the good doctor's attempts to foil the holiday festivities. In early 2004, I attended rehearsals for the Kersley Players' *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, and was nearly roped into playing Dr. Pernicious Broom, the wannabe recipient of the Bliffen Prize for Advanced Mad Scientistry, an apt role considering my parentage. As it was, a lack of actors forced the production to postpone until the fall, by which time I had relocated to Denmark to join my lonesome hubby.

All these ethnographic observations were supplemented with fifteen formal, tape-recorded interviews, not to mention numerous informal conversations with various community members regarding the Players. Emails and telephone calls have also been used when necessary, especially after my European relocation. The formal interviews,

conducted in the spring of 2004, with follow-ups in early 2006, resulted in over eleven hours of conversations, a veritable goldmine of data, which has been invaluable to this work. I get all excited and tingly when I think of some of the incredible insights that have been shared. They are truly guiding this study. Recording these thoughtful kernels was a standard-issue RadioShack cassette recorder, Maxell UR position normal, IEC type 1, cassette tapes and a Realistic 33-2001A dynamic microphone. Granted, this was not the most modern or high quality equipment, but it did the job at a reasonable price and I have been satisfied with the end products. The resulting reams of transcriptions were, for the most part, transcribed using a Sony Transcriber BM-77 on loan from the University of Copenhagen. Later transcriptions were tediously done on a portable stereo.

While not mindfully adhering to any transcription methodology, the basic intent with these transcriptions was to simply type out what my informants said. Since this dissertation is not a linguistic analysis of spoken language in its natural, nuanced rhythms, there has been “cleaning up” of the texts for their representation and readability on paper. The housekeeping done on my part was essentially to add punctuation and to delete the standard speech pauses, the umming and uhhing, because I felt that it was detracting from the content when in written form. In general, I chose not to pepper the transcriptions with colourful phonetic renderings of local speech. Besides contributing very little to the actual content of this study, such renderings require more training in phonetics than I have and any attempts on my part to transcribe in such a manner would have been condescending and disrespectful to my informants and just plain ill-advised. Paralinguistic activity, such as gestures, were generally not noted, except when clarifying, interrupting and/or supplementing specifically what was being said, in which case they have been transcribed

using square brackets. Vocal nuances, such as laughter, ironic tones, accent mimicking, emphasis, tempo shifts, have again not been duly transcribed, except when deemed pertinent to an understanding of the content. In that case, square brackets and/or italics – especially in the case of emphasis – have been utilized.

All that cleaning done, it has not been my intent to divorce my informants' words completely from their initial speech context, purifying, standardizing and academicizing them to written blandness. I have chosen to allow the stuttered rephrasings so common to speech, as people search for how to say what they want, to remain, as well as all the little, personal extra words that are spotted throughout talk – the *likes*, the *rights*, the *or whatevers*, the *you knows*.¹⁰ These inclusions represent well, I think, the conversational flow and the interviewing dynamics, indicative of a living, breathing, phrasing-on-the-spot, average-Joe source and not an academic tome, capturing so evocatively the unrehearsed and unpolished nature of the responses, which reveal themselves in many instances to be, like you know, quite literally gems or whatever.

These revealing gems occurred during my generally one-on-one interviews¹¹ held usually in my informants' homes (excepting two which were conducted at the informants' workplaces). The formal, recorded portions of the interviews or conversations lasted anywhere from thirty to forty-five minutes, although some were over an hour and one even filled both sides of my ninety-minute cassette tape. The informal chitchat

¹⁰ And I have not exempted myself and my stutterings, hanging sentences and *like you knows* from this process. I have read transcriptions where, in apparently punctuation-perfect, full-sentence English, a question is posed by the interviewer and the informant's response is a nearly incomprehensible phonetic breeding ground of double *e*'s, *z*'s and apostrophes.

¹¹ I did one two-person interview, a husband and a wife (and a hockey game on TV), but otherwise any other persons (a spouse and a child in two instances) were basically periphery characters who seldom, if ever, said anything.

enveloping the interviews could last for some time, depending upon the gabbiness of myself and the informant and whether or not a house tour was deemed in order. While being open to going with the flow during the interview itself, I did have a standard question schema, which was continually tweaked with each new interview to suit the informant and often reflecting wonderings germinated from previous interviews. The general interview questions included ones regarding: personal background, especially any theatrical interests; the when, why, how of Kersley Player involvement; favourite plays and/or characters, as well as problematic ones; the definition of a “Roy” play and thoughts on the man himself; the role of the Players in the community; changes over the years in self, troupe and community and what this has meant; any communal, familial or personal tension or conflict because of play involvement; and the possible existence of a Cariboo culture.

Selection of the fifteen interviewees was essentially done through my longstanding, personal network of neighbours, family, friends, classmates, workmates, and so on, noting that such categories are not mutually exclusive. As with many small communities, there were and are many overlapping, interwoven and strongly knit ties, which were touchingly apparent during the interviewing process. Nearly all interviews were bracketed – over cups of tea, glasses of water and even dinner on one occasion – with conversations testifying to these multiple communal connections. I saw wedding photos, heard of grandparental joys, shared life updates and felt of the genuinely tender concern for my own family’s well-being. Indeed, these are people who know me as Jess or Jessie, the informal names used only amongst my familiars. In the few interview instances where prior personal connections were not present, selection and contact were

typically based upon referrals from my known informants and/or from the general communal sense that *this* is *the* person to talk to about *that* subject. Unfortunately, or fortunately, time restraints, natural research limitations and a non-PhD personal life did not allow me to contact and interview every referral and/or every Player that ever there was. To have done so would have made this dissertation untenable. As it is, I am satisfied that my chosen cross-section of formal informants represent well the dramatic dynamics over the years. This selection includes: a near equal distribution of gendered perspectives (seven women to eight men); nearly all the stalwart Players, who are basically synonymous with the troupe itself; some of those first Players, who chose not to continue; non-performing, backstage helpers; recent Player converts from the outside the community; and, naturally, the playwright himself.

All these formal interviews and ethnographic observations were complemented with photographs, home videos and archival material. Searches in the Quesnel Museum and Archives provided rich sources of historical material regarding the area's dramatic development. They also supplied historical photographs, which, coupled with the ones found through the Royal BC Museum's online catalogue, lend an historical visual narrative to this work. Hundreds of Kersley Player photographs were loaned from the personal collection of Roy Teed, among others, and these have been scoured over, selected, scanned and utilized throughout this thesis. Seeing as performances are by nature ephemeral, there has been some detective work involved in tracking down as many grainy home video recordings of the plays as possible. Thirteen were eventually located (although there were rumours and sightings of more), thanks to various personal collections, and these have been digitalized onto DVD's by my tech-wizard of a big

brother and a selection of these have been uploaded onto the internet (See <http://www.youtube.com/user/kersleyplayers#g/u>). While certainly not easy viewing, such recordings are invaluable in getting a sense of the performed reality of the words. Apropos the words, Roy Teed graciously provided me with his *Semi-Collected Works*, computer files containing his play manuscripts from over the years, as well as various other papers – playbills, newspaper clippings, workshop notes, short stories, etc. So upon the talks and the observations, the photos and the clippings, not to mention all the books and their theories, this dissertation has been pieced together.

On the ethical front, I have sought to conduct myself and my research as respectfully and thoughtfully as possible. As someone intimately tied to Kersley and its people, it is not in my interest to jeopardize and completely sever those ties. Far from inhibiting or compromising my research, this respect for the ties that bind has, I feel, heightened my sensitivity to potential offences or taboo areas of investigation – the ones often alluded to during interviews and expounded upon when the tape recorder was off. This does not mean that I have sugar-coated the research – far from it. These hush-hush topics of sexual lines crossed and gossipy morsels of honest opinions were, quite naturally, of extreme interest to me, and feature illustratively in this dissertation, but I have sought to handle them confidentially and anonymously. This despite the fact that all my informants signed consent forms giving express permission to utilize their names and these interviews as I saw fit (See Appendix 4 for a sample consent form). I see no fitting benefits in reporting that *so and so* says *x* had an affair with *y* or that *a* says *b* is a prima donna. While the content is illuminating, it can continue to be informative without turning

into a gossipy, hurtful exposé. In short, I use my discretion, as it has been honed by my familiarity, respect and concern for the individuals and community involved.

A Note on the PhD Process and Product

In which all these italicized subtitles, rambling footnotes and cheeky vignettes are justified as fun, as the play necessary for dissertation-writing sanity.

All work and no play make Jack a dull boy. So goes the old adage warning of the effects of the tedium of life *sans* a playful balance. It certainly seems no coincidence that Jeremy Hilary Boob, PhD, stuck in his endless, tedious, half-life nothingness, is an academic, or that the aforementioned maxim should be the infamous repetitive rants of a frustrated writer turned psychopath.¹² Indeed, the dullifying effects of the dissertational process compound, all too often, into a paralytic and parasitic stuck-in-the-mudness or madness.¹³ The brain is such a swirling eddy of chapter outlines, pithy citations, theoretical orientations, oven cleanliness concerns, potential party plans and split-end woes that one just does not know where to begin, or end, for that matter. It's the nature of the dissertational beast, I suppose. This is tedious business. And yet, as a plucky Mary Poppins sings, "To every job that must done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun, and *snap!*, the job's a game."

The element of fun in this work is not simply the subject itself, but also the style and structure. One simply cannot expound upon the subversive pleasures and liminal conflicts of play without granting these play elements room to jostle about a bit in one's own life and work. One cannot imprison irony, humour, farce, play, nonsense,

¹² Who can forget the horrifying, climatic discovery by Wendy Torrance (Shelley Duvall) of Jack Torrance's (Jack Nicholson) "manuscript" in Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of Stephen King's *The Shining* (1980)?

¹³ For a brief, but apt and entertaining discussion on the woes of the vampiric, half-life of the so-called ABD (all but dissertation) PhD student, see Bodner 2003.

transcendental buffoonery, amphibology, alienation effects or dialogism in the cold realm of pure, serious, definitely-not-funny theory. Barbara Babcock argues “that criticism, whatever the discipline, should be considered as comedy, reminded of its playful origins, and reinvested with a comic perspective” (1984, 107). Indeed, such serious explorations of doubleness require their applied and equally important, although, at times, very silly, doubles. I cannot embroil myself in the serious pursuit of a PhD without also recognizing and embracing the utter ridiculousness of the endeavour. I must see both – the seriousness and the silliness, the inherent ironic pleasures – and I simply must come out and play. To that playful end, this dissertational drama is comprised of little, often irreverent, vignettes, which introduce every subsequent Scene, as well as potentially meta-narrative and auto-ethnographic footnotes. There is language play, exclamation points, creative titles, wry comments and, hopefully, humour. I offer no apologies for all these decidedly non-academic inclusions. And if the writing is considered stylistically uneven at times, jumping from levity one moment to jargonized seriousness the next, well, that is probably the schizophrenic and ironic and playful point.

End Act I, Scene 1.

In which the PhD student and author of this work promised to provide an in-depth analysis of a community and its theatre, casting a wide contextual net in order to capture the significance of this play-form, this playground and these players. The author offered no apologies for the rather untraditional structure and tone of her dissertation, asserting that it was integral for her to auto-ethnographically play herself when researching and writing about play.

Scene 2 – F the M-word!

In which this dissertation is contextualized academically by the serving up of quick, digestible overviews of folk drama scholarship's biases and concerns, as well as folk drama's many definitions. By way of warning (if it is not already apparent by the title of this Scene), it is often with great vitriol that the m-word is mentioned.

Lights up stage right, illuminating an archetypal study/personal library – floor-to-ceiling oak bookcases, filled with beautifully bound tomes. (Think Masterpiece Theatre set) Rare and exotic antiquities are smattered about the room. A fire flickers in the hearth. Basking in the warming glow, a lone figure sits reading in a well-worn leather Chippendale wing chair. He is your classic la-tee-da gentleman – pipe, corduroy, tweed, woollen knitwear, brandy glass, etc. The package is complete with a pretentious and glaringly put-on British accent.

Distant crowd noises echo into the room. The man, STEPHEN, stands, placing his book on a nearby table, and leaning on the mantle with brandy in hand, begins his soliloquy.

STEPHEN

(Pensively and pompously) If, on this winter's evening, you were to step away from the Christmas festivities for a quiet moment of reflection at the window, you might wonder, gazing into the featureless dark, if you and your hosts and the other guests having such a gay time were not alone in the world. As a feeling of melancholy rose up in you, however, you would notice a faint glow appearing in the blue sky. Then from behind a cloud would slip the moon, and a silvery vista of hills and hedgerows would open before you – and there, at a rise in the road, you would suddenly see them, as if they were apparitions, and a shiver would run up your spine. The clouds would soon again obscure the moon, but although the darkness would once more be all-embracing, your melancholy would be dispelled, for you would know that they were out there, and you would know that they were coming.¹⁴

Lights down stage right. Crowd noises continue to rumble. Lights up stage left on a cluttered, chaotic mess. Books are scattered and stacked precariously around the cramped room. Papers, garbage and general disarray run rampant. Walls are invisible beneath the bric-a-brac ephemera stuck to them. Sitting at what must be a desk, if one could discern its structure under the junk, is a haggard-looking FOLKLORE PHD STUDENT¹⁵ madly typing away. She is generally unkempt, matching rather perfectly her hodge-podge surroundings.

The crowd noises grow louder and louder, culminating in loud knocking at the door.

¹⁴ Tillis 1999, 177. Despite all the “rethinking” and critical commentary, Tillis bizarrely brackets his book with the most condescending, saccharine schlock, vignettes of “living” folk drama, reverting in his descriptions to the very 19th century Eurocentric romanticisms he’s spent the book railing against. One can hope that he’s being ironic, (because, really, who seriously says “gay” meaning “happy” these days?) but somehow I doubt it.

¹⁵ Any similarity to the author of this dissertation is purely intentional.

ANONYMOUS VOICES

(*Offstage, ingressively*) Any mummers allowed in?¹⁶

FOLKLORE PHD STUDENT

(*Resoundingly*) No! (*Pause*) And if I hear the m-word one more time, I'm saying the f-word!!

Lights down.

"I'm Scottish and German and mad all the time!" So yelled my sister one day, and I too could attempt to use such hereditary excuses to defend my knee-jerk reaction to mummering.¹⁷ I have nothing personal against mummers. I believe in equal opportunity mummering, mumming, belsnickling, janneying, guising, or whatever one wants to call it. People can dress up, slay dragons, revive Turks, snock hobby horse jaws, collect money, ingress, regress, progress, aggress, repress and get wasted all they want. But what I do have a problem with is when folk drama and mummering become synonymous, which seems all too often the case in the folkloristic realm. I take exception to scholars who, despite all their apparent "rethinking" of folk drama, revert to condescending and devolutionary "Old" Worldly romanticisms of centuries past, reducing vibrant, alive, flesh and bone, living and breathing drama to mere shades, unrecognizable and unattainable and skulking about the very European hedgerows. So, despite being a

¹⁶ The mummers' apparent opening line made famous with the 1984 hit song, "Mummers Song," by the Newfoundland group, *Simani*. For a discussion of the impact of this song on Newfoundland identity and culture, see Pocius 1996.

¹⁷ I am assuming here that my academic audience knows of mummers and the mummering tradition. But, seeing as this dissertation is also possibly going to be perused by non-folklorists, I suppose I should give a brief overview of mummering. Taking place during the twelve days of Christmas, mummering traditions can comprise a formalized dramatic performance of a traditional play form and/or informalized house-visits and general carousing. Most common in Newfoundland is the house-visit, in which a group of disguised individuals travel around the community from house to house and guessing games ensue. The masked mummers act uninhibitedly, often in direct contrast to their normal behaviour, dance and/or perform in some manner, roughhouse, drink, speak ingressively, and all the while, the hosts attempt to guess the mummers' identities.

dissertation on folk drama, no mummers have been allowed in. That said, I do utilize some mummering theories and analyses, drawing parallels when appropriate, but, for the record, this is not a dissertation about mummers. I repeat: this is *not* a dissertation about mummers. For folk drama scholars and revivalists of the Old School of Text-Centrism and Ritual Origins, I have just blasphemed and declared my work irrelevant.

Lolling in Academic Backwaters: A Brief Overview of Folk Drama Scholarship
In which the ramifications of the general folkloristic ur-obsession are explored within the context of folk drama, revealing a decidedly m-word bias.

Inheriting an apparent Darwinian predilection to cultural evolutionist notions and survivalist perspectives, folk drama research and scholarship has spent, since its inception in the mid-nineteenth century, much of its time, energy and focus trapped in something of “an academic backwater devoted to the investigation of the quaint and the curious,” as Anne Burson so describes it (1980, 309), perpetually stuck “in its somewhat static theoretical position [while] other areas of folklore have moved on to newer paradigms which fit and encourage newer concerns” (Burson 1980, 309). As such, it has remained “a minor area of the [folkloristic] field” (Burson 1980, 309), burdened with a legacy concerned primarily with deciphering ritualistic origins, assessing geographical relations and tracing textual genealogies *à la* golden Frazerian evolutionary anthropology. This legacy is perhaps best summed up with Edmund Chambers’s now somewhat infamous assertion in 1933 that “[i]t is, after all, the origin of the play, rather than its latter end, which is of interest to the folklorist” (12). Intently paddling upriver to find The Source, with Frazer’s golden boughs as orienting oars, blinkered folk drama scholars and revivalists sought and saw “[o]nly those forms of folk drama with credibly ritual features...to the neglect of those not so endowed...Indeed, the major legacy of the ritual

origins theory, whatever its merits, is the neglect of the living traditions of folk drama that might have been observed” (Pettitt 1997, 208-9) and the “severely limiting and distorting effect on the study of the folk plays themselves” (Pettitt 2005, 17). In essence, what folk drama scholars and revivalists saw was what they got. With sights and generic orientations attuned to devolving texts of ritualistic survivals, they found devolving texts of ritualistic survivals. This is why the use of “contemporary” and “folk” in the same breath to describe drama, as in the title of this dissertation, could be considered by some Old School necrological folklorists to be a problematic oxymoron.

Since folk drama, for much of its scholastic history, has thus been contained within these survivalist, text-centric parameters, it is not terribly surprising that “much of what we should be looking at as folk drama, we fail to see” (Burson 1980, 309). Academic inquiries have been basically limited to British hero-combat plays, religious pageants and ritualistic calendar customs; that is, synecdochically speaking, the dreaded m-word, mummering. A certain mummer-centrism has not only ruled the field but *defined* the field, as Steve Tillis accordingly points out:

What, if anything, is folk drama? The standard answer to this question has often been, either explicitly or implicitly, any performance that is like the Mummers’ Play....The scholars who offer a tripartite division of drama (folk, popular, and sophisticated)...have no such scruples about defining the category of folk drama along the lines of the Mummers’ Play and generally construct that category specifically on those characteristics of the Mummers’ Play that have received the most scholarly attention – an alleged association with ritual, a rural or village setting, and performance by amateurs. It is not surprising to see the category constructed upon these characteristics, for they are the primary concerns – if not the obsessions – of the Germanic and, especially, the English traditions of folkloristics that first took note of folklore as an aspect of culture that was worthy of investigation....Any rethinking of folk drama will obviously need to encompass the Mummers’ Play, but it should not be based, a priori, upon it. (1999, 194)

Since the traditional emphasis on ritual focussed attention “on forms displaying satisfactorily ritual action (preferably a death-and-revival) to the neglect both of other varieties of the mummers’ shows and of dramatic performances under other customary auspices (Christmas feasts, village festivals, harvest homes, lyke-wakes, etc.) which were not so endowed” (Pettitt 2005, 17), even the mummering so defining the field has been distorted. This distortion has been furthered by an all-consuming text obsession, which has left folk drama scholarship, despite its magnitude of research, with “desperately little information on who the mummers were, the character of the households they selected for their visits, what they were given in reward, and what they did with it” (Pettitt 2005, 17); in short, without a context. “Questions of creativity, innovation, and the interaction of person, community, and event” (Burson 1980, 309) have been generally glossed over; holistic interpretations having been subsumed by the persistent, traditional ur-quest.

Such “mummers-or-bust” definitions and concentrations have naturally left folk drama as a dying, if not already dead, line of academic inquiry – “a closed account” (T. Green 1981, 421) – especially in the New World and even more especially in that lastly settled area, the West. Textbooks, anthologies and surveys of folklore in North America have, for the most part, focussed wholly on extant, regionalized anomalies/Old World survivals or overlooked the genre completely, with excuses on par (when given) with those of Tristram Coffin’s in his preface to *Our Living Traditions* (1968):

It would have been useful, for example, to include a lecture on folk drama. However Southwestern drama, the *Coloquios*, *Los Pastores*, is Mexican, or Mexican-American at best and derive directly from medieval Spanish literature; British drama, the St. George’s and Robin Hood plays, is for all practical purposes no longer found in America, in spite of the one or two remarkable discoveries...in Kentucky; and drama that has developed from

and developed into song, game, and festival is easily taken care of in essays on these subjects. (vii)

Jan Harold Brunvand, in his *The Study of American Folklore* (1986), claimed that folk drama is “represented only in the barest survival” (211-12), not “exhibit[ing] much oral vitality since the nineteenth century” (211), the only living traditions being those of the above-mentioned religious pageantries of the Spanish-influenced southwest and the commercialized, Old England mummers of Philadelphia (219). Indeed, according to Brunvand, “[n]o native American folk plays of any significance have developed” (1986, 220). The pre-eminent Canadian folklorist, Edith Fowke, once went so far as to assert, in her *Folklore of Canada* (1976), that “[i]n Canada no form of folk drama has been very deep-rooted or widespread” (153), with the exception, of course, of mumming traditions in Atlantic Canada.

With the shift of the folkloristic paradigm, in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, away from a literary, diachronic system of inquiry towards a more ethnographically, synchronically and contextually endowed model, the lacks and distortions of the original folk drama parameters began to be somewhat addressed. Significantly, Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story’s anthology, *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland* (1969), focused attention on an often overlooked mummering form, the house-visit, providing much by way of contextualization of the tradition as found and practiced in Newfoundland. Henry Glassie’s *All Silver and No Brass* (1975) attempted a reconstructive ethnography of Irish mumming practices. Recontextualizations and re-evaluations of folk drama found form, “turn[ing] aside from the unproductive search for the ‘origins of the play’...consider[ing] instead its contemporary meaning” (Pattison 1977, 5), “freeing the study...from its

inherited myth/ritual overlay” (Cass, Preston and Smith 2000, 5) and basing the research “in the context of the community in which it occurs and by reference to those taking part” (Pattison 1977, 11; see also Burson 1982, Fees 1984 and 1985, Firestone 1978, A.E. Green 1980, Harrop 1985 and 1986, Lichman 1982 and Russell 1981). Yet, tellingly enough, while operating under this new, emergent folkloric model, most of the forms studied continued to be those standardized under the old, survivalist paradigm, namely, the mummers’ plays, the religious pageants, the life-cycle plays, the exotica of tradition’s refuse. Anne C. Burson complains in a 1980 article in the *Journal of American Folklore* that, despite all the apparent rethinking, “our conception of what folk drama is remains locked in this earlier perspective” (306-7) of cultural vestiges and ur-form pursuits. She contends, though, that “folk drama is not a survivalistic phenomenon, but a vital, meaningful, and very contemporary part of the life of many groups” (1980, 310). It is a sentiment echoed in the Canadian context by Pauline Greenhill: “Anglo Canada is the locus of a great deal of vernacular symbolic expression [folklore], and much of it takes place in folk dramatic form” (1988, 197).

By 1981, a whole issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* was devoted to paddling folk drama out of its “academic backwater.” Definitions were written and rewritten. Generic delineations were extended. And one might have thought that this “minor area” of study within folkloristics was finally coming into its own. Yet, despite the so-called “new directions” in the folk drama scholarship with its contemporary and historical contextualizations, there has been little work done within the genre to include works outside its original m-word parameters. As Michael Taft argues in a 1989 article, “The only form of North American folk drama that has received extensive scholarly

attention is Christmas mumming in Newfoundland...and [it] is not even a current tradition in Newfoundland” (1989a, 17).¹⁸ Yet, interestingly enough (especially considering my Canadian context), there have been a few articles that have surfaced which are almost wholly Canadian in content and Anglo-Canadian at that, dealing with regions outside the normal “folklore” zones of Atlantic Canada and Quebec, and examining dramas that are not vestiges of recognized “traditional” forms. Both Michael Taft and Pauline Greenhill have written on the Anglo-Canadian tradition of mock weddings¹⁹ in such provinces as Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Greenhill 1988; Taft 1989a, 1989b, 1997). The apparent ubiquity of folk drama in Anglo-Canadian culture is an understanding that meshes with my own observations concerning the role of drama in Kersley, British Columbia.

Define Me, Baby, One More Time

In which generic lines are drawn and a myriad of definitions attempt to sum up what is dramatic about this folklore and what is folkloric about this drama.

Afraid that “folk drama,” as a term, was about to be “rendered meaningless by the unwarranted extension of its boundaries” (T. Green 1978, 850) by social scientists and their very literal interpretation of “All the world’s a stage,” Thomas Green wrote an alarmist note in the *Journal of American Folklore* in 1978 summoning folklorists to a collective territorial pissing, a definitive demarcation of generic delineations. This preliminary call-to-arms resulted in his assertion that

¹⁸ Although there certainly have been attempts at resurrection and revitalization, mostly for cultural heritage and tourist purposes.

¹⁹ A wedding parody, often held in conjunction with anniversaries, bridal showers and even wedding receptions, in which community members play with gender roles and stereotypes, men dressing as women and women as men.

[t]he label “folk drama”...should be applied only to those performances which incorporate mimesis and role distribution among two or more players and are transmitted by traditional means among folk groups. Given the acceptance of these guidelines, nonperformance role-playing, such as formalized social interaction, would certainly cease to be confused with drama per se. Other forms, such as festival and ritual, that are also play activities and that incorporate many of the techniques of drama may be discussed in reference to folk plays. Since they do not function strictly as performances, however, they must not be confused with folk drama, strictly defined. (848-49)

As the definitions and redefinitions, refinements and delineations, have accrued over the years, what has remained essential to a characterization and delineation of folk drama has been “two issues: what is folkloric about this kind of drama, and what is dramatic about this kind of folklore” (Greenhill 1988, 170).

In querying as to what is folkloric about this kind of drama, the typical response for many years, as has been duly noted, has been its association with ritualistic origins, its recognizably vestigial status. This ritual derivation is just one characteristic of a trio often drawn upon to classify folk drama, the other two being: (2) a rural or village setting and (3) performances by amateurs, as opposed to professionals (Tillis 1999, 131-35).

Consider a folk drama definition put forward by Jan Harold Brunvand:

Folk drama includes plays that are traditionally transmitted, usually for regular performance at such occasions as initiations, seasonal celebrations, festivals, and religious holidays. Traditional transmission...may in this case include handwritten manuscripts. The folklore justification of such texts is that they are variable from region to region and generation to generation, and that they originate in an unselfconscious folk milieu rather than from a sophisticated artistic background. (1986, 219)

What is emphasized here is traditional transmission of traditional works under customary, ritualistic auspices within an unsophisticated folk context. As Roger Abrahams states, “Folk drama exists on a village or small group level...The dramas are given on special

occasions only, most commonly a seasonal festival” (1972, 354). This emphasis on a seasonal, customary context is one that has been more recently reiterated by Thomas Pettitt, who defines folk drama as “[p]erformances deploying recognizably dramatic techniques in the presentation of traditional materials under the auspices of a recurrent social activity of which they are a regular but subsidiary feature” (1997, 205). Utilizing “traditional drama” interchangeably with “folk drama,” he contends that “it is the relationship to context that is definitive of traditional drama” (1997, 207). Elaborating on what he means by context, Pettitt clarifies:

Traditional drama is traditional primarily by virtue of its context and particularly its subservient relationship to that context. The context is recurrent: a set of circumstances whose occurrence prompts a dramatic performance but that do not reoccur for the sole sake of the performance; the drama is therefore subsidiary to the context. A series of dramatic performances, however repetitive in content...does not qualify as traditional if its auspices are specifically theatrical, that is, if the social activity concerned (going to the theater, sitting on the beach in front of a Punch-and-Judy stall) is for the sake of the dramatic performance itself. Traditional drama is always part of something else that would live (if less vitally) without it. (1997, 207)

According to Pettitt, folk drama never exists for its own sake; its drama being folkloric by the very fact it is often housed under recognized customary auspices, reflecting calendrical, seasonal and human life cycles and rhythms. This is a sentiment echoed by Thomas A. Green, who states that “[f]olk drama is customarily associated with festivals – those events that commemorate points of special significance to a celebrating community (for example, Ramadan, Christmas, and Passover)” (2009, 215).

What is folkloric about this drama? Utilizing the phrase, “[d]rama in folk communities” (1972, 351), Roger Abrahams once implied that what constitutes folk

drama is, simply stated, drama performed in a folk group. While definitions regarding “folk” and “drama” have been anything but simple, the kernel of this statement, the notion of an intimate, dramatic performance within, for and/or about a community with its shared reference point(s), a folk group with its common factor(s), has become an integral part of many, if not most, definitions of folk drama. Consider Anne C. Burson’s definition of folk drama as “a mimetic performance whose text and style of presentation are based on traditional models; it is presented by members of a group to other members of the same reference group” (1980, 316). Michael Taft asserts that folk drama, as “[a] theatrical performance given for a specific and cohesive group of people...demands a certain intimacy between actors and audience” (1996, 208). He also contends, not unlike Abrahams, that “any form of community drama performed by locals and directed toward members of that community is folk drama” (1996, 209), whether Shakespeare’s masterpieces, popular musicals or original works. Pauline Greenhill states that “[f]olk drama has no pretensions to universality; unlike other forms of dramatic literature, it is *not* intended for broad, general consumption” (1988, 172; emphasis in original), just local enjoyment. Again, this closeness is integral, because, as Taft ultimately suggests, “[a]ll drama lies on a continuum of intimacy, with ‘pure’ folk drama being the most intimate and ‘pure’ popular drama being the most distant...While the boundaries of folk drama might be unclear, at the center of this tradition is an intimacy and shared consciousness of purpose among actors, directors, writers, stagehands, and audience” (1996, 210). This close connection between audience and performer(s) leads to some interesting dramatic performances and real-life repercussions, as will be investigated in this dissertation.

What is dramatic about this folklore? The obvious answer to this second query is, as already mentioned numerous times, its mimicry, its mimetic devices and its role-playing. According to Abrahams, “[d]rama of any sort calls for the creation of a play world by the players...[and] is primarily recognizable as a play activity, and therefore is closely related to game, dance, and ritual” (1972, 352). With this play model in mind, Abrahams thus defines “folk drama as traditional play activity that relies primarily on dialogue to establish its meaning and that tells a story through the combination of dialogue and action, the outcome of which is known to the audience ahead of time” (1972, 353). While the knowingness suggested by Abrahams is not unique to folk drama per se, again what is being put forward here is the notion that what unites folk drama is “[t]he relationship between the audience and the text, between the community or group and the traditional conventions of the play” (Greenhill 1988, 172). Anne C. Burson refers to these givens or knowns, these traditional conventions, as traditional patterns, asserting that “[a] specific inherited text is not the determining factor that makes an event folk drama; rather, it is the traditional pattern on which the event is based” (1980, 316). Indeed, the folklorist and medievalist, Thomas Pettitt, argues that the textual stability, so heralded in much of the mummering scholarship, is actually “symptomatic of the tradition’s loss of vitality” (1997, 206), since vitality means new plays every year, plays based, though, on traditional/time-tested forms, structures, plots, characters and tones (Pettitt 1997, 2000). Thomas Green, in his refined definition of folk drama, incorporates both the play elements and this idea of known traditional patterns: “folk drama is a scripted performance which incorporates mimesis and role-distribution among two or

more players and which adheres to the traditional aesthetic and communicative models of the performing community” (1981, 428).

What is dramatic about this folklore? Michael Taft suggests that there are three common, dramatic features in all folk dramas: “(1) at least one role-playing performer, (2) a plot, storyline, or coherent scene, and (3) an established ‘distance’ between actors and audience, such as a stage or a space specifically cleared or marked for the theatrical production” (1996, 208). Again, these characteristics are not specific to folk drama. Taft continues, arguing that

[t]he form that the drama takes varies, the most common being performances by human actors; but folk dramas also rely upon pantomime, puppetry, shadow figures, or any combination of these forms. These dramas range from informal, even spontaneous, performances to highly elaborate, well-planned, and rehearsed productions; from one-person monologues to large casts; from improvised lines to written dialogue. The more elaborate forms of folk drama include songs, costuming, and stage props, while the simplest are little more than a single actor in street clothes ad-libbing to a one-member audience. (1996, 208)

These folk dramatic performances, whatever their form, “must use a wide variety of techniques to focus the attention of the audience on the performance. Consequently, one encounters clowning, dancing, singing, instrumental music, bombastic speeches, and other highly stylized types of performance” (Abrahams 1972, 354). Since, as Abrahams contends, “subtlety is very limited...the dominating moods are melodramatic or farcical” (1972, 354). Characters and costumes, according to Pettitt, “tend to the unusual or the spectacular” (1997, 211). Thus highly stylized, Pettitt observes that the dramatic structures found in folk drama performances “involve fairly simple but striking patterns” (1997, 211), namely confrontations, contrasts and antagonisms. Indeed, he writes that the resurrection commonplace so beloved by ritual origins theorists “may owe its ubiquity, if

not its origins, to a simple dramaturgical circumstance: A figure falling down and getting up is the most striking visual effect that can be achieved in traditions whose theatrical resources are largely confined to the bodies of the performers and what is done to them” (1997, 211). As Thomas Green notes, the characters in folk drama often “exist to bring together jarringly the culture’s traditional polarities: male and female, human and animal” (1978, 847).

Dramaturgically, folk drama is said to be “presentational rather than representational” (Greenhill 1988, 170), that is, because of “the dominance of context over mimesis” (Pettitt 1997, 211), folk drama “is audience-centred rather than stage-centred, and the actors *perform about* the characters and events in the play rather than *becoming* them” (Greenhill 1988, 170; emphasis in original). The role never completely engulfs the person performing; “the actors and the audience are conscious of both their roles in the performance and their shared identity as group members” (Taft 1996, 208). Writing on this consciousness, Petr Bogatyrev observes that “the audience in folk theater continually confronts the role which an actor-peasant plays with the actor’s own private life” (1976b, 47). The collective intimacy remarked upon previously as being apparently central to folk drama creates “a constant juxtaposition of fictive and mundane roles” (T. Green 1978, 847), and this “awareness of context and relationship to the audience” (Pettitt 1997, 212) consistently breaches any dramatic illusion. Frame breakages are common and forms are not predetermined. The folk drama’s form will necessarily “be affected by the players, the observers, and the circumstances in which it is performed” (Greenhill 1988, 173). As such, folk drama has very much a transactional or dialectic quality.

While this notion of shared consciousness, presentational performance and role juxtaposition remains salient in folk drama definitions, Steve Tillis argues that such characteristics cannot be used to distinguish folk drama from other types of drama. He observes:

Indeed, even on Broadway the same juxtaposition often obtains: in musicals especially, when the star makes his or her first entrance, there is almost always a moment of applause. Obviously this applause is not for the fictive character, since the character has, as of yet, done nothing. Rather, the applause is for the mundane person of the actor, who is being honored as a person. It would be jejune to imagine that, after this applause, the actor's person is utterly forgotten. As these examples demonstrate, the juxtaposition of fictive and mundane roles is in no way indicative of folk drama as a kind of theatrical activity that can be contrasted with sophisticated drama. (1999, 123)

His own definition for folk drama, though – attempting as it does to deal with the two primary concerns of folk drama definitions, namely, what is folkloric about the drama and what is dramatic about the folklore – still mentions communal consciousness, a collective identity and intimacy drawn upon and enhanced through performance:

Folkloric drama and dramatic folklore: depending upon one's perspective, one might emphasize one or the other term, one or the other relationship of modifier and noun. A full definition of folk drama must account for both terms...I offer the following definition: *folk drama is theatrical performance, within a frame of make-believe action shared by performers and audience, that is not fixed by authority but is based in living tradition and displays greater or lesser variation in its repetition of this tradition; its performance, enacted over time and space with practices of design, movement, speech, and/or music, engenders and/or enhances a sense of communal identity among those who participate in its delivery and reception.* (1999, 140; emphasis in original)

Because of the broadness, vagueness and generality of Tillis's definition, which seems to be the nature of definitions sometimes, it does little to clarify what exactly folk drama is.

One can certainly see how much easier it would be to simply point to the m-word and say, “This is it! This is folk drama.” Period. End of discussion.

It is not the point of this dissertation to muddy the definitional waters of folk drama any more than they already are. I will offer no new, all-encompassing definition. Indeed, like Edith Fowke, I am “distrust[ful] of supposedly scientific definitions” (1997, 46). She continues, “The desire to turn folklore into a science has led to attempts to coin technical terms and definitions. Folklore genres are very difficult to pin down, and some apparently exact definitions sound more precise than they are” (1997, 46). Such a definition intended to cover all of folk drama’s culturally diverse forms would be imprecise, lacking, as Greenhill notes, “a satisfyingly concrete character” (1988, 173). And along with Anthony Cohen, I find it more beneficial to “seek not lexical meaning, but *use*” (1985, 12; emphasis in original). As it *usefully* is, Greenhill opts, in her work on Anglo-Canadian folk drama, to list characteristics of Anglo folk drama. Not intended as a definitive checklist or template to determine the authenticity of a dramatic form, the descriptors are guideposts, since “lived reality will conform only to one degree or another” (Pettitt 1997, 205). Drawing upon the thirteen “elements of folk drama” set forth by David Buchan et al (1983) and utilizing many of the characteristics heretofore listed, she describes Anglo-Canadian folk drama thus:

The text involves two or more performers in contrasting roles. Its narrative plot is conveyed more by dialogue than by movement; its outcome is known, yet there is also unexpected improvisation. Though set in a fantasy world, much of its humour is created by incongruous references to familiar, modern objects and topics. The performers are in costume or masked, and used stylised movements. They portray symbolic rather than realistic characters; they may break frame and speak to the audience or to individuals in it in personae of their everyday selves. Costumes, masks, and movements are traditional and thus familiar to the audience; the

players, though disguised, are also known to the audience as members of the community. The performance circumstances are variable and affected by the audience; the play is taken to them, rather than their coming to the play. The stage is not fixed and the action occurs on space cleared in a home or on the street, and often prepared by the players themselves immediately beforehand. The performance style is melodramatic or farcical, with clowning, pomposity, and other exaggerations. Folk plays are usually associated with particular seasons of the year. (1988, 173)

While drama in Kersley and the works of the Kersley Players certainly do not follow these Anglo-Canadian characteristics to every jot and tittle (nor should they), they remain pertinent to this study. The Kersley Players' own characteristics will be explored in greater depth in Act III and their constantly shifting position along the dramatic folk-popular continuum in Act IV.

On a final note, there is the naming issue, an issue which has reared its head consistently since the paradigm shift in folkloristics as disciplinary labels and genres are considered too loaded and burdened to continue. What *do* we call *this*? *Folk drama*, with its ritualistic history and vestigial connotations, has been considered inappropriate in light of the new folkloristic perspectives. Hence, in the 1970's and 80's, *traditional drama* was suggested as a viable replacement and used extensively and interchangeably²⁰ with *folk drama*, although the name does suggest a more time-tested continuity, whereas *folk* emphasizes the community context. *Customary drama* has been put forward as a name for the subgenre of *traditional drama*, the subsidiary which covers those dramatic forms that are "part of seasonal or occasional customs" (Pettitt 1997, 208). Courting the idea of the localized context, *indigenous theatre* has been touted. With its "connotations for the local and the useful – not to the mention the underprivileged – for those who see traditional

²⁰ A Traditional Drama Research Group was founded in 1980, and along with it, their own newsletter, *Roomer*. In my opinion, "traditional" is just as loaded a term as "folk."

drama as essentially different from and opposed to the theatrical traditions of the social and cultural elite” (Pettitt 1997, 208), *vernacular drama* has been played with.

Branching out of the folklore realm, there has been a longstanding tradition of calling this amateur, local theatre *little theatre*. Emphasizing the oppositional, political characteristic, *alternative theatre* has been used to label theatre which “defines itself as a consciously posited parallel to th[e] mainstream” (Usmiani 1983, 1). Perhaps the most common terms utilized outside the folkloristic realm within theatrical circles are *community* and *community-based theatre*, that is, theatre performed by, for and on behalf of a localized group, generating grassroots performances. In fact, *grassroots theatre* has been mooted as a descriptor for this locally rooted dramatic form, a theatre, which according to Michael Kirby, is “rural, non-urban...non-commercial, does not stage traditional scripts and is oriented toward a wide and generally theatrically-naïve, rather than an educated and special, audience...It is intended for a specific audience – the people of the locale or region in which it was developed” (1983, 2). And if I allow my informants to emically label this play form themselves, they are apt to refer to it as *community theatre*, *little theatre* and *grassroots theatre*, all terms emphasizing the local and self-generated:

What Roy Teed started doing was the epitome of little theatre. It’s the grassroots of little theatre, when you have somebody who writes a play, encourages people to come along, which your mother did very well – Bobbi was great...It’s the epitome of grassroots theatre that we’re looking at. I mean, who could get better than what we’ve done in Kersley or what Roy’s done in Kersley, your mother, everybody around here? (Gunn 2004)

Indeed, the notion that “everybody around here” has contributed in some way to this Kersley play form, even if by abstaining from it, is the germinating idea and driving force behind this rooted examination of the Kersley Players.



Fig.1.4. A cartographic overview of “the true north, strong and free.”



Fig.1.5. Map of Canada's westernmost province, British Columbia.

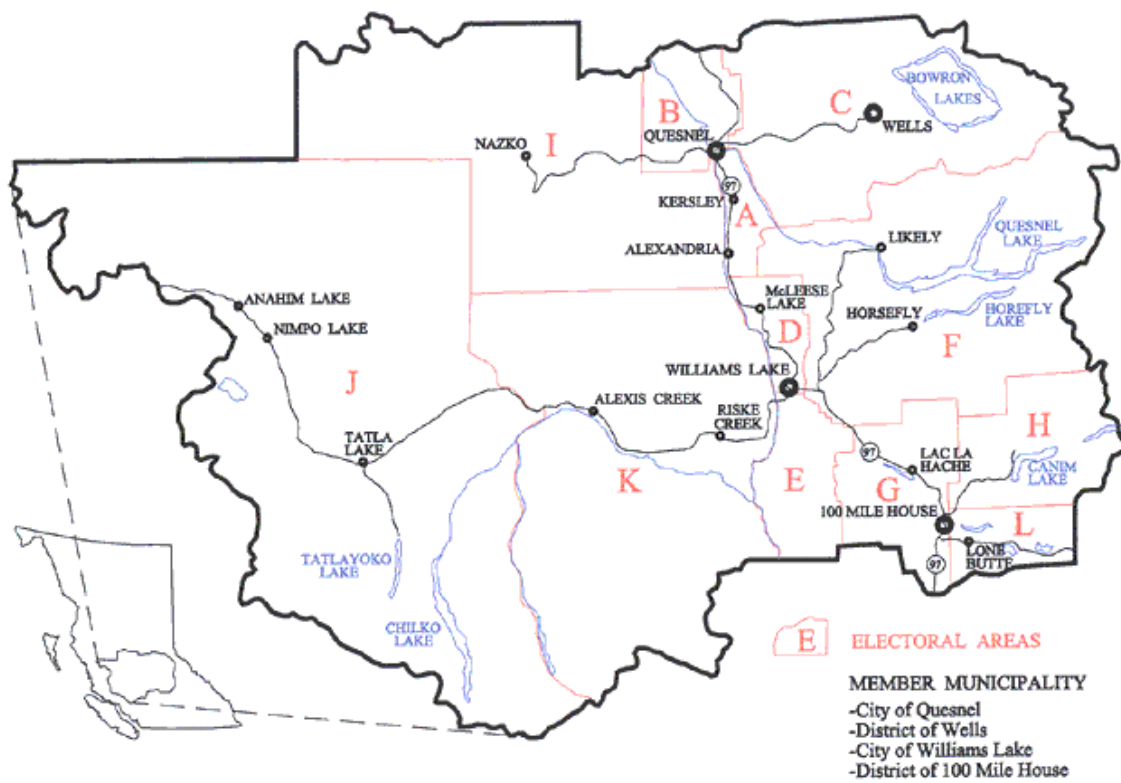


Fig.1.6. Map of the central interior region of British Columbia, the Cariboo.

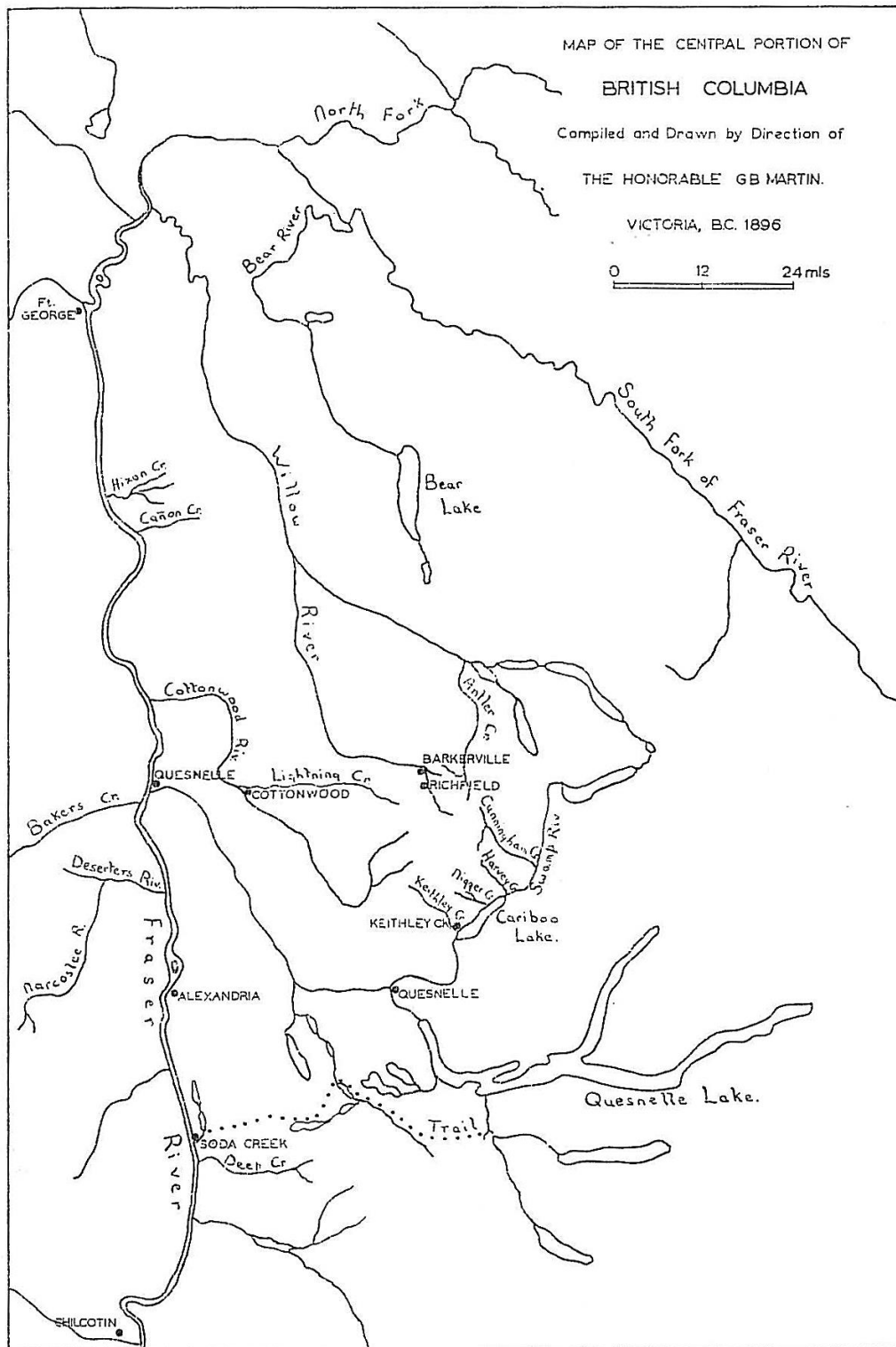


Fig.1.7. 1896 map of the northeast Cariboo. Kersley is located approximately halfway between Alexandria and Quesnelle along the east side of the Fraser River. *Source:* Elliot 1958, 31.



Fig.1.9. Kersley sign along Highway 97 heading south.

End Act I, Scene 2.

In which a brief overview of folk drama scholarship has highlighted its mummering bias, its focus on recognized, “traditional” forms. It was argued that despite the apparent new directions in folk drama scholarship – which arose with the general shift in folkloristics in the 1970’s from literary, diachronic studies to ethnographic, synchronic ones – emergent, non-traditional folk dramatic forms have continued to be mostly overlooked. And the swirling eddies of folk drama definitions and redefinitions have reflected this shift. In attempting to define the folk drama genre, definitions have concentrated on how this play-form is folkloric and/or how it is dramatic. So most definitions have focussed on its “folk” nature, meaning its amateur, unselfconscious, rural setting to some scholars or, simply, its performance within a folk group with its common factors, whatever those may be, by other scholars. Shared by all, it seems, is the notion that folk drama is contextualized by communal intimacy, indeed, intimate with a community’s traditions and situating itself within those traditions. Dramaturgically, folk drama is a role-playing, mimetic play-form, but one, it is often argued, that is stylistically simple, relying upon stereotypical contrasts. Because of the communal intimacy, folk drama often is presentational or audience-centred – its context more significant than its mimesis – and this means performances marked by the juxtaposition of fictive and mundane roles. The author sets forth no new all-inclusive folk drama definition, but intends, instead, to situate the Kersley Players and their plays on the ever-shifting, dramatic continuum between “pure” folk and “pure” popular. Lastly, suggestions abound concerning as to what to call this play-form, especially as “folk” has become increasingly viewed as highly problematic. Informants, themselves, tend to refer to this Kersley play-form as community, grassroots and/or little theatre, all terms emphasizing the locally intimate and self-generated and an emphasis ultimately informing this study.

Act II

The Setting: Where is Here?²¹

Scene 1 – Kersley Unincorporated: An Anglo-Canadian Community²²

In which a broad ethnographic look at the local community is attempted, examining historical developments, demographics, geography, industrial growth, social structures, theatrical endeavours, theatrical venues and worldviews.

Lights up on kitschy painted backdrop of a standard 1850's eastern Canadian township. A steady stream of men dressed for traversing a continent (backpacks, pickaxes, bundles, trundles, etc.) walk from stage left to stage right. A rather desperate looking woman, a POOR LONE GIRL, weaves through them, attempting to entice any of them into noticing her, but to no avail. All the while, she sings "The Poor Lone Girl of Ontario." The steady stream of men begins to become less and less, and she grows more and more desperate in her antics to keep them here, until at last she sings the final verse.

POOR LONE GIRL

I'll sling my goods in a carpet sack,
I'm off to the West, and won't come back.
I'll have a husband and a good one too, (*picking up carpet sack and slinging over shoulder*)
If I have to follow him to Cariboo!²³
(*Looks around, there are no men left*)
Hey wait! I'm coming too! (*Exits stage right running*)

Lights down.

Travelling on Highway 97 – the only road connecting northern and southern BC –

Kersley²⁴ is a blink-and-you'll-miss-it, two-bit-nowhere place in the central interior

²¹ Famous question posed by Northrop Frye in *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (1995): "It seems to me that Canadian sensibility has been profoundly disturbed, not so much by our famous problem of identity, important as that is, as by a series of paradoxes in what confronts that identity. It is less perplexed by the question 'Who am I?' than by some such riddle as 'Where is here?'" (222).

²² Title and subsequent structure loosely borrowed from Horace Miner, *St. Denis: A French-Canadian Parish* (1939). His chapter outline includes: History, Land and the People, The Society upon the Land, Kinship and the Family Cycle, The Role of Religion, The Mass, The Control of Nature, The Yearly Round, Childhood, From Marriage to Mourning and Old and New.

²³ Lyrics found in Taft 1983, 26-27.

region of the province known as the Cariboo (see fig. 1.4-1.8 for situational reference). An unadorned, government-issue highway sign simply states: Kersley Unincorporated (see fig. 1.9). Its approximately 400 unincorporated inhabitants straddle the highway, with the majority pooling in the western-lying subdivision surrounding the local elementary school. If one were to take in the thirty-plus kilometres of highway, which the school and the local volunteer fire department service, the population jumps to somewhere around 800 people. There's not much to catch the attention of a speeding car, except maybe the promise of gas at the Alamo, the local truck-stop/gas station/greasy spoon/motel/RV park. A small store, the Kersley General Store, quietly does business, assuredly remaining afloat through its sale of stimulants (tobacco, alcohol, junk foods, DVDs, daily rags) and not its anaemic produce (see fig. 2.1-2.12 for a brief photographic tour of Kersley's amenities).

Although, as Yi-Fu Tuan suggests, it is only the visitor/tourist who "has a viewpoint; his [her] perception is often a matter of using his [her] eyes to compose pictures" (1974, 63), there is not much in Kersley considered aesthetically viewable enough from the etic eye to even consider a picture. Yet for those calling Kersley home, familiar with its intricacies and nuances, a more "complex attitude [is] derived from [the] immersion in the totality of [their] environment" (Tuan 1974, 63). Kersley, to the Kersleyite, is remarkable precisely "because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood" (Tuan 1974, 93), an understanding and appreciation of its note-worthiness enduring because "it is mixed with the memory of human incidents" (Tuan 1974, 95). It is this sense of a place, this topophilic coupling of "sentiment with

²⁴ Location: 52°49'00" N, 122°25'00" W; Elevation: 671 m.

place” (Tuan 1974, 113), this assessment of *here*, which this section explores, setting the stage for the playfully dramatic works of the Kersley Players.



Fig. 2.1. Southern end of Edwards Road – the “business” quarter of Kersley with The Alamo and the General Store. Signs are visible from Highway 97 running just to the left (east) of the picture. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.2. The Alamo Grill or Diner, as it is now called. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.3. The Alamo's motel. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.4. The Kersley General Store, formerly The Kersley Kupboard. It is still called the K&K by locals. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.5. Kersley Elementary School, as looking northwest from the mailboxes at the junction of Edwards and Arnoldus Roads. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.6. New fire hall of the Kersley Volunteer Fire Department, as viewed from the south. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.7. Entrance to the Kersley Community Complex from Edwards Road, looking south, with the hall to the left (east) and the fire hall in the distant right (south). Due to pine beetle kill, many of the trees that once stood in the park have now been felled. Photo courtesy of Becky Dale.



Fig. 2.8. Looking southeast, the Kersley Community Hall in 2004. Notice the number of trees that once stood in the park, as compared to the photo above.



Fig. 2.9. The Mud Hut or Pottery Shack for the Kersley Mudhens as situated in the Kersley Community Complex. The Kersley Hall is to the right (south), Highway 97 runs behind (east) and the tennis court, ball diamond, former fire hall and arena are to the left (north). Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.10. The arena and former fire hall, as seen from the south across the parking lot from the hall. Roy Teed's truck is parked in front of the complex to the right. The third flag flying atop the complex, besides the Maple Leaf and the provincial one, is the local, yellow and green Kersley one, as designed by a local resident, Wolfgang Musslick. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.11. Park, hall and arena of the Kersley Community Complex, as viewed from the south. Photo courtesy of Becky Dale.



Fig. 2.12. The snowed-in hall during a good winter blow. Photo courtesy of Becky Dale.

History: Frontier Settlement & Boom ‘n’ Bust Development

In which a brief overview of European settlement and industrial development of the Cariboo frontier is provided, looking at its former fur-trading economics, its past goldmining glories and its current forestry industry dependency.

There is something of magic appeal in the rush and movement of a ‘boom’ town...Life comes to a focus; it is all here and now, all *present*, no past and no outside – just a clatter of hammers and saws, rounds of drinks and rolls of money. In such an atmosphere every man seems a remarkable fellow, a man of exception; individuality separates out and character blossoms like a rose.

– Stephen Leacock, “My Remarkable Uncle”

Konaway tillicums klatawa kunamokst / Everyone was thrown together / klaska mamook okoke huloima chee illahie. / to make this strange new country” (Lillard and Glavin 1998, 27) writes the BC poet Terry Glavin in his Chinook²⁵-English poem, “Rain Language.” As Canada’s far western front, British Columbia “has always been a land of immigration” (Taft 1983b, 3), forming “a society which even today can be characterized as the most unsettled and immigratory in North America” (Evans 1983, 9). As Michael Taft notes, “[i]t is a common joke that no one was actually born in the province – they simply came here” (1983b, 3). With so many ethnically diverse immigrants simply coming here and being thrown together, it is not surprising that the resulting settlement patterns and culture should “display a characteristic uniqueness” (Carpenter 1979, 106) in relation to general Canadian settlement patterns. The relatively homogeneous village communities of eastern Canada never materialized in British Columbia, an area essentially settled during the urbanizing, globalizing industrial era. For much of the nineteenth century, foreign settlement in BC was limited to fur-trading outposts and later

²⁵ Chinook was the creole language of much of North America’s northwest coast, comprising several distinct aboriginal languages along with French and English. It was a much-utilized tongue of discourse in nineteenth century BC and remnants of it are still found today in colloquialisms, slang terms and place names.

goldmining encampments. As such a resource-rich frontier, British Columbia initially attracted get-rich-quick schemers, drifters, “social misfits, renegades, losers, and opportunists. Many of the early arrivals in British Columbia had settled elsewhere, failed, and moved on in search of new horizons” (Carpenter 1979, 107). Golden dreams and disappointments created the most mythic, cinematographic “wild west” that one is going to find in peace-order-and-good-government-extolling Canada. Boomtowns were the norm as the resources were availed of. And, as with most boomtowns, they went bust with resource depletion. The frontier camps and their inhabitants continually jumped to the next big thing. Seeing as “[t]he frontier both shapes our characters and tests our mettle” (2002, 381), as Salman Rushie puts it, that lands and people are marked, physically and psychically, by frontiers – their progressions, regressions and remains – it stands to reason that the little British Columbia community of Kersley has been irrevocably affected by its frontier positioning and the consequent boom ‘n’ bust development patterns. And if I am going to examine how the community functions through its theatre, it is necessary to examine how the community came *to be*, came to function, in the first place – just how and why people decided to settle *here*.

Describing his local workplace in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, the sawmill worker and poet, Glen Fillmore, wrote: “There’s a place called Kersley Lumber, / Where we local boys all go, / To try to earn a living / But the wages are quite low... / And if someone should ask you / What they’re using for a crew, / There’s herring chokers and Frenchmen / And Englishmen and a wooden shoe” (see Appendix III for the whole poem, along with a couple of other Fillmore poems). The promise of earning a living, whether through pelts, gold, trees, natural gas pipelines or farmland, has always lured a mixed bag

of immigrants to the Cariboo and, specifically, to the Kersley-Quesnel area. The area has seen its share of fur-trading explorers, men whose names have indelibly attached themselves to the place, namely, that North West Company great, Alexander Mackenzie, in 1793, whose encounter with members of the Chentsit'hala Carrier Nation along the banks of the Fraser River, twenty kilometres south of current-day Kersley, irrevocably changed the course of his historic journey,²⁶ and other notable North West men, including, Simon Fraser and Jules Quesnelle, in 1808. These explorations, coupled with George Vancouver's coastal ones, opened up this northwest section of the New World for business – the fur business. In 1821, the North West Company erected Fort Alexandria at the spot along the Fraser River where Mackenzie had followed aboriginal advice and turned around (see fig. 2.13). It became a strategic point for the Hudson's Bay Company,²⁷ the shipping and receiving hub of New Caledonia's interior fur trade.²⁸ Yet, by 1867, the fort was permanently closed, overshadowed by the discovery of another resource and ill-placed to meet the needs of the golden dreaming hordes.²⁹

It was the discovery of gold that made the Cariboo the stuff of folksongs and poetry and the destination of not only poor lone girls from Ontario, but people from all

²⁶ On a Sunday morning in June 1793, Mackenzie was deep in counsel with the local aboriginals about the proposed course of his journey. Indeed, his transcontinental expedition hung in the balance. Consistent reports of an unnavigable river (dubbed the Fraser fifteen years later) and hostile "Natives" worried him. Time was running short and he had to think about the return trip. But to turn back would be disheartening – explorers are supposed to go onward, ever onward. The aboriginals pressed their case, insisting that there was another way to the sea and that it only required a little backtracking. Mackenzie ultimately heeded their advice, becoming the first European to cross the North American continent by land.

²⁷ The North West Company and the Hudson Bay Company amalgamated in 1821.

²⁸ Prior to 1858, the BC Mainland was referred to as New Caledonia, so dubbed by the North West Company explorer, Simon Fraser, in 1808. In 1858, Queen Victoria officially granted the region colonial status, and with the new status, came a new name: British Columbia. In 1866, Vancouver Island, which had been its own separate colony for years, merged with the mainland.

²⁹ A memorial cairn along the highway, a small ranching community with its abandoned, yet still standing, one-room schoolhouse, and a First Nations reservation mark Alexandria today. Location: 52°38'00" N, 122°27'00" W

over the world. The Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858 had gold-fevered hordes pouring into British Columbia, scouring the Fraser and its tributaries from Fort Vancouver to Fort George.³⁰ Hanging a right to explore the Quesnelle River, prospectors discovered gold and the rush was on, the Cariboo³¹ Gold Rush. Following the Quesnelle eastward, the first “city” (it was really more of a permanent camp) in the region was erected at the point where the river divides south to Quesnelle Lake and north to Cariboo Lake (see fig. 1.7). Quesnelle Forks, Quesnelle City, the Forks, or simply Quesnelle,³² as it was variously known, was born. The HBC fort of Alexandria thrived for a brief time as the major supplier to the goldfields, but was quickly superseded by the construction of stores at the mouth of the Quesnelle River. Situated as it is at confluence of the Quesnelle and Fraser Rivers, Quesnelle, Quesnelle City or Quesnellemouth³³ was an ideal location for the distribution of supplies to the Cariboo goldfields (see fig. 2.14) and visionary and

³⁰ Fort George is, in present-day, called Prince George – the largest city in northern BC, with approximately 80,000 inhabitants. Situated about 120 km to the north of Quesnel along Highway 97, Prince or P.G. (as it often called) is the commercial hub of the north. It is the junction of the Nechako and Fraser Rivers, the point where the north-south railway line meets the east-west line, and the joining point of Highway 97 with the Yellowhead Highway 16, the 3500-kilometre long east-west connector which can take one from the north coast of BC at Prince Rupert over the Rockies and all the way across the Canadian Prairies to Winnipeg.

³¹ The etymology of this word is rather sketchy. “Cariboo” is often considered an apparent Anglicization/frontier déclassé misspelling of the French, “caribou,” which itself is a French appropriation of the Algonquian word “xalibu,” meaning the pawner or scratcher. There were said to be many elk and caribou herds in this region during the mid-nineteenth century, but not anymore. While there is an indigenous “Woodland” Caribou found in the Cariboo Mountains east of Quesnel, in the Barkerville area, their numbers are dwindling due to habitat loss from clearcutting. Clearcuts suit other ungulates, namely deer and moose, quite well, so they’re thriving, attracting more predators, who, in turn, don’t balk at eating a caribou. While this Anglicized misspelling seems logical enough, “cariboo” is, according to the colonial governor at the time of the Cariboo Gold Rush, Sir James Douglas, a derivation of “cariboeuf” or “carboeuf” – yet another apparent French word for elk. In much literature from the Gold Rush days, “Cariboo” is mentioned without the now prerequisite “the.”

³² Location: 52°40'00" N, 121°40'00" W

³³ Location: 53°00'00" N, 122°30'00" W; Elevation: 474 m. The post office tired of all these various spellings and names, so in 1900, the name and spelling were standardized and Anglicized to simply, Quesnel. In terms of pronunciation, the ‘s’ is silent. An outsider can always be marked by its mispronunciation (that is, pronunciation of the ‘s’), although many locals will knowingly mispronounce it for ironic purposes.

enterprising Chinese immigrants, who faced perpetual prejudice from suppliers who refused to sell goods to so-called “Celestials,”³⁴ set up shop.

Quesnel blossomed as the goldfields thrived. Following the north arm of the Quesnel River, many miners struck it rich. And the boom ‘n’ bust town construction – that perennially moving frontier – which characterized so much of the Gold Rush, was seen over and over. Quesnelle Forks died as gold was discovered in Keithley Creek (see fig. 2.15-2.16). Keithley petered out when the yellow stuff was found in the Swamp River. Swamp River gave way to Antler. Antler was abandoned following gold discoveries on Great Lowhee Creek, Cunningham Creek, Lightning Creek, Van Winkle Creek, and the most famous of all, Williams Creek. The land east of Quesnel and Kersley, in the foothills of the Cariboo Mountains, was absolutely teeming with gold. In 1861, it is estimated that nearly 2.7 million dollars in gold was extracted from the Cariboo. Then, in 1862, a man by the name of William “Billy” Barker sunk a fifty-two-foot shaft along Williams Creek and pulled out \$1000 in gold two days later. Barkerville was born.³⁵

Barkerville joined the towns of Camerontown and Richfield along Williams Creek, but soon eclipsed them both. In its heyday, Barkerville was said to be the largest town west of Chicago and north of San Francisco (see fig. 2.17-2.18). Approximately 10,000 people – prospectors, missionaries, tradespersons, merchants and hurdy gurdy girls – called Barkerville home for a time. These were heady times. Fortunes were found and lost in a day. The mighty triumvirate of wine, women and song pretty much saw to

³⁴ In 1865, its population was divided between 100 “Celestials” and 100 whites, with an unknown aboriginal population.

³⁵ Location: 53°04'45" N, 121°30'30" W; Elevation: 1265 m. Barkerville is about 85 km east of Quesnel and its open air museum is pretty much *the* tourist draw to the area during the summer months. Every July, Quesnel holds its annual Billy Barker Days Festival – a four-day-long party celebrating its golden past.

that, pinching many a miner's poke. Yet, like many booming towns before it, Barkerville busted. By the mid-1860's, the great Cariboo Gold Rush was essentially over. In 1868, Barkerville was destroyed by fire. Although rebuilt, many of the gold-seekers had already moved on to more promising prospects.

While Fort Alexandria thrived pre-Gold Rush and Quesnellemouth blossomed supplying the Rush, Kersley was simply a place in-between on the vital Cariboo Wagon Road (see fig 2.19). The first recorded attempt at settlement in what is now the Kersley area was in 1862, when two men by the surnames, Wing and Phillips, pre-empted some property, hoping to ranch and farm, and thereby, supply the greedy goldfields. The venture presumably failed as the land was deemed abandoned by 1867, when one Charles Kersley filed for the pre-emption of the property, 160 acres sixteen miles south of Quesnel on the Wagon Road. Kersley had serendipitously found its founder. And after nine years of clearing and working the land, the mysterious³⁶ Charles Kersley sold the property in 1876 to Samuel Hall Bohanon, a former Maine farmer, who, along with his associates, was amassing an extensive 1200-acre ranch from Australian³⁷ to Kersley. Two decades on, Bohanon sold the northern part of his ranch, the part popularly known as "The Kersley," to a former farmhand, James Shepherd.

³⁶ Not much is known about Charles Kersley – who he was, where he came from or where he went – which naturally leads to all sorts of speculations, some very hotly contested, especially amongst the history-writing dames of Kersley. One particularly hackles-raising tale is that he was a black man, possibly a former slave out of the Carolinas. In recent years, an amateur genealogist from England, by the name of Roy Kersley, has been attempting to trace the Kersley lineage – Kersley is not a terribly common name – and he has found many English-born Kersleys immigrating to the Carolinas and Australia, but has found no evidence of a Charles Kersley. So, whether Charles was an expat Brit, a former slave, an Aussie, is anyone's guess.

³⁷ A small community about ten kilometres south of Kersley, called Australian because of the roadhouse-building Swede, Andrew Oleson, who had arrived in the Cariboo after golden disappointments in Australia.

As new owners of The Kersley, James Shepherd and his wife (*and* cousin!), Sarah Barlow – both natives of Lancashire, England – were responsible for constructing and running Kersley House, one of the last roadhouses before Quesnel (see fig. 2.20). Sarah’s culinary acumen and general hosting skills are the stuff of familial legends. It was not long before teamsters and stagecoach passengers were enjoying her hospitality, despite some initially very primitive conditions.³⁸ Quickly, James Shepherd began construction of an impressive two-storey log house with seven bedrooms and three reception areas to meet the demands. Indeed, local Quesnel historian, Branwen Patenaude, notes:

So great was the demand for the Shepherd brand of hospitality that it became necessary to add a dairy and to extend the kitchen...The need for more help to operate the roadhouse and farm encouraged other members of the Barlow family to emigrate [sic] to Canada. Amongst them were Sarah’s sisters...and several brothers...most of whom spent the rest of their lives in the Quesnel area. (1996, 191-2)

The creek was dammed, allowing for an efficient irrigation system, not to mention a great swimming hole in summer and a natural hockey rink in winter (see fig. 2.21). The outbuildings grew more extensive. Hay and grains were harvested. Blueberry pies consumed. And the wee nips from James Shepherd’s still warmed the insides of many a teamster on a cold winter’s day.³⁹ By 1900, the front parlour was acting as the local post office, and as early as 1910, The Kersley had the only phone for miles and miles. Indeed, The Kersley became the social hub of a growing farming and ranching population. The Dale family, out of North Carolina, had pre-emptions at the mouth of Kersley Creek and at Dog Prairie. Torontonians, Fritz Menzinger, had land south of The Kersley. Various

³⁸ Their first year, they lived in a sod-floored, sod-roofed cabin, presumably erected by Charles Kersley.

³⁹ Branwen Patenaude, in her book, *Trails to Gold* (1996), goes on to describe how mash from the moonshine-making process inebriated farmyard pigs and chickens, in one memorable incident, actually turning the pigs a fluorescent pink.

Shepherd relatives were settling in the area. The Durrell family, out of Ontario, pre-empted on Dog Prairie. The Zschiedrich family, from Germany, put down roots on land neighbouring north of The Kersley. The Russian, Jim Moriss, settled at Australian. The Grays arrived from the States. The Arnoldus family arrived from Holland, settling on land west of the Cariboo Wagon Road on the bluffs above Sisters Creek. And so it goes. In the Quesnel area, there were people coming from every province⁴⁰ in the Dominion of Canada, from the eastern seaboard and Midwestern states, from the British Isles, from Europe (east, west, north, south), from South Africa, from China, from New Zealand. A Kersley native, Nettie Dale Durrell, recalls, “Mrs. Zschiedrich was midwife when I was born. She couldn’t speak English and Mother couldn’t speak German but they got along real good” (qtd. in *Tribute* 1985, 117). German hands helping an American woman to birth a Canadian in the Cariboo. Truly, everyone was thrown together to make this strange, new, hard country.

Opening up this strange, new, hard country even more was the construction of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway (PGE),⁴¹ which rolled into Quesnel in 1921 and brought with it a steady stream of settlers looking for land. By the 1930’s, though, the PGE was chugging thousands upon thousands of gold-seekers to the Cariboo, after Frank M. Wells discovered gold near Jack o’ Clubs Lake in 1932. The Second Cariboo Gold Rush was

⁴⁰ Including Newfoundland, even though it would not be an official province until 1949.

⁴¹ The PGE was a major political bone of contention and all the accusations of mismanagement and fraud and illegal contracts ultimately ousted a provincial government (not that such scandals are rare in BC – BC politics is notorious for its government-ousting scandals, flamboyant leaders and pendulum swings between the socialist Left and the free-enterprising Right). Many Lower Mainland pundits claimed that the PGE was the railway line to nowhere and the PGE was popularly and variously dubbed “the Province’s Greatest Expense,” “the Please Go Easy” and “Prince George Eventually.” It finally made its way to Prince George in 1952, after three decades of Quesnel being the last station.

officially on and the town of Wells was born.⁴² This new Rush, though, required heavy machinery for hard rock quartz goldmining and a lot of upfront capital. It was methodical, organized and technologically advanced – a far cry from the heady capriciousness of Quesnelle Forks and Antler and Barkerville and all those other nineteenth-century gold-booming towns, when any yahoo with a gold pan could participate. Would-be prospectors found themselves working for larger, richer, gold mining companies. As historian, Gordon Elliot, notes, “the lure of gold, as it had seventy years earlier, attracted all types of people, including those who tried to take it away from the ones who had acquired it by hard work. Like Williams Creek of old, Jack of Clubs Lake attracted its share of bootleggers, gamblers and sharpies, as well as the solid citizens required to promote a lasting community” (1958, 58-59). Despite hopes for a lasting community, with the advent of WWII, Wells became a ghost town, just like its immediate neighbour to the east, Barkerville. And the whole Quesnel area might have also gone bust had it not been for the development of one significant industry – forestry. For years, the arborous giants of the coast had been commercially cleared, while the scrawny bush of the interior had sustained local need and nothing more. Gordon Elliot explains:

The advent of war brought about a change. Britain, in her search for a high speed, manoeuvrable, cheap fighter-bomber, had developed the Mosquito, the fastest in the world. It was made of plywood. Ideal for the building of these laminated aircraft, Quesnel birch was fairly free of knots and could be glued effectively. It was cut, shipped to New Westminster, processed, and sent to Britain. Promoters began taking an interest in Cariboo forests. (1958, 60)

⁴² Wells is about 5 km west of Barkerville. A boomtown built in the 1930's, it eventually went bust, although it has had something of a resurgence of late, branding itself as haven for artists and artisans.

So while gold may have originally brought people to this strange, hard land, it has been the wealth of the green gold which has sustained the Cariboo for the past seventy-plus years (see fig. 2.22-2.23).

The growing need for domestic and export lumber fuelled many forays into the lumbering business in the Kersley-Quesnel area. Initially, many of the farms had small mills for personal use. During the 1930's, however, the first commercial sawmill opened for business in Kersley, supplying local need. By the 1940's, international demands were growing and needing to be met, so sawmills and planermills began popping up all over. By 1958, there were over one hundred sawmills and planermills operating in the Quesnel area. In the 1950's, Kersley Lumber was constructed, becoming a local workplace staple for decades, along with logging on Kersley's eastern-lying mountains. By 1954, the Cariboo Wagon Road had been paved, solidifying the infrastructure necessary for the construction, in 1957, of a pumping station for the extensive Westcoast Transmission natural gas pipeline⁴³ and, later, an oil pipeline at Australian. A real company community, "the Pumping Station" or "Westcoast," as the place is locally known, provided employment and housing to as many as twenty-five families in the Kersley area,⁴⁴ that is until the jobs were automated out of existence in the 1990's, resulting in yet another Cariboo ghost town.

⁴³ Later called Westcoast Energy and currently Duke Energy – the pipeline runs from Fort Nelson to Huntington, at the BC-Washington border, and beyond. With subsidiaries throughout the province, it provides natural gas to much of BC.

⁴⁴ Kersley Elementary, for the years that the Pumping Station was an actual community, always had a kind of Pumping Station gang, kids from the south whose fathers all worked for Westcoast. An informant recalls how other Kersley kids, who essentially lived in tarpaper shacks with outside johns, figured the Westcoast kids to be slightly haughty "brats because we had indoor plumbing and siding" (Grimm and Grimm 2004).

In the forties and fifties, though, the Cariboo was booming, thanks to the pipelines, the reopened goldmining and the lumbering. Between 1941 and 1951, the population of Quesnel had more than doubled, and it more than doubled again by 1956. Jobs were aplenty, so many Canadians from back east (namely Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan) and BC Lower Mainland dwellers found themselves heading to the Cariboo and settling in Kersley. The initial agriculturally based population began to be overrun by plain old industrial workers, just wanting houses in which to live, not land to till. With the construction of Cariboo Pulp & Paper (CPP) in 1972, the first of Quesnel's two pulpmills, Kersley's fate as a satellite bedroom/residential community of Quesnel was increasingly sealed.

Prior to the seventies, Kersley, while always intimate with the bigger town of Quesnel, did operate quite self-sufficiently. It had its own farms, ranches, sawmills, schools, gas stations, stores, cafés, railway station, post office – all the necessities for a rather isolated community. Recollecting her youth growing up at the Pumping Station and attending Kersley School during the 1960's and early 70's, one of my informants recalls:

DG: No, we didn't go into Quesnel very much. I remember not joining track and field and stuff like that, 'cause I figured my mom wouldn't drive all the way...And she might have, but it was just – you just didn't ask. And I know like living down at Westcoast, we never asked to go into the pool or anything like that. It was just – people just didn't do it. Whereas now, you just do it, right. People just do it. I don't think people travelled then as much. And I think a lot of the women, like the older women my age now [late forties/early fifties], didn't drive – like a lot of them didn't drive...

JGJ: So they were basically stuck in Kersley.

DG: Raising all these kids. (Grimm and Grimm 2004)

When Highway 97 was rerouted to its current course and generally improved upon in the early 1970's, town was not quite so far away. Daily commutes became viable and necessary – the forty plus kilometres a matter of mundane life. Work became more centralized. Kersley Lumber closed, along with hundreds of other local, Ma 'n' Pop lumbering operations in the Cariboo.

Starting in the mid-1960's, the BC forestry industry became more and more conglomerated in the hands of multinational corporations, thus increasing the annual cut. In the Quesnel area today, there are two pulpmills, the aforementioned Cariboo Pulp & Paper and Quesnel River Pulp,⁴⁵ five large sawmills, a plywood plant, an MDF plant⁴⁶ and several smaller, so-called “value-added” manufacturing operations, including Pinnacle Pellet, a locally owned plant manufacturing wood pellet fuel and pet supply products, located on Dog Prairie.⁴⁷ The majority of the mills and plants in Quesnel, excepting two sawmills, are currently owned by West Fraser Mills Ltd., a company which sits in second place in the North American lumbering industry in terms of ownership and control. This has turned Quesnel into something of a one-horse town, as the locals will say, although such a status is open to change at any moment with international mergers, economic agglomerations and stock market whims.⁴⁸ Over 3,000 people are directly

⁴⁵ QRP opened for business in 1981.

⁴⁶ MDF stands for medium density fibreboard. It's the stuff they use on all the home renovating shows.

⁴⁷ Dog Prairie is about 5 km north of Kersley along Highway 97. Pinnacle Pellet was established in 1988 by the brothers, Jim and Rob Swaan. It burned to the ground in July 1999 in a rather spectacular fire, which drew throngs of onlookers and was considered more exciting than the grand finale fireworks later that night at the annual Billy Barker Days festival. The wood dust smouldered for months. It was the Kersley Volunteer Fire Department's largest fire to fight thus far. The Swaan brothers rebuilt and reopened in 2000.

⁴⁸ And now, in 2009, with an international finance crisis, a recession is in full swing and Quesnel mills are being hit hard. Many are going bust, shutting down, and those still solvent are running on a very part-time basis. CPP has been forced to fuel the mill using high quality wood chips, instead of all the refuse it normally uses from the sawmilling process.

employed in these mills, some of who make their homes in Kersley. It is not uncommon for local ranchers and farmers to work two jobs, one in a mill and one on the land.

While The Kersley was situated on the east side of the highway, the current residential community, often considered Kersley proper, is now located about one to two kilometres north and on the other side of the road. The development of the western side began in the 1950's, when Stewart and Anne Leflar, former Wells gold-seekers, donated land from their Sisters Creek Ranch for the construction of Kersley Elementary School, the centralized school, which combined the three one-room schools in the area into one. The Leflars also sold off land for what was to become a minor subdivision around the school, housing the local millworkers. By 1960, there was a café with a gas station and a newly built community hall situated a stone's throw from the school. But again, it was during the 70's that *this* Kersley really blossomed, thanks in large part to one man, John Grimm.

The Grimm family emigrated from Colorado in 1970, purchasing the old Arnoldus farm just west of the school. John Grimm promptly saw the potential and began subdividing his newly purchased farm, building split-level houses and selling to a growing non-farming, Quesnel-commuting community. By the late 1970's and early 80's, much of the former Grimm farm was subdivided into one-acre-plus lots, and the current Kersley was born. While farms with their certified, disease-free, seed potatoes and ranches with their cattle continued to operate on the outskirts, the more heavily populated Grimm Subdivision became Kersley. It has been a development not wholly welcomed by the old farming families in the area. To them, Kersley has been urbanized. This, despite the fact that many of these one-acre-plus lots housed and house chicken coops, pig sties,

horse stables, extensive gardens, dog kennels, woodpiles, barns, home sawmills, 4-H projects, rusted-out cars and other evidence of a residentially rural lifestyle.

Commuting twenty minutes up the highway into “town,” the suburbanizing sprawl of Quesnel has increasingly moved southward, on top of the hill, in local parlance. Before descending Dragon Lake Hill into the downtown, one is met with the giant superstores so typical of postmodern North America – Walmart, Extra Foods, Canadian Tire – with their acres of asphalt and reams of stuff. Their appearance has turned the two local shopping centres, Maple Park and West Park, both constructed in the 1980’s, into virtually ghost malls, and spelled the ruin of many small-town, family-run businesses, although some continue to survive. Upon descent of the hill, one is quite literally hit, nasally, with the distinctive odour of pulpmill – an unforgettable combo of sickly sweet wood sap and rotten eggs. As mentioned before, Quesnel boasts two pulpmills, both siphoning the waters of the Quesnel River and effusing into the murky waters of the Fraser. It is not unheard of for salt cake ash to “snow” on the city, yet another reminder – in case the smell wasn’t enough – that there are two pulpmills in town.

The Quesnel amenities servicing Kersleyites are many. There are two high schools, Quesnel Secondary School (QSS) and Correlieu Secondary School (CSS),⁴⁹ a satellite campus for the Prince George-based College of New Caledonia (CNC) and University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC), two arenas, a library, a recreation

⁴⁹ There was a third, a junior secondary school (grades eight to ten), Maple Drive Junior Secondary, located on top of the hill, that is south Quesnel, but it was closed in the early 2000’s because of cutbacks and a general population decline. There was a longstanding joke about the three schools claiming that Maple Drive was the suburban school (situated as it was on the city outskirts and near the “posh” suburb of Southhills), QS was the urban school (since it is right downtown) and Correlieu was the turban school (since it is located in West Quesnel, on the other side of the Fraser, in an area which is emically considered “Paki-town,” that is the section of town where there is a visible community of so-called “East Indians.”).

centre with swimming pool, a museum, a hospital, an airport, numerous baseball diamonds and soccer pitches, rodeo grounds, a movie theatre, radio station, newspaper, shops, restaurants, homes for seniors, dentists, shrinks, hairdressers, and the point is made. What Quesnel cannot provide, Prince George, Kamloops or Vancouver can. A Kersleyite thinks nothing of travelling the near 300-km return journey to Prince George for a movie, a bite to eat, a baseball game or a tour in Costco.



Fig. 2.13. Fort Alexandria. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: G-05983.



Fig. 2.14. Facing north, the confluence of the Fraser (left, west) and Quesnel (right, east) Rivers at Quesnel, BC. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: I-27110.



Fig. 2.15. The abandoned remains of the busted Quesnel Forks. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: I-05013.



Fig. 2.16. The scars of hydraulic mining at Quesnel Forks in 1895. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: A-03843.



Fig. 2.17. The famous Cariboo boomtown of Barkerville before the fire of 1868. Notice the clearcut mountainsides. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: A-00355.

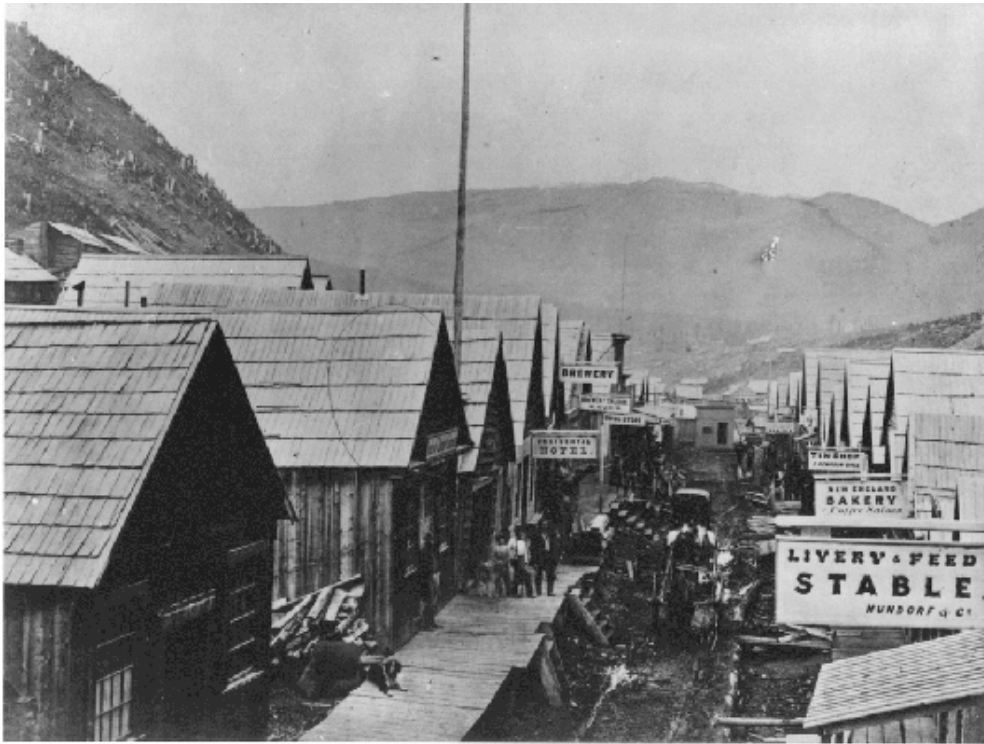


Fig. 2.18. Pre-fire street scene in Barkerville. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: A1-02050.



Fig. 2.19. Cariboo Wagon Road near Quesnel in 1912. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: C-09949.



Fig. 2.20. Kersley House. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1981.173.1.



Fig. 2.21. Hockey at The Kersley. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1998.49.6.



Fig. 2.22. Lumbering operations in Quesnel in 1967. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: I-21215.



Fig. 2.23. Skidding logs after a clearcut in the Quesnel area in 1952. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number NA-12911.

The Land & the People

In which a description of the geographic and demographic landscape of the Cariboo and Kersley/Quesnel is provided, emphasizing the importance of the boreal forests and the male-dominated forestry industry, which tends to reify traditional gender relations.

There is a closing scene in one of Roy's plays, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* (2003), during which the apparently genteel heroine, Molly, a relative newcomer to the Cariboo and now spousal eliminator, states: "Earlier today Ezekial told me this was a hard country. He was right, it is a hard country and it makes the people who live here hard as well." This hard, Cariboo country sits on the Interior Plateau of British Columbia with the 3000-metre peaks of the Coast Mountains in the west and the 2400-metre peaks of the Cariboo Mountains in the east, precursors to the Rockies (see fig. 2.24). Kersley is situated about 200 metres above the Fraser River, on a natural clearing and relative flatland referred to as Round Prairie. There are a series of three so-called "prairies" or natural meadows of which Round is the middle; Grande Prairie lies to the south and Dog Prairie to the north. All are brief plateaux before the eastern mountains begin. Kersley lives in the shadow of the slopes of Green Mountain. Round Prairie is cut by the chasms of two creeks emptying into the Fraser, Kersley Creek in the south and Sisters Creek⁵⁰ in the north, which essentially demarcate the boundaries of Kersley itself. Buffering Sisters Creek and the Fraser and, hence, bordering Kersley's northern and western edges is 500 acres of bush, the locally dubbed "Lease Land."⁵¹ Travelling twenty

⁵⁰ Sisters Creek begins as one creek, but splits, hence the name, thus creating two parallel gullies on Kersley's northern edge.

⁵¹ So called because the province granted the land to BC Rail (formerly the PGE), who never found a use for it themselves, but used to make some money on it by leasing it out for the running of cattle. This leasing practice stopped about two decades ago, when some clever BC Rail bureaucrats, looking at prospects on paper, decided to up the rent, making it economically unviable to lease the land for cattle. While not used commercially, it is still very much in use. Kersleyites consider it their land and use it routinely for much of their recreational pursuits, be it burning old cars at the gravel pit, target practice, dumping garbage, daily

kilometres north on the highway, one descends the 200-metre bluff, known as Dragon Lake Hill, into the river valley of Quesnel. This descent causes an increase of 1.7° C in the average annual temperature of Quesnel in comparison to Kersley.⁵² So, while the average annual temperature in Quesnel is about 5° C, Kersley is hovering around 3.3° C.

The Cariboo climate, in general, is deemed continental. For the Kersley-Quesnel area, this means an average summer temperature of around 16° C and an average winter temperature of -5° C. It snows, approximately, 178 cm per year and rains 39 cm. There are 179 frost-free days a year, leaving a rather short growing season from late May to September. Winters are typically long, cold, snowy and dark, ending in the muddy season, known as spring break-up, when the snow pack melts. Summers tend to begin rainy, but can be balmy and sunny come late July/August. Early September is often characterized by a lovely, so-called “Indian Summer,” which is short-lived before the days turn rainier, colder, darker, and winter begins again. It is quite commonly remarked upon and joked about that winter takes up half the year, or the whole year for that matter, as one of my informants quipped: “Yeah, four seasons: winter and winter – no, coldest, colder, cold and not quite so cold” (Arnoldus 2004). There has been much concern of late, though, regarding the effects of global warming on local climate, which, while often

walks, camping, bush parties, tobogganing, dirtbiking, hunting, 4Xing, berrypicking, picnicking, etc...Every once and awhile, there is some concern that the land will be logged and/or sold for private interests, but it still remains the collectively used Lease Land.

⁵² And, I must say, this discrepancy was duly complained over every winter, especially when the official weather readings, taken at the Quesnel Airport in the valley and applicable for Quesnel and area (which means Kersley) were read over the radio and it wasn't quite cold enough for school closures. Only if it was colder than -32° C would the schools close, but that near 2° C difference between Kersley and Quesnel would mean that Kersley kids were being forced to go to school even though it was -33° C or colder in Kersley, but not, unfortunately, in Quesnel. Oh, the injustice of it all. I cannot convey the anxious anticipation of listening to morning weather reports and praying and hoping and praying some more that school would be closed.

making for shorter, milder winters, is having a very marked effect on the land. The cold snaps, the dips into the -30° C range, have become less and less, resulting in pine beetle larvae surviving Cariboo winters with more and more ease, thus resulting in great swathes of pine beetle kill. The standing, reddening, rotting, dead wood is tinder for forest fires and a perennial portent of yet another resource potentially about to go bust.

The forests in the heavily timbered Cariboo are lodgepole pine, spruce, small fir, birch, cottonwood and poplar (see fig. 2.25).⁵³ To the east of Quesnel, in the mountains with higher rainfall, cedar and larger spruce make an appearance. This is the boreal and sub-boreal landscape, described so evocatively by Brian Fawcett, a native PGer (one from Prince George):

[A] country of rivers and mountains without end; of chilly, dappled lakes and streams filled with trout and salmon; of abundant moose, bear, and wolves gracing pristine forest meadows; of tall skies, beneath which the hillsides are choked with wild lupines, daisies, and Indian paintbrush. Surrounding and infusing all of this are the dense forests local people call, with a deliberate lack of poetry, “the bush.” Calling the boreal forest “the bush” is an acknowledgement that the things you become intimate with in the northern forest aren’t centuries-old tree-giants looming over bunny-festooned carpets of green moss, with trout-filled brooks ambling gently by as if it were some dope-smoker’s sentimental greeting card. The northern forests are pine and spruce and balsam firs, none of them very large or picturesque. The forest flora runs from alder to thickets of Russian willow to spine-laden devil’s club that grows two metres or more high. And don’t forget the clouds of blood-sucking bugs, because they won’t forget about you. Only crazy people and loggers willingly enter the northern boreal forest. Sensible people live on the margins, in the clearings, along the streams, rivers, and lakes. They screen their porches and windows when they can afford to, and they buy insect repellent in gallon jugs whether they can afford to or not. (2003, 8-9)

⁵³ Brian Fawcett argues that these northern BC forests “are among the least glamorous on the continent. The dominant species grow slowly, they’re neither noble nor grand, and they aren’t characteristically covered in the kinds of picturesque mosses and lichens that attract nature photographers or professional ecologists” (2003, 46).

The dense thickets of bush shelter foxes, coyotes, wolves, cougars, black bears, grizzly bears, jackrabbits, grouse, moose and mule deer. Saskatoon berries, raspberries, minute strawberries, hidden caches of blueberries – all grow wild. Streams, creeks, springs, rivers, ponds, swamps and lakes are home to beavers, ducks, trout, salmon. Bald eagles, hawks, owls, chickadees, mosquitoes and no-see-ums patrol the skies. The bush is very much alive. The first hardy people to avail themselves of the unglamorous fecundity of BC's hard Cariboo Interior were members of the Chentsit'hala Carrier Nation or Western Dene People, who had been, for millennia, hunting, fishing, foraging and living in the region. Today, there are four First Nations bands in the Quesnel area: Alexandria, Kluskus, Nazko and Lhtako Dene (Red Bluff), with aboriginal populations making up roughly 9% of the approximately 24,000 people in the extended Quesnel area,⁵⁴ an area which is 21,766 km². This equates to a population density of about 1.1 persons per square kilometre.

In the whole of the Cariboo, with its land total of 80,626 km², the population is 65,659 people, a whopping 1.7% of the BC population. Twelve percent of this population is identified as aboriginal, tripling the 4% listed for the whole of BC. Visible minorities (not including aboriginals) account for 5% of the population, a considerable decrease from the BC percentage of twenty-two. Of these visible minorities, an overwhelming percentage is of South Asian origin (63.4%), while only 10.5% are Chinese. Immigrants make up 11% of the population, much lower than the 26% of BC's total, and of those immigrants, those coming from the USA lead with 21%, followed by Germany (15.2%),

⁵⁴ The new population numbers from the latest census (2006) have just been released, but none of the other statistics, so I will continue with the complete 2001 census numbers. The latest population poll does show a decrease, however, of 8%, the population now sitting at around 22,500 people in the greater Quesnel area.

the UK (13.6%), India (13.6%) and the Netherlands (5.2%). Any recent immigrants (a whole 580 people in the past ten years) are coming from Germany (31%), the USA (17%), India (5%) and the UK (4%). It seems the Asia-based immigrants who account for so much of BC's recent immigrant population are just not making their way into the Cariboo. Seventy-five percent of the population are BC-born Canadians, compared to the 66% in BC. Eighty-eight percent have a single mother tongue of English, in comparison to the 74% in BC. Of those with a non-English mother tongue, German (24.6%) and Punjabi (19.5%) are the major languages being spoken. Of Canada's two official languages, 95% only have knowledge of English, with 98% only speaking English. Of the population over twenty years of age, nearly 34% are without a high school graduation certificate. And on the religious front, 40% are espousing no religion.

Localizing these statistics even further, in the Quesnel area, where the city itself is has approximately 10,000 inhabitants,⁵⁵ but services an extended area of 24,000, 90% of the population is Canadian-born. Of the 10% foreign-born, most immigrated before 1991. Four percent of the population are identified as visible minorities, with the vast majority of South Asian descent (65%), followed by Chinese (14%) and Latin American (6%). Language-wise, 89% claim English as their mother tongue. On the spiritual front, 43% declare no religious affiliation, while 53% assert a Christian denomination. The most significant non-Christian religion to make an appearance is Sikhism with 3%. Educationally, 31% of the over twenty population never graduated from high school, while 29% have a high school certificate and/or some post-secondary. Only 10% have a

⁵⁵ The 2006 census has listed the population under 10,000 at approximately 9,300 – a population decrease of 7.1%.

university degree, while the remaining 30% is comprised of those with trade certificates and college diplomas. Generally speaking, women tend to have higher educations than men, except in the trade certification department. Economically, the area is based on the bush, that is to say, the forestry industry, which is predominated by male employment. Of the experienced labour force, 40%, mostly men, find direct employment in resource-based industries, as well as manufacturing and construction – the trades – while the service industries of sales, health, education, arts, etc. are filled by women. Men are typically tradesmen, trained in fixing, constructing, operating, while women assist, serve, teach. The trades pay more, so a woman with full-time employment in the Quesnel area is making, on average, \$17,000 less annually than the full-time employed male.⁵⁶

Bringing all these stats together, the Kersley-Quesnel area is predominately comprised of a white, English-speaking, Canadian-born population of mixed European descent. Gender divisions remain traditional, for the most part, with men as the manual-labour-performing, primary breadwinners. Women's work, including that in the home, remains those vocations traditionally associated with the ever-helpful female of the species – nurses, assistants, cashiers, sales associates, secretaries, teachers, social workers, etc. This one-industry area is built upon men's work – men going into the bush and the mills to cut and process and manufacture – while much of the secondary service-related industries, sprouting off of the wood, are staffed by lesser-paid women. As one of my informants noted, "The whole town's full of millworkers and truckdrivers and

⁵⁶ A full-time employed man makes, on average, \$48,000 per year, while a full-time employed woman earns \$31,000 a year.

cowboys and farmers and ranchers” (Minnett 2004), and this hardy, testosterone-driven living permeates the Cariboo.



Fig. 2.24. Looking east, an aerial overview of the landscape in the Quesnel area – bush, lakes, rivers, streams, mountains. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: I-27114.



Fig. 2.25. The boreal forest of the Cariboo surrounding Quesnel. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives Collections – call number: I-64925.

The Society upon the Land & Its Theatre

In which we examine the historical and current social networks formed in this region of the Cariboo, especially in Barkerville, Quesnel and Kersley, emphasizing the theatre being performed and its venues. A structural description of the Kersley Players' venue, the Kersley Community Hall, is given and along with an analysis of the calendrical placement of the plays.

Hectic schedule at Kersley Hall

Quesnel Cariboo Observer, 19 September 1984

The Kersley Community Hall, built in the late 1950's, is busy just about every day, especially during the winter, and vibrates with energy, like the town itself...Residents enjoy community activities such as dances, pot luck suppers, aerobics, ceramics, skating, hockey, broomball, cross country skiing, tennis, softball and organized children's parties. "People get together often. There's something of interest to everyone," says Bobbi Grant, secretary of the Kersley Community Association. Work bees are a common way of getting things done in Quesnel's satellite community...The goal is community spirit and community involvement. "We've built everything through community effort and have no debts at the community hall," says Mrs. Grant. The complex, hall, arena and tennis courts, were built by the people, from donations made by the people. "We're far enough from town (Quesnel) that a lot of entertainment is here. People that live here have the same ideals." People want their children to

grow up with some rural philosophy around them. At one time, says Mrs. Grant, everyone had a garden, some chickens or a cow, but now the community is becoming more urban...A lot of people work in Quesnel, use its facilities and do a fair amount of shopping there. "We don't try to be separate from Quesnel but we try to keep an identity."

When *The Dinner Party*, the first official Kersley Players' piece, was performed in the spring of 1987 in the Kersley Community Hall, it was part and parcel of an ongoing and well-established communal social activity and entertainment network, a network that had been in development for nearly a century. With construction of Kersley House by the Shepherds, a social hub was created for the blossoming ranching community, the "accommodating facilities [becoming] the scene of many weddings, anniversary parties, and community dances" (Patenaude 1996, 192). There were tea parties and May Day celebrations, picnics and pick-up hockey. In the midst of the remoteness and wildness of the frontier, a wildness fanned by gold-fevered quests, there was, according to BC historian Chad Evans, "the pioneers' desire for social organization, for humaneness, which is reflected in their societies that strove against the primitiveness of nature and men" (1983, 90-1), seeking permanency and purpose. Theatre, both amateur and professional, has been used extensively to show this stamp of civilization.

In his exhaustive history of frontier theatre, that is theatre in British Columbia, Chad Evans argues that the BC frontier and its culture have been indelibly shaped by the interplay between raucous Republican Yanks, with their manifest destiny mindsets and perennial pursuits of Eldorado, and stiff-upper-lipped Victorian Brits, with their colonial, imperialist worldviews and laudations of all things Olde England. As early as 1853,

gentrified British naval officers in Victoria were performing farces⁵⁷ for their own ranks, as well as selected colonists, with hopes of impressing British decorum “on an environment that was predominately green, prehistoric and [apparently] indifferent to human culture” (Evans 1983, 15). With the influx of gold-seekers in 1858 and the subsequent stock professional theatrical troupes who followed, “British amateurs pitted themselves against this American presence, forming societies and constructing theatres to assure their survival” (Evans 1983, 17). Chad Evans observes regarding the development of British Columbia theatre:

During the nineteenth century amateur entertainment appeared spontaneously in every urban scene in British Columbia, but what defines the early amateur theatricals is the British sense of class and elitism inherent in patronage and philanthropy of club performances. Financial benefaction was also the measure of moral improvement which such events bestowed upon society. After 1858 the colonists were somewhat garrisoned amid an American populace characterized by its self-seeking materialism. But while the exploitative, republican Americans came and went with the economic tide, the British persisted in their amateur tradition during the “dull winters” and depressed years. Amateur theatricals were social events that could revive strong images of “home” for the colonists. This was the conservative function of “private” theatricals, but in the Far West we see that this soon falls under frontier influences, and there is a constant shift from the private to civic purpose. The officers of the Royal Navy performing in music-halls; the Royal Engineers reaching outside of their garrison to the New Westminster citizens; the civil amateurs introducing topical material and non-professional women on stage in benefits for public institutions; all these egalitarian adaptations suggest a movement away from insular colonialism. (Evans 1983, 27-8)

Despite the theatrical impediments so typical in Canada – the climatic and geographic extremes, the small populations, the anti-theatrical prejudice – “Western Canadians in the nineteenth century were keen theatregoers” (Benson and Conolly 1987, 25) and amateur theatre performers. Indeed, as Canadian theatre historians Benson and Conolly simply

⁵⁷ An adjective commonly and easily assigned to plays featuring all-male casts *and* female roles.

state, “[t]heatre was extremely important to communities large and small in the West” (1987, 28). Structuring much of their public theatre work under the rubric of charity and “for a good cause,” amateur theatre groups encouraged society “to extract some positive benefits from the production of plays” (Benson and Conolly 1987, 6). Such an apparently moralistic, beneficent *raison d’être* was integral in demarcating conservative British traditions and rule from materialistic “Californians.”⁵⁸

Having come before the gold rush, the British colonists “had settled with a religious determination to create in the new world the quality of life they had aspired to in England” (Evans 1983, 69). Theatre, to them, “should aspire to the state of the art back ‘home’, in England” (Evans 1983, 67). The miners, on the other hand, had arrived in BC with get-rich-quick dreams, which included heading home as soon as they had struck pay dirt. The mining culture brought “characters” from the world over to BC, and “each person [was] spurred on by a romantic vision of their [sic] existence. The theatre did everything within its power to represent this romantic vision; and in this sense, melodrama and its complementary, unnatural and dreamlike staging, was close to the collective soul of the people” (Evans 1983, 69-70). Nostalgic songs performed by children, Shakespeare’s most rhetorical tragedies, particularly *Hamlet*, farces on British manners, variety shows and action-packed, paranoid, self-pitying melodramas were the theatrical favourites of the BC mining population. Dubbed “the poor man’s catharsis” by Eric Bentley (1965, 198), a melodrama had the potential to provide the miners with a release from the toiling work-a-day existence, the genre’s over-the-top mawkishness

⁵⁸ According to Evans, “[t]he denomination ‘Californian’ refers more to a state of mind than any racial sameness” (1983, 59).

emphasizing the uncontrollable, fateful elements of life. Tellingly, this melodramatic release has links to the farcical one now found in the Cariboo community of Kersley – a link to be explored in Act III.

In the Cariboo boomtown of Barkerville, the miners “put great value in fraternity” (Evans 1983, 90). With its deep diggings, Williams Creek gold mining could be attempted year round, although, what with the long, hard, cold winters, many opted to return to the coast when the snow came. Yet, since it was possible to work year-round, the stereotypical American placer miner, who drifted from strike to strike, was replaced by “many British and Canadian middle-class men who had become miners by chance as much as choice” (Evans 1983, 90). And the fraternal organizations they were forming “seemed to gain strength from the remoteness of the community” (Evans 1983, 90). With “the brutal quest for riches, and the forsaking of civilized behaviour” (Evans 1983, 90) on the one hand and the desire for social order, civility and humanity on the other, Cariboo culture becomes this constant interplay between two apparent oppositional forces. Theatrically, this “manifested [itself] in the coexistence of two dissimilar theatrical forms, saloon entertainment [with its gambling, boxing bouts, dancing girls and travelling showmen, generating profits for bar proprietors] and amateur theatricals [with their communally beneficial aims]” (Evans 1983, 91).

The Cariboo Amateur Dramatic Association (CADA) formed in the spring of 1865, becoming “the most important social group in Barkerville” (Evans 93). By 1868, they had purchased a saloon and converted it into a theatre, the Theatre Royal. Opening in May 1868, CADA presented two farces to a packed and appreciative house. Unfortunately, the Theatre Royal’s life was short-lived. On September 16, 1868,

Barkerville was destroyed by fire, and the hastily rebuilt town no longer included a theatre in and of itself. Barkerville's "citizens needed a firehall more than a theatre, so they decided to erect a two-storey, 60 by 30 foot structure to serve both C.A.D.A. and the Williams Creek Fire Brigade" (Evans 1983, 95; see fig. 2.26). Such a multi-functional, theatrical venue was the norm in western Canada, as theatre historians Benson and Conolly so note: "Creating theatre in the absence of conventional theatre facilities became a Western virtue" (1987, 26). Warehouses, skating rinks, fire halls, barns – all were potential theatres. Truly, the "[a]ccounts of poor facilities in theatres in Western Canada are legion, and are not entirely figments of the prejudiced imagination of easterners" (Benson and Conolly 1987, 27). That said, the big BC cities, like Victoria and Vancouver, had their "real" theatres, but one could argue that the predominant theatrical space in the west was one of multi-functionality, described by Benson and Conolly: "The theatres were unlike any other in Canada, before or since: multi-purpose buildings used for gambling, drinking and dancing, as well as for theatrical productions" (1987, 26). While Benson and Conolly refer here specifically to the grand theatres with even grander names commonplace to Dawson City during the Klondike Gold Rush, it is a description which could easily be extended to include theatres constructed in gold rush towns throughout British Columbia.

In their inventive theatrical spaces, CADA presented light comedies and farces, "although full length Victorian dramas were sometimes ventured. Spectacle was out of the question on the humble stage; and overtly serious plays were avoided, the miners having their share of gravity from the mining life itself" (Evans 1983, 97-98). Evans does also suggest that comedies were frequently chosen because "the untrained actors could

turn to caricature when their abilities were taxed” (1983, 98). Interlude performances included songs (usually sentimental ballads concerning separation and loss, although parodies did make an appearance as well) and poetry recitations (often written and performed by the so-called “Poet Laureate of Cariboo,” the Scotsman, James Anderson), followed by a burlesque afterpiece. The performance of a satirical melodrama, written by a local man about a topical subject, as an afterpiece in December 1869 bombed and CADA “returned to their repertoire of British plays” (Evans 1983, 100), performed every other Saturday night. Indeed, Evans contends that the two superimposed parent cultures of BC “were long in begetting any distinctly Canadian drama (indeed, it could be argued that, until recently perhaps, we have had a rather bastard culture in the Canadian Far West, which has failed to resolve its ambivalent parenthood or attain any measure of sophisticated individuality)” (1983, 71-72).

While CADA was staid in its British play content, it was far from staid in its membership. Despite consisting mainly of well-educated miners, mercantilists and civil servants – men who “wanted to arrange their entertainments in the traditional manner of amateur theatricals...and develop a measure of legitimate theatrical respectability which would be in accord with their middle-class, often British background” (Evans 1983, 92) – CADA was bisexual in the sense that, from its beginning, it was open to female membership. This is especially significant considering the fact “that during the 1860’s ladies seldom performed on the amateur stage. In Barkerville however, a place likened to a ‘penal settlement,’ such effete propriety was pointless. This was, after all, the wild frontier” (Evans 1983, 98). It was, therefore, not an uncommon sight in Barkerville to see

local women, both married and single, on the stage – a decided frontier distinction and liberating aberration from the norm.

By 1870, Barkerville was going bust. The gold was essentially gone, so the miners were moving on to more promising prospects or simply heading on home. Audience members and actors dwindled, along with the number of annual performances; there were only two in 1873. As Barkerville emaciated in the throes of its demise, CADA lingered around in various forms, even enlarging its mandate to include athletics. It was declared extinct by 1902, after ongoing squabbles with the Fire Brigade about management of the shared venue. Deemed unsafe, the Theatre Royal was demolished in 1937. Yet, even as Barkerville rapidly deteriorated, other Cariboo settlements, namely Kersley and Quesnel, began to steadily grow.

Supplying the goldfields, Quesnel naturally needed the amenities necessary to service the migratory mining populace and the increasing local population. Quesnel sported two large hotels, the Cariboo Hotel and the Occidental Hotel (see fig. 2.27-2.28), both of which had their entertaining spaces – pool halls, gambling rooms, bars and dance halls. Shows travelling to and from Barkerville spent their lay-overs in the Quesnel hotels, providing entertainment for the locals. Yet, the locals also provided entertainment amongst themselves, developing a societal infrastructure in their desire to civilize the frontier and come together in this strange, new, hard country, as Branwen Patenaude explains:

Quesnel essentially has been known as an area where people come and go all the time – terribly transitional – and so you never could really zero in on any population number for a long time. But then more cultured people and more highly educated people began coming and, of course, people of that nature, who don't have to scratch and keep their noses to the

grindstone *all* the time to survive, began to think of more cultural activities [JGJ: Right.] – and reading and libraries and things like that. (2004)

As the years wore on and more families settled in the area, more and more clubs, societies, associations, auxiliaries, organizations and groups were formed. There were sporting clubs: horseracing, swimming, tennis, lacrosse, baseball, shooting, curling, skating, lawn bowling, badminton, basketball and, of course, hockey. There were church and hospital auxiliaries, farming collectives, scouting troops. Cards were dealt, funds raised, picnics consumed, dances held, concerts performed, variety shows organized. Customary calendar events were celebrated annually – New Year's, Valentine's Day, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, May Day, Dominion Day, Independence Day (especially when there were many Californians pre-1865), Labour Day, Christmas – as well as the general household visiting throughout the year. And it seems distance was never an issue when it came to entertainment:

The distance travelled to attend a ball was of no importance. Quesnel people were known to drive by team to attend the annual Clinton Ball and the Lac La Hache Potlach. The BX steamer ran "excursion rates" for the dance at Soda Creek...With the increase in ownership of cars, weekly dances were held in rotation at Dragon Lake, Kersley and Bouchie Lake. Attendance at these dances always increased after the arrival each September of about fourteen area teachers on the P.G.E. "School Marm Special". Some of the young ladies remained in the area, trading the blackboard for a wedding ring. The hospital nursing staff was also vulnerable. The home grown girls were not overlooked either. Many a spark was ignited by a dance. (*Tribute* 1985, 304-5)

Fighting off the isolation inherent to remoteness, people did what they could to mingle, and that meant organized gatherings.

Lacking a community hall, Quesnelites often utilized the accommodating spaces of the large hotels as their gathering venues. The Cariboo Hotel, owned and operated by

the Norwegian carpenter, John Strand, and his English wife, Mary Barlow,⁵⁹ was an elaborate, three-storey building, continually beautified by the talented Strand since his purchase of the property in 1900. The hotel also had an adjoining barbershop, butcher shop and theatre, the Empress Theatre, which in common parlance was referred to as the Strand Theatre (see fig. 2.28). It was in the basement of the Strand that the January fire of 1916 started, destroying both the Cariboo and Occidental hotels, two stores and a bank. While the Cariboo Hotel was rebuilt, the theatre and the Occidental Hotel were not. Fortunately, the Rex Theatre, which had opened for business in July 1914, was unscathed, so Quesnel still had a gathering point (see fig. 2.29-2.30). The Rex's proprietor, Alex Windt, was apparently

exceptionally liberal with his theatre. He removed the seats when anyone wanted to use the building for a dance, and, when the dance was over, he screwed the seats to the floor once more. The building itself was used for meetings, musical evenings, lectures, travelling musicians and for theatricals. After the Occidental Hall was closed to entertaining, the theatre became the community hall. (Elliot 1958, 75)

As a privately owned community hall,

[t]he Rex was more than an ordinary movie-house...It was the meeting place for every conceivable kind of gathering in town. Concerts, badminton, speeches, masses – every kind of meeting was held there. Many prominent people spoke at the Rex in its heyday, and all the B.C. premiers who visited the Cariboo delivered their speeches in Quesnel's lone theatre. (McNeil and Stavrum 1977, 20)

In 1948, the multi-functionality of the Rex was ended when renovations installed a sloping floor and secured row seating. No longer were chairs quickly "hustled against the wall to clear the floor for dancing" ("Rex Theatre Has Long History" 1953, 21) after the film had ended. Since it is hard to play badminton and dance on a sloped floor covered in

⁵⁹ Sister of Sarah Shepherd, operator of Kersley House.

rows of seats, this was the end of the Rex as a community hall. Besides, the Legion Hall, complete with a stage, had already been constructed and in use since the 1930's (see fig. 2.31). A "real" movie theatre, the Carib Theatre,⁶⁰ opened for business in 1953, spelling the death of the newly renovated Rex. Having remained abandoned for years, the Rex was torn down in 1977.

Community spaces crave community use, and one of the popular uses was for amateur theatrical productions. Quesnel historian, Gordon Elliot, notes:

Theatricals have always been popular in the community. The dramatic society received its first impetus in 1910 and has continued to produce plays although it has undergone many changes in both name and policy since its inception. It has, however, steadfastly held to the idea that the legitimate stage is of importance to a Canadian culture and for this reason Quesnel has been referred to as the "drama city of the interior." (1958, 75)

Indeed, in the local newspaper, *The Cariboo Observer*, from January 29, 1910, it simply announces: "An Amateur Dramatic Association is being formed in Quesnel" (1). The productions were often fundraisers for some communal good cause – the various sporting clubs, the hospital, the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Legion, etc. The early plays performed, as one can glean from the newspaper reports, tended to be complicated British comedies or farces, with promises for "unlimited merriment on the part of the audience" ("Dandy Dick" 1915, 1). Post-play festivities often continued with music and dancing, as a 1916 newspaper article notes: "After the performance the floor was cleared, and dancing was indulged in, until about 2.30 a.m." ("Dramatic Club scores another success" 1). Along with the plays of the drama club, vaudeville and minstrel shows, comprising a

⁶⁰ I say "real" but in today's age of stadium seating, the Carib Theatre is decidedly quaint. There is a notorious dip in the sloped flooring, so there is one row about midway where you are actually lower than the row in front of you, making for rather annoying viewing. Locals recognize the dip and avoid it as much as possible.

multitude of community members and benefiting various charitable causes, were also popular, as remembered by Quesnel locals:

The old-time minstrel show was a favourite in the pre-twenties and required much time in the preparations. A variety show, long remembered, contained a nervous actor who had resorted to “Hiram’s” for courage. He came on stage, determined to do it his way. When others in the cast tried to subtly manoeuvre him, his retorts and off-script dialogue produced unexpected comedy. (*Tribute* 1985, 304)

With most of the newspaper reports documenting these theatrical productions dating from December, with the prerequisite Christmas concert naturally, to March (and sometimes into April and May), one can deduce that dramatic activity was essentially a winter to spring pastime.

The steady interest in theatre had earned Quesnel the label, “the drama city of the interior,” by the time of Gordon Elliot’s history writing in the late 1950’s. While a long-forgotten descriptor nowadays, it does indicate, along with the myriad of newspaper articles, the extent to which Quesnel citizens had embraced amateur dramatics since the formation of the first dramatic association in 1910. By the mid-1920’s, the local theatre was benefiting from the relocation of the Guy sisters, Flora and Josephine, from Minneapolis. Caring for their ailing great uncle, Sam Bohanon, Flo and Jo were apparently community sparkplugs, initiating many theatrical productions, the best remembered of them being *Leap Year Follies* in 1924. Hosting an all-female cast, the variety show script “was contrived by Josephine Guy” (Patenaude n.d., n.p.), having been inspired after an annual visit to Vancouver during which she saw a production featuring

the Dumbells.⁶¹ According to local historian Branwen Patenaude: “Flo Guy played a male part, dressed up in a pair of Mr. Maclure’s fawn coloured corduroy trousers. During the performance Mrs. Hutchcroft Sr. giggled aloud when the footlights revealed Flo’s unbuttoned fly” (1981, 15). Despite the good times, it seems that the theatrical activity had petered out by the late 1920’s, perhaps due in large part to Jo Guy’s departure in 1927.

In the fall of 1930, the Quesnel Amateur Dramatic Society reformed under the capable direction of Charles Edkins, an expat Brit and newcomer to the Cariboo via Saskatchewan, and as the 1931 newspaper recruitment announcement states: “There is no valid reason why Quesnel should not have a very live Dramatic Club – there is abundant talent in the town and a number of worthy causes that the Club could work for. Further, the meetings hold for the members plenty of fun and a good social time” (“Quesnel Amateur Dramatic Society” 1). Charles was “the guiding light and spirit” (Patenaude n.d., n.p.) of the Quesnel Amateur Players for over two decades, a talented actor, director, coordinator, sound effects man, set designer and make-up artist. He was also a founding member of the Cariboo Drama Association, an organization formed under the direction of Major Bullock-Webster and under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, to promote Little Theatre development in this area of the province.

The Welshman, Major Llewelyn “Bill” Bullock-Webster, was “one of B.C.’s most energetic and ubiquitous theatre personalities” (Hoffman 1987, n.p.), a British remittance

⁶¹ A popular Canadian vaudeville troupe from 1917-1932. Initially formed during WWI by members of the Canadian Army’s Third Division for the purpose of entertaining the troops, the Dumbells post-war, civilian existence included criss-crossing Canada twelve times for the next thirteen years and releasing twenty-seven recordings (Kaffmann and Moogk n.p.).

man who had arrived in the province in 1901. He founded the BC Dramatic School in 1921 in Victoria, where his high (read: British) standards were readily embraced by “a town that was more and more measuring its persona in the rhythms of graceful Olde England” (Hoffman 1987, n.p.). By 1932, his school had come to a Depression-induced end, but since the Little Theatre movement was in full swing across North America, with its mission “to create theatrical art rather than to passively receive or duplicate the commercial enterprises of other nations” (Benson and Conolly 1987, 51), Bullock-Webster was quickly hired as the director of “School and Community Drama” for the Department of Education to further Canadian drama. Appertaining to that position, the Major began “travell[ing] the province organizing drama workshops and festivals, screening adjudicators, dispensing theatre pamphlets he had written, and making the Department’s substantial theatre library, begun with a collection from his Dramatic School, available to anyone interested” (Hoffman 1987, n.p.), and the provincial amateur theatre association, the BC Drama Festival Association or Theatre BC (as it is now called), was born. This regional offshoot became part of a national theatrical network, the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF), which was in operation from 1932 to 1970, when it was succeeded by Theatre Canada. As the national theatre, the DDF organized regional amateur theatre competitions throughout the country, bringing in professional dramaturges/adjudicators – usually from one of Canada’s parent countries (which is to say, France or Great Britain) – to travel around to the various provincial competitions to judge and ultimately recommend plays worthy of competing on the national stage, at the DDF itself.⁶²

⁶² The argument, naturally, is that despite all the apparent patriotism and nationalism, the DDF and its

After the DDF-proselytizing visits of Major Bullock-Webster in the late 1930's, which "had no small share in arousing latent community interest in the drama" ("Twelve plays entered in 2nd drama festival" 1940, 1), the Cariboo Drama Association formed, armed with the mandate to organize regional drama festivals. The first Cariboo Drama Festival was held in 1939 in Quesnel, with the Legion Hall as the venue, and brought entries from Williams Lake, Prince George, as well as the local contingent. Preparations for these festivals had drama companies touring all over the region, honing their performances for the forthcoming competition. A 1940 newspaper article, reporting on the preparations for the second annual Cariboo Drama Festival, which was also held in Quesnel, states that

vigorous rehearsals have and will be undertaken, and it is reported that all of these plays have been developed to a point beyond the amateur standard. Reports from Williams Lake, Wells and Prince George indicate that the same efforts are being applied by the groups in those towns, and the predications are that the Festival audiences will be treated to a standard of acting hitherto not achieved in the Cariboo. ("Festival notes" 1)

Quesnel apparently excelled that year in their increasingly professionalized effort for the high standards touted by the Major, winning for best play, best actor and best actress.

The awards and laudations piled up over the years, with the 40's and 50's being, arguably, the golden age of Quesnel Little Theatre. In 1946, Quesnel Little Theatre, with its membership of fifty-five, was "signally honoured by an invitation from the executive committee of the First International Drama Festival, to be held in Victoria, to represent the northern part of the province" ("Little Theatre Players here receive honor" 1). That

standards were always imported, never indigenous, and therefore perpetuating the colonial mentality so prevalent in Canada, that understanding which ultimately "sets the great good place not in its present, nor its past nor in its future, but somewhere outside its own borders, somewhere beyond its own possibilities" (Brown 1971, 38).

same year, Quesnel cleaned up once again at the regional drama festival, taking top honours for J.M. Barrie's play, *The Old Lady Shows Her Medals*, directed by Charles Edkins, and for the play's main performers, Ella Ferguson Dixon and Peter Gook. This play was subsequently taken, in 1950, to the provincial drama festival in Victoria, which ended up bringing "honours to both Mr. Edkins as best director, and to Ella Ferguson Dixon as best actress" (Patenaude 1981, 69). In 1956, Quesnel won best play at the Cariboo Regional Zone Drama Festival, and so it goes. Over the years, there were the annual melodramas for Billy Barker Days and the Monty Python dinner theatres, the small productions and the large ones.

Performing typically a selection of Samuel French⁶³ catalogue comedies, dramas, musicals, English farces and melodramas, Quesnel Little Theatre lost audience and participant interest as the years wore on, especially as key or "star"⁶⁴ members moved away or stopped performing, culminating in the dissolution of the troupe in the mid- to late 1990's. It has yet to be reformed. This is not to say that amateur dramatics have ceased in Quesnel – far from it. But the stalwart, card-carrying membership in Theatre BC, with its Major aims, seems to no longer be a part of the local theatrical milieu. "High standards" have been swapped for a good time and a worthy cause. The Women's Centre

⁶³ Samuel French Inc. is probably the English-speaking world's most renowned theatrical publisher, play licensor and leaser, in business since the mid-1850's and named after its cofounder, the American, Samuel French. The company has a massive database/collection of copyrighted plays from which to choose and at a price, naturally, one orders manuscripts.

⁶⁴ "Star" members, as explained to me by Mary Beningfield, a former QLT member, were those who were already well-known and liked in the community at large, as she explains: "We [QLT] didn't have a following per se, unless it would be a particular director that – 'Oh, I know that person, so I'll go see their play!' – which was kind of unfair to the rest of us who direct. And so, you had your stars in Quesnel Little Theatre that people would go and see and it wasn't really fair because they might not try out for your play. Well, okay, so my play didn't make as much money because I didn't have the star in it, you know. And so, you did have that kind of thing" (2004).

celebrates International Women's Day with a production of Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*. Christmas concerts, school productions and campfire skits continue to be performed. Any groups forming, though, are often based on the energy and commitment of one or two "star" individuals and/or "star" causes, and when those stars burn out, the group clustering around them tend to also fade away. Yet, as the history of amateur theatre in Quesnel shows, there always seems to be a new star on the horizon to reform the troupes in some way or another. Currently, much of Quesnel's amateur theatre activity is centred about twenty kilometres south, in its satellite community of Kersley.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the formation of the Kersley Players, a point accordingly stressed by one of my informants, was "not something that just happened with Roy Teed. This is something that this community has always done. It's just part of community. That's how community works" (Koning 2004). Kersleyites have been coming together to socialize and humanize, to make an imprint on this frontier and form a community, since the settlement's early days. As the farms and ranches spread out around The Kersley, people began to gather and to organize. And the main gathering point for Kersley over the years has been its community hall.

The first Kersley Hall gathered its initiatory crowd in the spring of 1924, with the wedding of Hans Zschiedrich to Liesel Semmler. The hall was constructed on the northern section of the Zschiedrich property by Hans's father, Paul, as a home for Paul's parents, who never did live there. The house stood empty for a number of years until the wedding, when the unused building gained a new communal purpose. The Kersley Farmers' Institute – one of the first formalized organizations in the community, founded in January 1925 – was the first to begin regularly utilizing the space for its meetings and

sponsored social events. The hall soon became the hub of Kersley social activities – school concerts, dances, weddings, church services, anniversary parties, potluck suppers, you name it. Rent was five dollars and included heat, light and janitorial services. A large wood heater in the basement would be ignited early in the morning to make sure the hall was warm. Coleman lanterns lighted the rooms. And in the upstairs portion of the hall, bedding was provided for the children who accompanied their parents. Many children, now long since grown up, have fond memories of spying on the adults’ socializing below through cracks in the floorboards. During the 1930’s, the hall was expanded upon, doubling in size, in order to accommodate the growing need for a communal meeting place, especially as moving pictures began being presented there (see fig. 2.32-2.33).

Just as the hall grew, so too did the community and its social infrastructure. With a farming-based economy, it is not surprising that most of the early clubs being formed were agricultural in nature, with many directed towards keeping children on the land. To this end, Kersley of the 1940’s is full of a myriad of Junior Farmers’ Clubs – a Potato Club, Alfalfa Club, Beef Club, Calf Club, all precursors to what would become the 4-H Club. With the effects of WWII being felt even in little Kersley, women of Kersley and Australian formed a Sewing Circle in February 1941, armed with the mission to knit socks, gloves, mittens, toques and scarves for “the boys,” as well as make quilts for bombing victims. Funds were raised through whist and crib tournaments/parties. It was during the 1940’s, as discussed earlier, that the Cariboo’s lumbering potential was noticed, and this discovery prompted an industrial explosion, bringing many to Kersley post-WWII. In 1946, the community’s first store, the Kersley Store, was constructed by two recent immigrants to the area, Archie Thompson and Bill Jones. The partnership

didn't last long, and by the end of the decade, Bill Jones had constructed his own store, the K.H. Store, just up the road and across from the Kersley Hall (hence the store's name).⁶⁵ These stores were gathering points for shooting the breeze, passing the time and community chitchat. The presence and viability of these stores testifies to the growing number of non-ranching Kersleyites and the economic boon affecting the area.

And the boon and boom continued into the 1950's. February 1950 saw the foundation of the Kersley Women's Institute (WI), an organization of women who did just that; they organized and continue to organize – Halloween parties, bridal and baby showers, Christmas concerts, dances, Mother's Day teas, picnics, food preservation workshops, a travelling library, sewing clubs, babysitting courses, cribbage tournaments, community speakers, reel-to-reel film showings, student bursaries, classroom fieldtrips, fundraising auctions, among many other things, including, interestingly enough, skits and plays. Under the direction of Mary Robins, a post-WWII British immigrant to Kersley, the WI began performing at both the halls in Kersley and Australian⁶⁶ to much community enjoyment. Husbands were even encouraged "to join the fun by taking on supporting roles" (qtd. in Crocker-Teed and Grant 2003, 85). This off-shoot of the WI was called, by 1955, Kersley Little Theatre. Not much is known or remembered about the group, but it can be presumed to be a very local and informal community theatre created and performed for Kersley eyes only. The extent of its existence is also unknown, but one can surmise that, as a socially relaxed, fluid group, it formed when entertainment was

⁶⁵ Both stores had closed for business by the mid-1970's. The Kersley Store dwindled out of business by the early 1960's, while the K.H. lasted into the 70's until it was destroyed by fire one cold day in early January 1975. Kersley was without a store until March 1982, when Saskatchewan emigrants, the Gessner and Samoleski families, opened the Kersley Kupboard (K & K), which now sports a Gold Rush-era façade and a new name, the Kersley General Store, although locals still tend to call it the K & K.

⁶⁶ Constructed in 1957 and torn down in the 1970's.

wanted for a Christmas party or community barbeque or what-have-you and then dispersed again afterwards. Like Quesnel entertainment, this too was contingent upon a “star,” namely the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of Mary Robins. One well-documented theatrical performance, which included Mary Robins and many more, took place in 1967 to celebrate Kersley’s and Canada’s centennial. *Long Long Trail*, as the show was called, was a retrospective of Kersley’s development, showcased through dance (can-can, Charleston, square, go-go, etc.), music and song. Apparently, the packed hall was especially delighted with the “[f]our lovely [can-can] ‘ladies’, two of whom wore beards” (qtd. in Crocker-Teed and Grant 2003, 92), and after the show, Kersley was declared to be “one of the closest knit, hard working districts in the area” (qtd. in Crocker-Teed and Grant 2003, 92).

Working to become an active, close-knit community, Kersley residents founded, in 1954, probably the most important organization in Kersley’s history, the Kersley Community Association (KCA), which is essentially the municipal governing body of this unincorporated place. In patriarchal Cariboo fashion, this is an overwhelming male-dominated “government,”⁶⁷ with women filling such supportive roles as secretaries and treasurers and enlisted to organize communal social activities. The ancestor of the KCA began on May 23, 1954 with the initial aim of being a local athletic club, the Kersley Athletic Club (KAC). Terry Toop, Lower Mainland immigrant, logger, prospector and proprietor of the Torches Café,⁶⁸ was president, with Elsie Haroldson, the local

⁶⁷ There has been one female president in the KCA’s entire history, a one-year term by the above-noted community “star,” Mary Robins, in the early 1960’s.

⁶⁸ The first café in the area, built in the early 1950’s by Terry and Marj Toop, who had arrived in Kersley in 1947.

schoolmistress, as secretary/treasurer. The idea was to form a baseball club, but it quickly morphed into more, especially after the women got involved. There were no objections when, five days after its inception, a social committee was formed. Dinners, dances, parties, picnics, turkey shoots and even some baseball games followed. Emphasis on the importance of healthy recreation, spurred on by the KAC, helped to establish local packs of Lord Baden-Powell's worldwide organization of cubs, scouts, brownies and guides. Sports Days were held, teams formed and tournaments played. And people continued to enjoy the great outdoors – fishing, hunting, camping, prospecting, swimming, ice skating, snowmobiling, skiing, tobogganing, etc.

By 1959, the KAC had reformed itself into the Kersley Recreation Commission (KRC), a registered organization under the auspices of the British Columbia Recreation Association. Members began to attend regional courses and provincial conventions on recreation management, obviously keenly interested in advancing their association's scope and capacity. In 1958, Walter and Betty Edwards, local ranchers, essentially donated a parcel of land to the community, drawing up a 99-year lease contract, in which the KRC was required to pay the hefty sum of one dollar a year.⁶⁹ Upon this communal land, the KRC laid the groundwork for what has become the Kersley Community Complex. The first major development for this land was the resolution to construct a new community hall. In November 1959, the last rites of the first Kersley Hall were celebrated in the same way as its initiatory ones, with a wedding. The new Kersley Community Hall opened its doors in 1960. It was the same year that Jean and André Arnoldus opened the

⁶⁹ In 1997, the land was sold for one dollar to the Cariboo Regional District, making it officially Kersley communal property.

Alamo, a local diner and gas station, located almost directly across from the newly constructed hall.⁷⁰ It became something a community staple, providing morning coffee gab sessions, poorly paid employment to many a local and babysitting for many a waiting child. The school, the hall and the diner began concentrating community development in their proximity. The next major development for the KRC was a rather ambitious project – the construction of a covered arena.

By 1967, the Kersley Community Hall had added kitchen and bathroom facilities, the WI had purchased a kiln, housing it in the Australian Hall and thus starting the local ceramics club, and the KRC was drawing up plans for an arena. It was in that centennial year that the Kersley Community Association officially formed, with Tony Selzler, owner of the K.H. Store, as its first president. It appears to have run concurrently with the KRC until 1971, when the two amalgamated into the current association. The arena was finished, after much hard work, in 1972, although additions and improvements have been made to it almost annually since its “completion.” There was, naturally, a big party to celebrate its construction.⁷¹ In that same year, Kersleyites voted yes to the implementation of a Kersley Recreation tax, an extra property tax to support and sustain their communal recreational facilities. A local referendum in 1987 reaffirmed this special tax, reconfirming the sense of communal propriety and pride for Kersley’s community complex.

⁷⁰ With the rerouting of the highway, the first Alamo was bypassed, so a new Alamo was constructed in 1972 about 500 metres south of the first, right alongside Highway 97.

⁷¹ The Kersley parties of the 60’s and 70’s, both in the bush and at the hall, are legendary – lots of dancing, drinking, hash-inhaling, drag racing and fighting.

By the end of the 1970's, Kersleyites were enjoying the amenities of a hall, a fitness park, a pottery shack,⁷² a ball diamond and an arena. With so many facilities and activities, it was deemed prudent in 1980 to hire a fulltime recreation director, namely Roy Teed. By 1983, the complex's parking lot had been paved and a tennis court added. By 1985, the arena was expanding to include two fire hall bays, a racquetball court, weight room and an apartment for the recreation director, which he briefly used. By 1987, the *farceurs*, the Kersley Players, had formed, performing their risqué plays and finding their initial good cause in supporting the Cariboo-born and raised Rick Hansen⁷³ and his "Man in Motion" world tour (see fig. 2.34). By 1990, the hall was being renovated with new kitchen and bathroom facilities, more storage rooms and wheelchair accessibility and, notably, a green room for the Players. In 2001, a new fire hall was constructed and, in keeping with the seeming cooperation between fire halls and theatre troupes that has been established since Barkerville days, the two old bays now house Roy Teed's office, a community meeting room and Studio P, the soundstage/rehearsal space/storage room of the Kersley Players. In 2002, a new theatre group made its first appearance on the Kersley scene – the Kersley Musical Theatre. Under the leadership of Janice Butler, a recent emigrant from southern Alberta, this so-called "family-oriented" theatre has met with resounding success. The cast and crew of over one hundred, consisting of people from all over the Quesnel area and beyond,⁷⁴ perform annually every February/March their classic

⁷² The former teacherage was relocated to the communal grounds to house the kiln, which the WI had donated to the community, and be the clubhouse of the Kersley Mudhens.

⁷³ He hails from Williams Lake.

⁷⁴ During a recent production, one of the actors was actually commuting from Prince George every evening to perform.

musicals⁷⁵ to sell-out crowds for a week. The implications of this “other” group for the Kersley Players will be examined at a later point. Thus far, though, Kersley and its hall do seem to be big enough⁷⁶ to support two separate theatre troupes, although not without some toes being stepped on and egos bruised.

When, in November 1986, Bobbi Grant was organizing once again the annual community Christmas party, she wanted to do something different. For years, the entertainment had been reel-to-reel movies and cartoons along with Santa Claus,⁷⁷ of course. But to spice it up, “Bobbi Grant said, ‘Let’s do a Christmas play. Roy, write us a Christmas play.’ The play was written, the cast was found, lines rehearsed and when it came time to name ourselves Bobbi said in her inimitable way, ‘Hey, we’re the Kersley Players,’ and so we were” (*Lace Drakes Playbill* 1997, n.p.). Thus began the Kersley Players, as one of my informants relates:

In fact, it was out of community spirit that the Kersley Players evolved. It was fun. It was – I think we got involved actually before there was video games and all that. You know, it was entertainment. It was entertainment for the community and for the people involved. And it was fun...The whole thing – I mean, I don’t even know if you remember – we started off with – well, we did that one play⁷⁸....Then we got involved with bringing movies and stuff into the community and showing them at the hall. And Roy, you know, has always kind of written plays. You know, we got – we’d started doing things at Christmas and at Halloween and that sort of

⁷⁵ Since 2002, the Kersley Musical Theatre has performed *Anne of Green Gables*, *Annie*, *Wagon Wheels West*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Oliver* and *Wizard of Oz*.

⁷⁶ In 2008, the hall underwent renovations yet again, with an extension being added on the stage end (the east side) to theatrically accommodate the two theatre troupes with a larger stage and expanded backstage space. I have not seen the results personally.

⁷⁷ I remember telling kids at school that my mother had Santa’s telephone number. The Santa of my youth was a storyteller extraordinaire, who could tell fantastic tales about exploits with his reindeer and deftly handle any prying questions from suspicious youngsters. In later years, he was accused of child molestation. But his stories, coupled with the sleigh and deer tracks in our yard (put there by my father, I rationally realize now), fed my sense of wonder, the sense that led me into folkloristics.

⁷⁸ The silent movie, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon*, from 1972.

thing. And it all kind of evolved out of that. And yeah, so that's kind of – and it was fun. (Jack Grant 2002)

The Kersley Players' creation gelled because of the agar provided by decades of socializing and humanizing of the frontier. Years of community get-togethers and organizing and generating fun were the culture medium from which this theatre troupe could grow and evolve.

Emerging from such a communal network, it seems apropos that the Players perform only plays written by a local community member, with the majority of monetary benefits being generated going to local groups – the elementary school, the volunteer fire department, the community association, the Women's Institute, the Girl Guides/Scouts, the Mudhens, the 4-H club, and so on. Tens of thousands of dollars have been fundraised over the years through the catering of the many dinner theatres, and the provision of such “an opportunity for local groups to raise money with only a small investment in time and effort is a very important part of being a Kersley Player” (Crocker-Teed and Grant 2003, 89). Along with their annual fundraising plays, the Kersley Players – well, a kind of offshoot of them anyhow (it's not formally the Players) – have stayed true to their origins and perform a Roy Teed Christmas skit for the annual community Christmas party, just as they did back in 1986.

While still yoked very much to the local, the Kersley Players joined, in 1990, that provincial community theatre organization, Theatre BC – a regional member of Theatre Canada – and soon found themselves thrust onto foreign stages performing in front of outsiders. The repercussions of this decision resound today, as the apparent “professionalized” direction of the troupe caused a group schism. Many former Players

claim that the fun died when the troupe left Kersley and got “serious.” An in-depth investigation into this serious versus fun imbroglio, this professional versus amateur brouhaha, will be undertaken in Act IV, but in acting away, the Kersley Players have increasingly honed their craft under professional direction and guidance, not to mention the Major’s standards, and changes have, quite naturally, resulted. Since their membership in Theatre BC, the Kersley Players have won over forty awards (individually and collectively) at regional drama festivals in the Central Interior Zone (CIZ),⁷⁹ which includes the towns of 100 Mile House, Williams Lake, Quesnel and Prince George (see fig. 2.35). They have been regaled with laurels for best actors and best actresses, best ensembles and best backstage crews, best costumes and best scripts (see Appendix I for an overview of all the plays and their honours). They have been selected as scene development or workshop plays on several occasions, earning berths to Mainstage, the provincial drama competition, and thus bringing their performances to a truly wider audience. In 2000 with *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch*, *Whee-hee* and again in 2008 with *The Good Game*, the Kersley Players were selected as the Central Interior Zone’s best production, chosen to represent the zone at Mainstage. On both these occasions, Roy Teed has received merits for his original scripts and recognition of his talent. His scripts are now actually making their way into the repertoire of other theatre troupes around the province, so it is not a complete aberration to see what was once a Kersley Player play being performed by a whole new set of players in Maple Ridge or Williams Lake or Prince George.

⁷⁹ The province is divided into ten regions or zones. There are currently seventy member clubs of Theatre BC province-wide, according to the member list for 2006-2007.

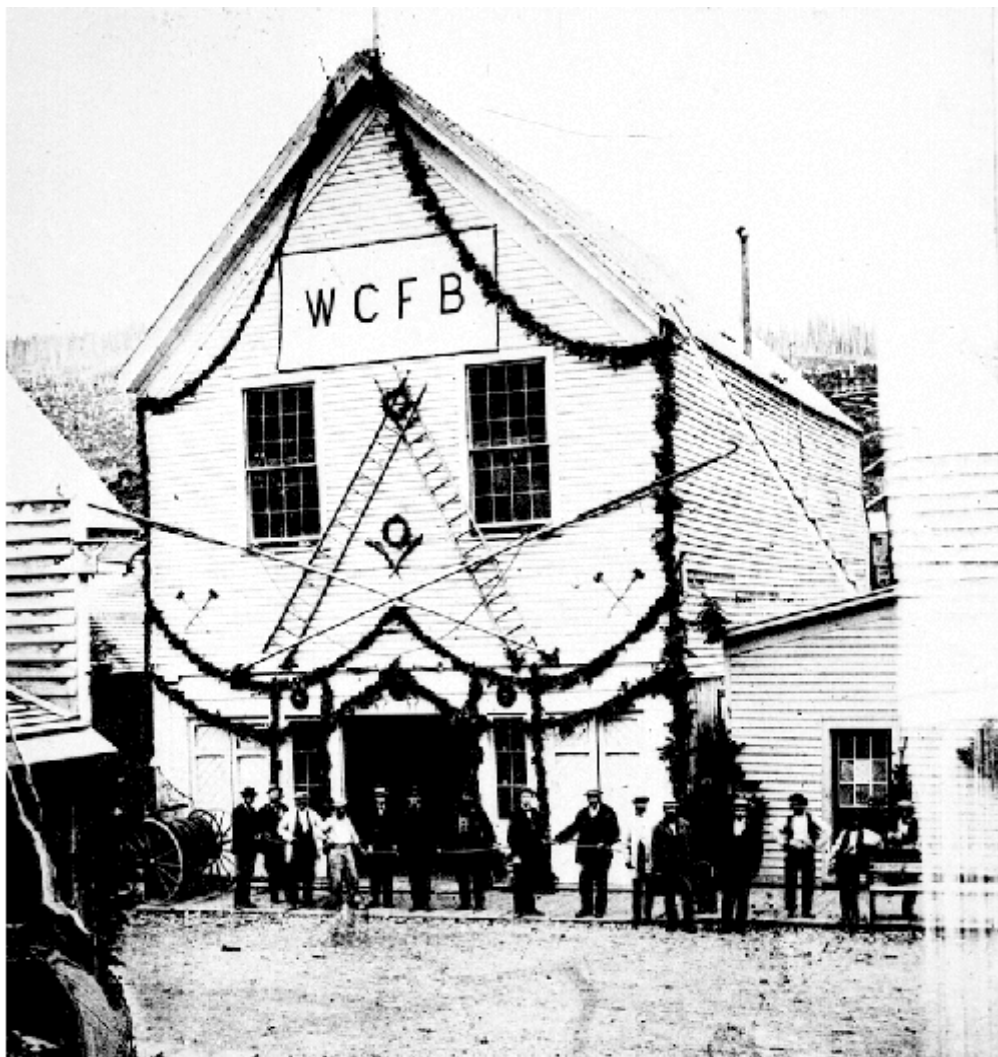


Fig. 2.26. Barkerville's Williams Creek Fire Brigade Hall and Theatre Royal, home of CADA. Photo courtesy of the BC Archives collection – call number: A-03761.



Fig. 2.27. Occidental Hotel in Quesnel. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1982.8.1.



Fig. 2.28. New Cariboo Hotel in Quesnel – the Empress Theatre, commonly called the Strand Theatre, is to the left. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1998.3.1.1.



Fig. 2.29. Quesnel's Rex Theatre on the right. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1992.100.5.



Fig. 2.30. Dance inside the Rex Theatre, Quesnel, circa 1920's. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P1986.101.1.



Fig. 2.31. The Legion Hall in Quesnel. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P5975.491.1.



Fig. 2.32. Expansion on the original Kersley Hall, circa 1930's. Photo courtesy of the Quesnel Museum & Archives – call number: P2000.4.1.



Fig. 2.33. The old Kersley Hall, as it currently stands disused and abandoned today. The snowy slopes of Green Mountain loom in the background. Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.



Fig. 2.34. Rick Hansen receiving the proceeds from *The Dinner Party* performances, along with a VHS of the play (it is in his hand). KCA president, John Grimm (right) did the honour, while Ted Melanson (centre), principal of Kersley Elementary School, held the megaphone. April 1, 1987 in the Kersley Community Complex parking lot. Photo courtesy of Kathie Ardell Prentice.



Fig. 2.35. Map of British Columbia showing the ten regional zones of Theatre BC. The Kersley Players belong to the Central Interior zone. *Source:* Theatre BC, <http://www.theatrebc.org/bckgrndr/TBCmap.htm> (accessed September 20, 2009).

The Theatrical Season of the Kersley Community Hall

In which the significance, or lack thereof, of the calendrical placement of the plays is explored and in which the tangible structure of the Kersley Community Hall is described, highlighting the structural modifications made in order to accommodate the Players.

For those scholars of the ritual origins theoretical persuasion, just the fact that these plays are typically performed in the spring would be enough to elicit an ejaculatory

whoop, inseminating the plays with some calendrical fertility rite explanation. And while it is perhaps significant that these plays are, generally speaking, annual spring customs for Kersleyites, there are no magico-religious overtones or undertones as to their seasonal placement. Indeed, as Jack Santino points out, astrological and calendrical plottings cannot account completely for customary practices:

The turning of the seasons (and the chores this brings) along with the journeys of the sun, moon, and stars, while they may have been the primary inspirations of many of our feasts, festivals, and celebrations, are in themselves not enough to explain them. One can only speculate about some prehistoric time and place where festivals of the solstices were that and only that, pure and simple. In any recorded history, no matter how ancient, festivals are dressed up in religion, politics, commerce, and society. That is, festivals, as they are understood by their celebrants, are culturally specific: they honor deities, commemorate significant historical events, and solidify social ties. (1994, 23)

Solidifying social ties seems to be something of a pragmatic and practical imperative for a Caribooite during the long, dark, cold winters, and being a part of a “Roy” play aids in this process of social connection, as one of my informants so states: “It’s definitely – it definitely helps in the winter-times to get over those winter blahs, you know. We start rehearsing around January-February, you know, and it’s a great time to get busy on something. [JGJ: Cabin fever.] Yeah, yeah, cabin fever, that’s right” (Drewcock 2004). Living in a northern clime, with its extensive winters and the isolation that such cold and darkness succour, there is a basic human compulsion for contact, for sociality, for connections to overcome those winter blahs and curtail that cabin fever. Theatre has fulfilled this winter social function in the Cariboo area since the first settlements and pioneers began organizing themselves. That said, though, getting together for playtime during these winter months and working towards a grand unveiling in the spring is, in a

way, echoing the very process of the earth itself during its hibernating months. Truly, “[s]pring begins in the dead of winter” (Santino 1994, 47) and the preparations for and the anticipation of its arrival start in the darkness and help stave off the cold.

Seasonally and symbolically, spring is a time of rebirth, and as such, is a time fecund with customary practices and folkloric traditions. Simon J. Bronner, in his examination of student folklore, notes this human predilection for spring festivities:

Spring seems to bring out the most hilarity in students. Spring festivals, known as “riots,” “rites,” “flings,” “fevers,” and “storms,” serve notice that the school year is almost over, the days are longer, and the sun is shining once again. Typically, the festivities are meant to release tension shortly before finals. There’s pattern to this release in folklore. One source is ancient: the connection of spring with birth and renewal. People come out of their womb-like homes and emerge outside to flourish. Spring is also a time when the ground becomes fertile, and many college festivities respond with tree and flower planting ceremonies. Spring to the ancients was also a time of reversal. The light replaces the dark, the green replaces the brown, the warmth replaces the cold. In keeping with this idea, many spring festivities feature comic reversals. Men dress as women, students act as faculty, adults act as children. (1990, 93-4)

Thematically, “Roy” plays certainly follow these patterns of comic reversals, temporarily replacing the culturally codified Cariboo norms with jesting, farcical nonsense, as will be explored in the next Act. In this sense, the performance of these plays in the spring very much fits with this ancient, archetypal release into the light and the subsequent celebratory license.

While it may be tempting to interpret the placement of these plays along such symbolically cosmic and calendrical lines and times, the timeframe truly affecting and enforcing the plays’ placement is much more dependent upon the arbitrary human delineation of time and schedule coordination. Autumn, late spring/early summer productions have become increasingly common, especially as considerations are made for

Players' lives outside of the play realm. Involvement with Theatre BC and its zone and provincial competitions, which typically take place in June, have pushed, in some cases, the play rehearsals into spring itself, the final productions happening in May or June. This lessens the time committed to play development, a welcome respite for the Players, acknowledging life duties and responsibilities outside the playground. One simply cannot play *all* the time. The creation of the Kersley Musical Theatre, with its February/March productions, have also initiated scheduling conflicts for those Players acting in both troupes, as well as tensions regarding the sharing of spaces and amenities. The intensity of play involvement often requires some downtime, so with the two Kersley troupes acting too closely in conjunction with one another, there can be Player and community exhaustion. And exhausted Players often do not want to come out and play, and their absence is felt deeply in a small troupe that needs as many Players as it can scrounge up and is often scrambling for more. So, for those scholars of the ritual origins persuasion, the ejaculatory jubilations are a bit premature. The time of the season for the Kersley Player plays is primarily dependent upon human schedules – playwright whims, Player availability, venue bookings and the like.

The ludic venue, *always* booked for the Players, is the local community hall. Since its construction in 1960, the current Kersley Community Hall has been the communal gathering point (see fig. 2.36). With a decidedly pragmatic and basic architectural design, the hall is essentially a rectangular box, once clad in plywood, painted brown, and now covered in light blue and white aluminium siding. Like many community halls, it is a dark, cold space, with little natural lighting except from the few, small, wire-meshed windows placed high up near the ceiling along its southern side. It

sports a practical hardwood floor with increasingly faint red lines of athletic boundaries from the time when it was utilized as the local school gymnasium. It smells, quite naturally, of hall, that cold, slightly musty odour of shut-in spaces being opened up after a period of abandonment. The walls are painted a muted dusty rose colour and bare the cracks and incisions, the wear and tear, of perpetual hall-decking for all manner of occasions. A wooden chair rail skirts the hall walls separating the complementary muted grey colour underneath from the pink above.

One enters the hall through double doors from the western end into a drafty vestibule. Walking briefly through the vestibule, one passes through yet another set of double doors into the great space itself. The stage is positioned directly in front, across the expanse of floor, at the far, eastern end of the hall, framed by its burgundy velveteen drapes. Clusters of rooms, mostly new additions and renovations, hedge the hall space along the western and northern edges. A storage room housing tables and chairs and other bits and bobs lies on the right side of the vestibule, while the cloak and boot room lies on the left side. Running up along the left, northern side of the hall are four doorways, the first two being the former bathrooms, which now house a storage room and the liquor room – there is a window into the room for the selling of wares. Next comes the expanded kitchen, with its industrial dishwasher and two gas ranges, large freezer and even larger commercial refrigerator, making it one of the best hall kitchens, if not *the* best, in the Quesnel area.⁸⁰ It too houses windows into the hall, one for the delivery of dirty dishes and the other, larger one for serving food, and even has an actual window and door

⁸⁰ This assessment comes from experience. I am the daughter of the caterer who pretty much designed the Kersley Hall kitchen to be her dream catering kitchen – lots of counter space, a whole area for washing up, multiple sinks, just all the facilities necessary for smooth-running food service.

looking north across the parking lot towards the arena, tennis courts and ball diamond. The last doorway, up near the stage on the left, leads to a mini hallway with branches leading to the various toilet facilities and a hall exit. Along the stage end itself, there are two doorways; the one on the left heads to the basement and the furnace and more storage, while the one on the right leads up to the stage (see fig. 2.38-2.42).

Never constructed with *real* theatre in mind, the stage, for years, was more of a place for bands to set up and/or kids to run around and jump off of. Again, access to the stage was only from the front, and there was no backstage space excepting a broom closet and a slightly bigger pantry-like closet. This made for some close quarters during those early Kersley Player plays, as the actors huddled and sweated behind the backdrops, desperately having to urinate, as some of the stories go. With the increasing development of the Kersley Players and their plays into an annually anticipated event and the group's dramaturgical growth through its involvement with Theatre BC, their operating space also began to develop as well. Instead of a shabby, white and grey walled stage with brown, plywood flooring, all is now painted black. Stage extenders have been built. And the ceiling of the hall now sports mounts for professional theatrical lighting (see fig. 2.40-2.41).

The hall renovations in 1990 took the needs of the Players into consideration and a "green room" was built onto the hall's northeast corner with backstage access and, more importantly, bathroom access (See fig. 2.37 and 2.43-2.45). The green room is a small, windowless room, its walls today cluttered with the paraphernalia of plays past – scraps of wallpaper from various productions, lines of paint, framed certificates of theatrical awards, the miscellaneous, material bric-a-brac of memories. There is also a trapdoor in

the floor, since the room is level with the stage, and that underneath space is utilized for storage and/or for when it is necessary to wet down an actor who's supposed to have fallen into a stream, as was the case in *Strangers on a Glade*.⁸¹ Indeed, the spatial accommodations mirror the increasingly slick productions, in which one finds headsets and electronics backstage instead of hand signals and manual light switches. Further accommodating the Players and refining this playground, a former fire hall bay has been granted as a practice space or studio by the Kersley Community Association. With the construction of a new fire hall south of the hall in 2001, two bays were left empty, and have since been renovated into a community meeting room and Studio P, the sound stage of the Kersley Players (See fig. 2.46-2.49). Studio P has a small raised platform or stage, again painted black, and contains all the costumes, props, lights, wall flats, stage extensions and memorabilia collected and constructed over the years. This space has allowed the Kersley Players to move out of the hall for rehearsals, also giving them a room of their very own for pre-production preparations and warm-up (putting on make-up and costumes, drinking beer, etc.) before walking across the parking lot to the hall, where they can now sneak in backstage through the bathroom entrance. No more mucking about in hall bathrooms, private homes or arena rooms. In 2008, for the first time ever, the Kersley Community Hall became the venue for Theatre BC's Central Interior Zone Festival and the Kersley Players the hosts. In preparation for this event, an extensive and expensive⁸² renovation of the hall's stage was planned and completed. With funding secured through recreation grants, the whole eastern end of the hall, which is to say, the

⁸¹ This was done with cold water during the final showing, much to Deleenia Lovell's shock and the backstage crew's delight.

⁸² It cost approximately a quarter of a million dollars.

stage end, has been expanded, creating a much larger backstage area, including an increased basement space. There are now dressing rooms and proper toilet facilities for performers.

Despite all the refinements to this playground and the accommodations for its players, the hall remains a hall and *not* a theatre. It still smells of hall. It still lacks risers and good acoustics. It continues to be used daily for a myriad of community affairs and life-cycle markers – meetings, marriages, parties, memorials, reunions, craft sales, dances, potlucks – not unlike those multi-functional western theatre spaces so typical of the Gold Rush and its frontier towns. The Players themselves have performed on *real* stages and in *real* theatres throughout the province now, and yet, they remain tied to this rectangular box plunked down in the middle of nowhere. There is just *something* about the space, as one of my informants notes:

I mean nothing against the Kersley Hall, but I mean for as many people – I mean, they sell out all the time – I mean, they could go to the Correlieu theatre, right, and have a proper stage and everything, but they don't because it seems like it's a Kersley thing. It's the atmosphere of the tiny, little hall. You're going in. You sit. It's all hot and crowded. (Grimm and Grimm 2004)

“A Kersley thing,” the Players are irrevocably yoked to their hall and their community, and it is this communal proprietary air and close-quartered atmosphere which envelops the performances and makes them successive successes – a point to be elaborated on in Act IV.



Fig. 2.36. Kersley Community Hall, as seen looking southeast.



Fig. 2.37. Addition to the Kersley Hall in 1990, as seen from the north. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

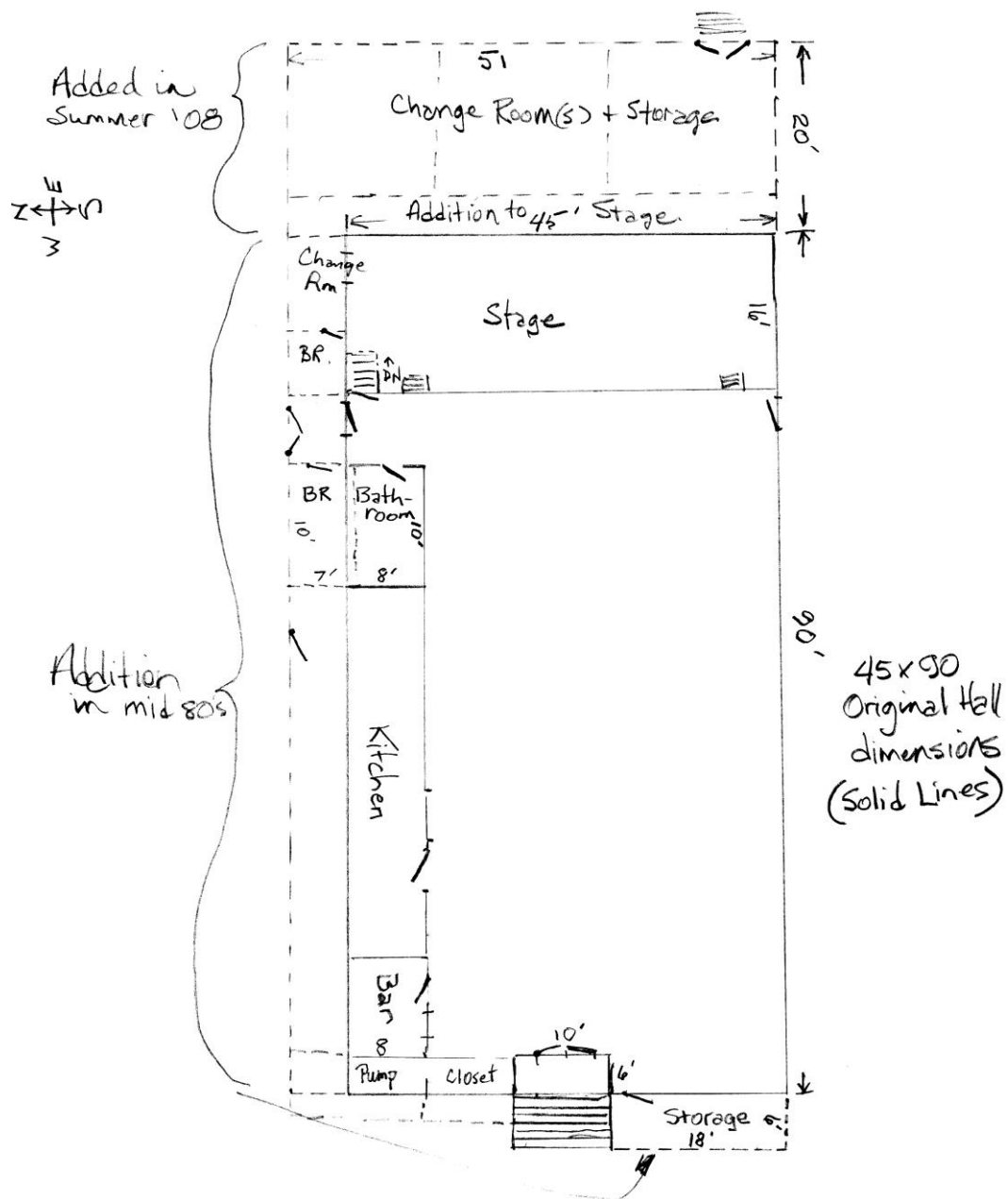


Fig. 2.38. Floor plan and dimensions of the Kersley Hall, as drawn by Jack Grant. It is not entirely accurate, seeing as he has forgotten a jog here and a doorway there, but considering that there are no existing blueprints for the hall and that he was drawing much of it from memory, it is close enough.



Fig. 2.39. Stage of the Kersley Hall, as seen from the main hall entrance and facing east.



Fig. 2.40. Interior of the Kersley Hall, facing west and as viewed from the stage. Notice the metal pipes on the ceiling for lighting mounts.



Fig. 2.41. Bert Koning mounting the lights for the 2004 production of *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 2.42. Interior of the Kersley Hall, facing northeast and looking at the entranceway to the kitchen and, further along, the bathrooms and the basement.



Fig. 2.43. The cluttered and cramped Green Room as seen entering from the stage and, therefore, facing north.



Fig. 2.44. Looking from the Green Room onto the stage, which is to say, facing south. Notice the variety of wall décor – scraps of plays past.



Fig. 2.45. The trapdoor in the Green Room.



Fig. 2.46. Entrance to Studio P in the former fire hall bay, as seen from the south.



Fig. 2.47. Sign above the door to Studio P.



Fig. 2.48. Facing southwest, the rehearsal stage of Studio P.



Fig. 2.49. Studio P spotlights and wardrobe.

Working-class Worldview: Earth First! Then We'll Log the Other Planets...
In which the general worldview of a Caribooite (Quesnelite and Kersleyite) is examined, a view that is heavily shaped by the woods and the mills, reflecting an alienated working class caught up in consumerism and immediacy.

Sitting in a Quesnel bathroom a number of years ago, I entertained myself, as one often does in such situations, by reading the stall wall graffiti. Amongst the varying diddies, doodles, lewd suggestions and telephone numbers, a prior occupant, with presumably environmentalist leanings, had boldly written on the stall wall with a heavy black marker, "EARTH FIRST!" Underneath, in a more subtle and standardized blue ink, some wisecracker had scribbled the addendum, "Then we'll log the other planets..." I have obviously never forgotten this stall wall interchange. It struck me then and strikes me now as typifying the Cariboo mindset, testifying to a bleakly pragmatic, ironic and, dare I say, fatalistic worldview, reflecting a longstanding colonial mentality. And when querying my father, a born and bred B.C.er, pulpmill-worker and long-time Kersley-dweller, about how Caribooites view the world, the first words to come tumbling out of his mouth, heavily soaked in ironic tones, were, tellingly enough, "Earth first! Then we'll log the other planets." The comment's interplanetary scope seems particularly apt when one considers that, during the 1980's, "the largest contiguous forestry clearcut" (Fawcett 2003, xv) of the twentieth century, 53 000 hectares worth,⁸³ was situated fifty kilometres northeast of Quesnel in the Bowron River Valley⁸⁴ and was actually visible from space. Indeed, "[f]oresters in Northern B.C. claimed that, along with the Great Wall of China, it

⁸³ Larger than any well-publicized Amazonian or Soviet clearcut. This equates to "about 15 million square metres of lumber – enough to build 250,000 homes – with an economic value of more than \$800 million. The government received about \$27 million in stumpage fees" (Fawcett 2003, 45).

⁸⁴ Ironically enough, the Bowron Lakes' Chain draws tourists the world over to canoe their circuit. A forested fringe, not unlike those commonly seen along Highway 97, was left around the lakes, though, "obscur[ing] the extent of the cutting. For aesthetic reasons, so to speak" (Fawcett 2003, 4).

was the only human alteration of the planet that could be distinguished” (Fawcett 2003, xv) from such an otherworldly perspective.⁸⁵

In a recent book, journalist Brian Fawcett examines this clearcut as a gruesome scar of globalization, as a wound haemorrhaging into the communities surrounding it, colouring their lives, their views and their self-determination. He writes, “That clearcut is out there, weakening *your* will, undermining *your* ability to believe in the future and to build it. Or rebuild it, because the continuum that we’ve all been on in the past 200 years – Mackenzie’s trajectory – is a terminal one” (2003, 129-30; emphasis in original). He continues, arguing that the BC north has been treated “like it’s a supermarket, a subsystem of a larger project that’s to be used for buying and selling goods until it’s used up” (2003, 130), a colony “from which a profit is made, but *not by the people who live there*” (Atwood 1972, 35-6; emphasis in original); profits belong to the “mothers” – the countries, the corporations, the ships, the fuckers. Fawcett further suggests that hinterland dwellers tend to make their marks on the frontier by becoming “flatteners of landscapes, gougers of hillsides, polluters of rivers, desecrators of leafy vales, cold executioners of hapless fawns and does, and so on. We push things around, including one another; we bulldoze” (2003, 131). An inbred European sense of unease in relation to the bush, that uncontrolled, dangerous wilderness, so typified by the much-discussed Canadian garrison mentality, lingers in this neck of the woods. Wishful mastery of the fearful, unknown wild manifests itself with every clearcut, slashburn, reforestation project, bear rug,

⁸⁵ Although, the North African and Tigris-Euphrates basin clearcuts were not being considered in this claim.

chainsaw drone, pit mine, ATV track, barb-wire fence, shotgun shell and drop of pulpmill effluent.⁸⁶

This terminal, bulldozing, garrison-mentality trajectory, set in motion by onward-ever-onward-frontier-pushing European explorers and furthered by furtraders and goldminers and loggers and politicians and multinational corporations, inculcates a commercial, industrial rapaciousness and an aggressive, capitalist immediacy – a supermarket cycle. Paycheque-to-paycheque living and get-rich-quick-and-get-out schemes abound, as people seek to get what they can before it all goes terminally bust.

Fawcett expounds:

It [Prince George, but I would extend it to include Northern BC in general] has been, then and now, more interested in the commercial opportunities it enables for aggressive individuals than in tradition, history, and civility. In that respect, Prince George [Northern BC] is a microcosm of what has occurred in Canada, which is a country with a sparse history, particularly along its north and western edges [frontiers], and one that is largely indifferent to the history it does have, unless it involves sending men off to foreign wars. Along the country's west and northern margins, indifference lives a short distance from hostile contempt...Life on the frontier is becoming life on the stagnant edge of nothingness. Hard work and concentration no longer get people where they want to be. You need to get lucky, or, more exactly, you need a gimmick and a tax loophole. A market may shift on the New York Stock Exchange, and you're out of a job or you're bankrupt; a tariff ruling a continent away, designed to steer an

⁸⁶ A fine illustration of this mindset is the fact that in the fall of 2003 – after a summer of particularly destructive forest fires throughout much of south-central BC – the powers that be in Kersley (the KCA and the KVFD) thought it would be a good idea to log the threatening Lease Land, so that it resembled, and I quote, “a European forest.” I would reckon that most of them have never seen or been in a “European” forest, but the adjective is being used to mean man-controlled, park-like and trees maintained in nice, straight lines with little or no underbrush. Having been in more than a few European forests now, I can find them rather creepy, not unlike that scene in *Watership Down* when the travelling rabbits come across the kept warren and its well-fed inhabitants who had accepted this life of ease, knowing that it also meant that they could be “harvested” at any point – a simple trade-off for the good, maintained life. Anyhow, this proposed action also included the building of a firebreak around the Lease Land perimeter. A community meeting to discuss the controversial proposal ended in something of a gendered conflict, with a group of women, the Friends of the Lease Land Society, pitted against the big, old men sitting in community positions of power. Nothing much came of the proposal, except a little logging (perhaps five acres worth) of any tree worth any money at the Lease Land's most accessible point.

equally remote-from-you government to or from some policy that has no natural local consequence one way or another, suddenly lands on your balance sheet. One corporation buys up a competitor and loads itself with so much debt that it can be kept afloat only by cutting staff in your locally-profitable-and-efficient corner of the operation. At any moment your livelihood can evaporate, obliterating the value of your assets. Since the future is now permanently opaque, everyone learns to live with a six-month horizon, at the end of which a whole different fiscal jamboree might begin, as arbitrary and ridden by crises and threats as the last. (2003, 9-10, 245-46)

Work on “the stagnant edge of nothingness” is hard, breeding longsuffering, indifference and contempt. People work to live, *not* live to work, prostituting their bodies to transcendent “mother” corporations in order to enjoy themselves, often carnally, *after* work.

This focus on the utilitarian aspect of work is what sociologist James Rinehart has called “an *instrumental* orientation to work. [People] feel that the basic reason for working is to maintain themselves and their families in order to do the things they ‘really enjoy.’ Life for these people begins when work ends” (2001, 6; emphasis in original). Within the capitalist work order, labourers *are* merely instruments, as Paul Willis elucidates: “The system of capitalism still means essentially...that labour is bought, detached from the individual, and directed towards the production of commodities for the profit of others. Labour is dispossessed from its owners. This labour is directed, emphatically, not for the satisfaction of its providers, but for the profit of its new owners” (1979, 187) – corporate CEO’s in Japan and New York investors, all interested in the fiscal dividends of, for instance, West Fraser Ltd. and its monopolization of Quesnel lumbering operations. The golden entrepreneurial freedoms and vicissitudes of staking a claim and working for and on behalf of oneself, of subsisting off one’s own land

production, simply do not figure into the rationalized, mechanized and routinized, twenty-first-century extraction of resources. In an area like Quesnel, which is so heavily dependent upon primary resource extraction, the labour necessary to feed the mills and please the investors is, by nature, dispossessed, detached and alienated. This, quite naturally, affects how people live and view the world.

Defining and describing the nature of alienated labour in the first of his four economical and philosophical manuscripts, Karl Marx prophetically writes in 1844:

What constitutes the alienation of labor? First, the work is *external* to the worker, that it is not part of his [her] nature; and that, consequently, [s]he does not fulfil himself [herself] in his [her] work but denies himself [herself], has a feeling of misery rather than well being, does not develop freely his [her] mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker therefore feels himself [herself] at home only during his [her] leisure time, whereas at work [s]he feels homeless. His [her] work is not voluntary, but imposed, *forced labor*. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. External labor, labor in which man [woman] alienates himself [herself], is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification. Finally, the external character of work for the worker is shown by the fact that it is not his [her] own work but work for someone else, that in work [s]he does not belong to himself [herself] but to another person... We arrive at the result that man (the worker) feels himself [herself] to be freely active only in his [her] animal functions – eating, drinking and procreating, or at most also in his [her] dwelling and in personal adornment – while in his [her] human functions [s]he is reduced to an animal. The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal. (Fromm 1961, 98-9; emphasis in original)

As work is dissatisfyingly externalized, individuals increasingly seek fulfilment and satisfaction in *non-work*, in leisure-time pleasures which so often centre around the so-called basal “animal functions.” Like the bumper sticker saying, a certain “Work hard, play harder” mentality pervades, as so observed by Thomas Dunk during his examination of Canadian working-class culture in Thunder Bay, Ontario:

An insistence on having fun is not simple escapism, nor is it merely a surrender to the hedonistic impulse of contemporary society, although neither of these elements can be left out of account. The insistence on having fun is also an affirmation that the point of work should be the enjoyment of life, rather than production for its own sake. Enjoyment denied in the labour process becomes an obsession in the realm of leisure. (1991, 93)

The working-class obsession with non-work is also noted by Meg Luxton in her study of working-class culture in Flin Flon, Manitoba:

From the perspective of the worker, the labour process is not for the satisfaction of needs. Rather it demands the denial of needs. Time spent at work is segregated from 'real life'; it is time spent for, controlled by, and at the service of another. The man returning after a day of work comes home tired. His capacity to labour has been consumed, so he is spent and depleted. He considers his time off work to be his own, to do with as he pleases. He demands the right to spend his time away from wage work in voluntary activities. But the experiences of wage work are not so easily shaken. His experiences at work usually leave him tired, frustrated and irritable. The worker bears the social residue of this alienating labour process and of the oppressive social relations of capitalist production. He needs to find ways of releasing those feelings of tension, of assuaging the dissatisfaction. He wants his leisure to be free of conflict and to be refreshing, restful and personally satisfying. (1980, 45)

Indeed, as Robert Crawford notes, "In the absence of a capacity to control one's life situation, more characteristic of working-class experience, what is important is to have another stance toward it, a positive and easy-going attitude....Leisure time, for these hardworking men, will not be invaded by still more disciplines" (1984, 82). This perennial pursuit of personal satisfaction and release in the non-work, play realm is, not surprisingly, evident in the working-class culture and worldview of Quesnel and its surrounds, reflecting the alienated residue of capitalist and colonialist production.

Drawing upon previous personal work done on resistance strategies against the rationalized work process evident in Quesnel mills and the coping mechanisms utilized

for dealing with such alienated labour (Grant 2002), I quote at length an informant⁸⁷ from that prior investigation, who localizes, very illustratively, how it is to be a Quesnel millworker and, by extension, a Caribooite. His observations are tellingly on par with those of Marx, Dunk, Crawford and Luxton:

The key resistance strategy is to believe, to assert, and to demonstrate that the company only owns you for eight hours a day. After that, you drink, you fish, you have a four-by-four/snowmobile/race car/whatever hobby that the money from the mill affords. You fuck. You have children and they play sports, go to school and are always (key resistance strategy of transferring your hopes, dreams and ambitions to your mini-you's) much smarter than you so they won't work in the mill. They will take a step up the professional class ladder to the ranks of teachers, whom you hated but recognize as having it good with the same wages as you and months off over the summer, doctors, lawyers, tradesmen maybe (I've been trying to use neutered language throughout this, but let's face it, this is a male industry; the whole thing reeks of testosterone); whatever; just something better. They don't *own* you, you rent yourself to them; they use your body for eight hours; you get paid. No one goes away completely satisfied, but everybody gets what they *need*. Drink, lots of drink, cocaine on the job because you can still work while you're on cocaine, maybe a joint if your job is one you can handle stoned. Some come to work drunk. Some secretly install hydroponics in a hidden underground corner of the mill and grow their own marijuana – the ultimate turn around of the situation. The key is forgetting; make sure that they only have you for *eight* hours, plus perhaps lunchtime, though if you are high on the pecking order and have lots of good stories about your exploits (sexual/vehicular/hunting/fishing/fist-fighting/extraordinary millworking), [it] can be fun for you at the head of the table, and the drive to and from the mill. Other than those nine hours, you are your own man; you do what you want; you fuck, you drink, you hunt, you fish, you watch sports on TV, movies on your home theatre system; you kick ass, you do what you want; *You* are the man. Some religious few, mocked heartily by the others as they may be, resist by their teleological aims; this sucks right now, but it affords me the ability to raise my family in religion and, in the paradise to come, my reward will be sure. Still, and always, for everyone, the key is forgetfulness; let them control nine hours *only*. (Jules Grant 2002; emphasis in original)

⁸⁷ Yes, he happens to be my brother, but I have in no way influenced his observations. He has *not* read Marx, Dunk, Crawford or Luxton, rather has come to these conclusions via personal experience.

Since, as Luxton notes, alienated labour's residue is difficult to completely forget and wash away, the search for forgetfulness and release tends to lead to opiates, anything that will numb and distract and soothe away the rationalized aches and pains, preferably as immediately as possible. As listed above, these opiates, often mixed together for varying cocktails, include consumerism,⁸⁸ religion, stimulant use and abuse,⁸⁹ families,⁹⁰ hobbies, violence, sex, tall-talk, among others. In a society built economically upon environmental destruction and resource depletion, it consequently seems rather natural that physically and psychically depleted workers should engage in self-destructive *and* self-constructive behaviours, perpetuating frontier work's dehumanization as well as combating it through humanization, numbingly bulldozing and thoughtfully building at the same time.

Destructively constructing and/or constructively destructing, identity formation and worldview are heavily influenced by, what William Hugh Jansen has termed, the esoteric-exoteric (S-X) factor, which he thus defines:

The esoteric applies to what one group thinks of itself and what it supposes others think of it. The exoteric is what one group thinks of another and what it thinks that other group thinks it thinks...The esoteric part of this factor, it would seem, frequently stems from the group sense of belonging and serves to defend and strengthen that sense...The exoteric aspect of the factor is, at least in part, a product of the same sense of belonging, for it may result from fear of, mystification about, or resentment of the group to which one does not belong. (1965, 46)

⁸⁸ Dunk concludes his study rather bleakly, contending that the commodification of all aspects of life have left the working class forever consuming, fruitlessly attempting to Wal-Mart their way to self-determination. It's a conclusion shared by Fawcett and other melancholic western Marxists.

⁸⁹ In the early 1990's, Quesnel was apparently declared the drug capitol of North America, and this fact was supposedly mentioned on the *Arsenio Hall Show*. I never saw the show myself, but the rumours abounded.

⁹⁰ Luxton's work concerns the role that women, as the ever-helpful sex, play in replenishing and soothing the spent workers, making a home and rearing children, and ultimately "act[ing] as pressure to keep their husbands not only at work but working regularly and responsibly" (66). Much of "being a man" in this society is the ability to be a breadwinner, to take care of and provide for one's family, defining oneself through one's status as husband and father.

Living in the sparsely populated BC north, far from policy-making and tax-collecting provincial and federal governments and the news-making media, Caribooites are not populous and, hence, powerful enough to affect political policies and are generally not newsworthy enough to make the supposedly province-wide, yet solely Lower Mainland-based news coverage. This non-noteworthiness allows gargantuan clearcuts to go unnoticed,⁹¹ except from observant orbiting astronauts, and feeds a general esoteric sense of perceived small-town nowhere-ness and nothingness, a sense of neglect and overlookedness common to nearly every province and territory in Canada, as well as Canada on the international stage. Culture, Tradition, History are elsewhere and remarkableness is only granted when McDonald's and Wal-Mart decide to come to town, when some globalized, outsider franchise deems Quesnel viable, legitimatizing a place through its commoditized presence.

With such an apparent stamp of approval, Quesnelites, secure in their garrison, can then view themselves better than the hicks at Kersley with their measly one store and gas station, and Kersleyites, snug in their outpost, can, in turn, view themselves better than those ranchers from Alexandria with their "Indian" reservation, and all can form a unified garrison in their dislike for Prince George and its "We're the centre of the north" pomposity.⁹² The whole BC North can bond in its distaste for the self-absorbed, flaky, Gortex-wearing, yuppie vegans of the Lower Mainland, and BCers can make fun of

⁹¹ Fawcett comments that BC environmentalists, "in their enforced need to respond to the demands of corporate-owned media addicted to pictorial novelty...are too often engaged in trying to save some spectacularly moss-enfurled morsel of old-growth forest that just happens to be within a helicopter ride of Vancouver's [and hence, BC's] major television stations. They find it hard to get to places as remote as the Bowron River valley" (xix).

⁹² In his book, Fawcett describes Quesnel as dingy and stinky (177), which is an etically accurate description, but every Quesnelite says the same thing about Prince George.

redneck Albertans who can't drive on winding roads, and the Canadian West can stand united in their dismissal of Ontarians and their centre-of-the-universe attitude, and Canadians can hate Americans, and on it goes – the S-X factor in practice. As one of my informants quipped after I queried as to the existence of a Cariboo culture:

DG: Like are we rednecks?

JGJ: Maybe that's what I'm asking you nicely. Since you supplied the word.

DG: I don't think we think we are, but I think maybe other people view us as that, even as opposed Kersley from town, you know. We're a little bit more cowboys or whatever you know, like redneck or whatever. I don't think we are, but you know people in town even – you live 15 miles out of town and they think you're a – you know, live in the toolies⁹³ or whatever you know. (Grimm and Grimm 2004)

Whether or not “other people” on the provincial stage or the “people from town” truly view themselves more cultured and sophisticated than northern BCers or Kersleyites is debatable, but the esoteric perception in Kersley is that they do. Roy Teed comments:

I think the rift is more – it's felt regionally between here and the Lower Mainland. Maybe the Lower Mainland feels that there's a rift between Toronto or eastern Canada for themselves, but we are in the hinterland out here, the sticks, the boondocks, you know. I used to belong to the playwriting – the playwrights' guild or association here in BC, but I let it lapse after several years, because it was all centred on the Lower Mainland. Like nothing went on up here, period, either theatre or playwriting or whatever...But that's the way – that's where I feel the gulf is, between us and down there. (2004b)

And as with many engulfing stereotypes and blason populaires, there can be a certain absorption of the perceived exoteric view, wherein people have ultimately “assumed the role that folklore [has] demanded of [them]” (Boatwright 1949, 94). Like the functional

⁹³ Local slang meaning the middle of nowhere, the backwoods, often interchangeable with ‘the sticks’ and associated with a lack of refinement, sophistication and/or culture.

performance of their jobs, Quesnelites and Kersleyites perform the parts expected of them. Yet, just as they humanize their dehumanizing jobs through various means,⁹⁴ some choose to play with the stereotypes, often playing up the redneck, cowboy toolie-dweller and exaggerating the role in order to confirm the stereotype's "reality" to outsiders while delighting insiders with a smirking, ironic wink. Others seek to defeat the exoteric view by becoming exoteric themselves; that is, adopting what they consider to be outsider ideals and refinements, as Roy Teed acknowledges: "I think there's a certain faction that has aspirations to be culturally elite or culturally snobbish in Quesnel here, but there's very little cultural capital to see, I guess, if you consider culture symphonic music and opera and big capital 'T' theatre" (2004b).

In an area based on hard, physical labour and surrounded by bush, it is not surprising that hands-on, survivalist, horse sense is generally lauded over the highfalutin' theories of the book-learned "intelligentsia"⁹⁵ and the pretentious aspirations of the so-called cultural elites. As such, the stories commonly told and the anecdotes shared tend to focus on clueless outsiders' hapless encounters with the bush, and, by extension, the locals' more nuanced, survivalist interactions with the fear-inspiring and respect-demanding wilderness. I would hazard an educated guess that every Caribooite has at least one tale, and probably way more, in his/her repertoire dealing with this genre, which I have dubbed, "Close Encounters of the Bush Kind." Stories abound of stupid German

⁹⁴ In my previous research (Grant 2002), I found people resisting workplace dehumanization and asserting personal control and creativity through everything from smoking, eating, union involvement, pilfering of time and goods, socializing, reading, playing cards, hiding out, shooting pigeons, walking slowly and on it goes. Through collective complicity, workers undermine the competitive rules of capitalism.

⁹⁵ This is not to say that education is not encouraged. For many parents, it is seen as an escape from the mills, as a way out of the bush for their children. As it is, the education often thrusts one into some sort of interstitial clearcut, a no-man's land, where one doesn't fit in the bush dynamics here or the academic pedigrees over there.

tourists getting their asses literally bit off by bears, of neo-hippie, vegan treeplanters' silly, smelly and holier-than-thou summer exploits, of big-wig environmentalists' short-lived media stunts.⁹⁶ Personal experience narratives of bush encounters are rampant, sometimes getting a little taller with every telling – glorious hunts, fish that got away, fatal mishaps, loyal dogs, life-threatening situations, wily wild animals, wilderness survival. Legendary tales, encompassing the whole belief spectrum (memorate-fabulate-legend), of lost gold mines and Sasquatches entertain children and feed the imagination.⁹⁷ In writing on monster traditions in British Columbia, Carole Henderson Carpenter argues that these tales typify the fear-mongering garrison mentality and are, hence, “symbolic of this danger and fear” (Henderson 1976, 261). She further contends that “[t]he social and cultural circumstances in the west...fostered the creation and preservation of individual traditions like anecdotes, tall tales, and reminiscences” (Henderson 1976, 261) and not the community-oriented and based traditions of ballads and folktales, so found in the relatively homogenous communities of the east. Such monster-loving, individualized traditions are all present in Quesnel and area and finding form in the writings of Roy Teed.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ A favourite story, told and retold, concerns Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society in his bid to stop the northern BC wolf hunt. He helicoptered into the BC North on his saviour mission in the dead of winter. It was -35 to -40 degrees, and he and his entourage wore nothing but overcoats and overshoes. They made it 35 feet into the bush and managed to pitch a tent, before the cold claimed the cause. They ended up having to be rescued and were helicoptered on home. Or so the story goes.

⁹⁷ At least they did mine. I grew up on stories of the lost Kersley goldmine, hidden somewhere on Green Mountain, with a cache never collected. My uncle's mother, in her later years, got lost on the mountain while searching for the mine. And my father and my Nana (my paternal grandmother) are tellers of fantastic Sasquatch tales. My paternal grandfather, long since deceased, was a bridge builder for the CPR and spent much of his working life in the Coquihalla, a southwest BC mountain range extending from Hope to Penticton. In those remote work camps, Sasquatch sightings and stories thrived.

⁹⁸ Roy recently published (Christmas 2007), under the pseudonym, Jasper Brown, a collection of short “autobiographical” stories and anecdotes, entitled *True Stories of the Wilderness*, concerning life in the bush as recollected by the toolie-dweller, Jasper Brown.

While the bush provides economic subsistence and recreation, it can also fearfully and dangerously take. A moose can crumple a fast-moving car and walk away from the fatal wreckage unscathed. A chainsaw can buck in a resistant tree and maim. A skidder can tragically topple down an icy slope. A pack of coyotes can lure out the family pet. A cougar can stealthily stalk its human prey. A river's waters can rise. Blizzards can blow. Gas lines can freeze. Pine beetles can fell a tree and an industry. Forests can burn. Pulpmill pollutants can cause cancer. And on it goes. The potential terminus of an industry, of a life, is always readily and wryly apparent. Vastation, that "sense of personal annulment before the immensities of time and space" (Parker 1977, 154), lurks and lingers. The frontier boom 'n' bust pattern remains. The colonial mentality pervades. So Quesnelites and Kersleyites hedonistically boom with their guns and their ATV's, their brewskis and their weed. They find their boon in the propagation of their loins, in their afterlife hopes, in their current solvent situation, in their fun, post-work times. And they enjoy heartily their farces. Frontier pragmatism and experience have not produced a pantheistic Wordsworth or a transcendental Emerson or a wilderness-worshipping Thoreau, but a Roy Teed.⁹⁹ The intense survivalist and capitalist reality has shaped a

⁹⁹ Mody Boatwright writes, "It is true that the early West produced almost no literature expressing a response to landscape. When one finds purple patches on the God-in-Nature theme in the memoirs of a frontiersman he is pretty safe in concluding that the manuscript has been tampered with. Jim Bridger wrote no pretty verses on Old Faithful; Kit Carson no sonnet on Taos Mountain; Charles Goodnight no ode to the Great Plains" (1949, 173). He then continues, attempting to ascertain why this is the case by citing W.H. Milburn: "[W]hat is poetry, but truth exaggerated? Here it can never arrive at any perfection. What chance is there for exaggeration in the Great West, where the reality is incomprehensible? A territory as large as classic Greece annually caves into the Mississippi, and who notices it? Things, to be poetical, must be got up on a small scale. The Tiber, the Seine, the Thames, appear well in poetry, but such streams are overlooked in the West; they don't afford enough water to keep up an expansive duck-pond – would be mere drains to a squatter's pre-emption" (qtd. in Boatwright 1949, 173).

utilitarian and ironic worldview. Humans are workers. Trees are lumber. Animals are food. Earth first, then we'll log the other planets.

End Act II, Scene 1.

In which the investigation of the Kersley setting has illustrated the boom 'n' bust immediacy and impermanency of this frontier of resource extraction. Indelibly shaped by its geographic location and historic development, Kersley and its inhabitants are demographically and psychically marked by this boom 'n' bust inevitability, vastation, transience and alienation. To combat these elements, or at least stave them off for a time, halls are built, clubs are formed, ironic winks are shared and do-good theatre performed. Indeed, Kersley and Cariboo theatre is often appreciated in accordance to how beneficent it is to the community at large, a point explored in greater detail in Act IV. Truly, diverse people have been continually thrust together to make this community in this strange, new, hard country.

Act III

The Playwright and His Plots

Scene 1 – Being Roy Teed¹⁰⁰

In which an entry into the inner workings of an artist is attempted, through an analysis of his life, his interstitial community status and his clowning sensibilities.

Spotlights up on a table and chairs situated centre stage on an otherwise bare scene. A microphone and tape recorder sit on the table. A folklorist, JESSICA, is fiddling with the equipment, while her informant, ROY, sits uncomfortably, fidgeting in his chair.

JESSICA

Oh no, it was on VOX.

ROY

Oh, voice activated.

JESSICA

Yeah, voice activated, and there were no voices going, so... Alright, I'm sitting here – this is the – what is it called, this room, now?

ROY

This is the community meeting room.

JESSICA

The community meeting room and it's the first of March 2004 and I'm sitting here with Roy Teed, the playwright of the Kersley Players. Is that what we refer to you as?

ROY

Whatever.

JESSICA

Well, do you call yourself a playwright?

ROY

Occasionally.

¹⁰⁰ A borrowing from the Charlie Kaufman movie, *Being John Malkovich* (1999), in which people get, quite literally, inside John Malkovich's head through a portal hidden behind an office filing cabinet.

JESSICA
A writer?

ROY
Uh, less occasionally.

JESSICA
What do you refer to yourself as?

ROY
Uh, mostly “me” and, in some other cases, “I.”

JESSICA
(*Laughing nervously*) Alright, fair enough. I walked into that one.

Lights down.

Nobody writes like Roy. Nobody. And I – I swear, I told him before – I said, “Roy, if we kill you, you’ll be famous.” But he doesn’t seem to think that would be the way to get famous. But he will – he will go down in history, I believe. He will go down in history ’cause his plays are just – the mind that creates those plays is just unreal. It’s interesting too – I don’t think you know this, but Roy and I graduated in the same class. We were in the graduating class from Correlieu and I didn’t even know Roy other than to say “Hi”-“Bye” type of thing. So, we go way back and I know he was always a little off-to-the-side even back in, you know, Grade 11 and 12. So, he’s definitely – he’s got a brain there that works a little different than most people – in a *good* way, ’cause it gives him an opportunity to write things that are – well, like the one we’re working on. *Holy*.

– Wayne Wark

There is nothing physically comely about Roy Teed. His glasses are big. His nose is bulbous. His skin is blotchy and pockmarked. He’s missing teeth. His demeanour is quiet and unobtrusive. This is a man who, as one of my informants put it, “most people wouldn’t know him to trip over him” (Arnoldus 2004). He is, in many ways, unremarkable, “just a regular guy that you see on the street” (Zacharias 2006), or don’t see: “If you walked up to Roy on the street, if you’d been to a Kersley play or every Kersley play and never saw Roy and walked up to him on the street, I would never – you

kind of make assumptions about some people, you know, the way they dress, the way they talk – you would never do that with Roy” (Minnett 2004). He is a self-declared introvert who dresses like a toolie-dweller in worn-out blue jeans and flannel shirts, and appears, for all intents and purposes, your stereotypical Cariboo-grown hick. The only physical remarkableness about him is his homeliness, which, coupled with his unassuming manner, adds to his aura of weirdness. First impressions of Roy are to dismiss and stay clear. He has been “off-to-the-side” or, in his own words, “a little different than the rest” for all of his life, quietly observing. As a childhood peer of Roy’s remarked, “There was something big time brewing there, but he just didn’t let on” (Prentice 2006). And yet, for those being let in, letting the first assumptions subside and coming to know him more intimately, he is a soft-spoken, thoughtful man brimming with intelligence, lively conversation, informed opinions, quick wit and an absolutely shockingly bizarre sense of humour. Indeed, as one of my informants queried, “Who would have known that there was this brilliance” (Zacharias 2006)? It’s time to meet Roy Teed.

The Ugly Duckling Transforms into the Strange Drake

In which the life and times of Roy Teed are set forth, including his development from the odd boy next door to the eccentric writer and his place in the community.

*The truth is he’s not dead, but only ignored –
like the mirroring lenses forgotten on a brow
that shine with the guilt of their unnoticed world.
The truth is he lives among neighbours, who, though they will allow
him a passable fellow, think him eccentric, not solid,
a type that one can forgive, and for that matter, forego.*

– A.M. Klein, “Portrait of the Poet as Landscape”

Despite being rather elusive about the facts of his early years, it can be deduced that Roy Teed was born in the early to mid 1950’s, in a city located somewhere in, as he

phrased it himself, Upper Canada.¹⁰¹ He is the oldest of five children, the big brother of four sisters. In the late 1950's/early 1960's, when Roy was five or six years old, his family moved west, settling in Kersley, where his father found employment at the local sawmill, Kersley Lumber. The Teed family became part of the growing millworker populace now living around Kersley Elementary, where Roy began attendance. Growing up in Kersley of the 1960's and early 70's was a decidedly rural, no-frills existence, as Rod and Debbie Grimm, both peers of Roy Teed, discuss:

DG: When I went to Kersley School and stuff, I just remember us going out and sketching Arnoldus Road. I remember it just lined with trees and just this little dirt road. I don't know, it was just – you knew everybody and stuff like that, and everybody seemed to have a tarpaper shack. [JGJ: *laughing*] Well, they did, though.

RG: Oh yeah.

DG: You know, like nobody finished their –

RG: Outdoor plumbing. (2004)

It was with outdoor loos, bush backyards and communal intimacy that Roy grew up. In describing the Kersley of his youth, he comments:

RT: We used to play cowboys and Indians in the bush. We used to – we were scouts and we used to build tree forts and have acorn fights. It was a typical country upbringing, I guess. I mean we – you don't even have any idea what it was like. There was no one. You could walk out behind almost any house in the community and you were in instant bush, you know. It was wonderful. The place is almost like Vancouver now.

JGJ: And do you – is it something that annoys you a bit that it's become?

RT: No, it doesn't annoy me. I mean, it's progress. If you wanted to get away from it, you'd move to the Yukon, right? But no, it's just that when you're brought up in that sort of environment, you – that was what formed – that's the type of space that formed you. And it's harder to find. It's not

¹⁰¹ Which is to say, the province of Ontario.

impossible. It's incredibly easy to find still. It just means driving for awhile. (2004a)

The freedom to skip school and shoot squirrels, to shoot thousands upon thousands of practice rounds with his new pistol with nary a neighbour's comment, to experience the enthrallment and isolation of frontier living, have moulded Roy Teed, shaping his worldview and feeding his imagination. Indeed, as Northrop Frye notes, "[t]he countries men [women] live in feed their minds as much as their bodies: the bodily food they provide is absorbed in farms and cities: the mental, in religion and arts. In all communities this process of material and imaginative *digestion* goes on" (1971, 201; emphasis in original). For Canadians, this has meant, according to Frye, their Jonah-like ingestion into a leviathan country, wherein "the frontier was all around one, a part and a condition of one's whole imaginative being" (1971, 222).

Digesting and being ingested by his frontier surroundings, Roy was a creative young boy, who always had the urge to tell stories: "I've been writing all my life, right from virtually when I could write – physically make letters on the paper, you know. I remember writing something in like Grade 2, you know, some great multi-page epic and I've been writing ever since" (Teed 2004a). Roy also developed a fascination for military history at a young age and, while still in elementary school no less, remembers selecting to leisure-time read *The Guns of August*, "this huge tome about the origins of World War I by Margaret somebody or other. I didn't understand 98% of it, but I read that son of a bitch" (Teed 2004a). This love affair with language – in its infancy in Roy's youth and so developed through his voracious reading and writing – continues to this day: "Oh, words are wonderful. I love language, words. The whole act of writing is playing with words

and the way they sound together and the rhythms of the prose and you know” (Teed 2004a). A language nerd and history buff, Roy’s scholastic achievements were limited in the numbers’ department. Maths and sciences were not his strong suits, and it is a lack which curtailed his military ambitions later on:

At the high school crossroads, you know, where you’re deciding what you’re going to do – this way or that way – the route I took was university, but my other – the other way I wanted to go was to join the Canadian military and I wanted to go into one of the military universities, Royal Rhodes or whatever – RMC, I guess it is; they don’t have Royal Rhodes anymore – and take a degree and be an officer. Unfortunately, some of the prerequisite courses, high school courses, you had for that were things like physics and math and chemistry. I took chemistry but I am not bent in the science direction. I mean, I love – I used to have this, you know, a telescope and chemistry set when I was a kid, but that was different. When you started sitting down with textbooks, it was math, so I got discouraged and decided that I wouldn’t do that, ’cause I didn’t want to join as an unlisted person. I had higher aspirations and I should’ve – I don’t know if I should’ve, but I didn’t explore it enough. (Teed 2004a)

Instead of military training, Roy went in a completely different direction, opting to study “beer, pubs, women and creative writing” (Teed 2004a) at the University of British Columbia, resulting in his self-proclaimed “only claim to legitimacy – a collection of acronyms from UBC” (Teed 2004a) – a BFA. As a member of the fine arts community at UBC in the 1970’s, Roy was most certainly exposed to the alternative, patriotic push in the Arts at that time to articulate a distinctly Canadian identity. Indeed, the 1970’s was a decade marked by the formation of the alternative theatre movement in Canada, with its militantly Canadian and anti-establishment mindset – a movement which pushed for popular theatre in the Marxist sense, which is to say, affordable and accessible, focusing on local, regional and national issues instead of “the internationalistic, masterpiece-oriented policies of the establishment” (Usmiani 1983, 149).

For a young man raised in the utilitarian Cariboo, with its good-paying mill jobs aplenty, Roy was an anomaly, a strange aberration from the norm, in the 1970's with his decision to seek higher learning. The fact that he chose to study something as *impractical* as the finer arts and not some traditionally acceptable and *useful* profession like a doctor or lawyer or teacher heightened his already generally acknowledged off-to-the-sideness, highlighting just how different he really was. This was the boy who, as one of my informants described, was "different – a different kind of guy. I remember it was always, you know, '*Roy with his knife*' or whatever, you know, and everybody was kind of – and I don't think – I think he was totally always harmless or whatever, but I just always thought he was a little different." In attempting to not overspeak or be too negative in the assessment, an addendum to the above observation was quickly added: "But he always treated the ladies like ladies and stuff like that too, you know – well, most of the time." The sense given from this conversation, among other informal ones, was that Roy was a weird kid. One can infer that he was the creepy boy at school and that cautionary tales circulated, especially amongst the girls, with regards to his oddness.

The assessment of Roy as a "neat"¹⁰² or "different" young man is one that meshes with Roy's own personal assessment of himself:

RT: I just think my personality was a personality that kept the distance. That's the way I operate. So, you know, I've always been a little different than the rest of the family. I mean, I'm quite – frankly, I don't give a care. I don't care whether they accept it or not. That's the way I am, you know.

JGJ: I was actually going to ask you about that. Do you consider yourself fringe in the community?

¹⁰² As another informant so euphemistically and democratically described Roy, using the word to mean special, different, interesting, odd, eccentric, weird, strange, etc.

RT: Oh, absolutely. You're an outsider looking in – wouldn't you say that's correct? (2004a)

Sitting in his distanced, off-to-the-side position, Roy is indeed a fringe individual in the community, a *real* character, known for his eccentricities, which people now tend to associate with his artistic sensibilities and creative temperament: "Roy's a bit eccentric, so his plays – I don't know, I think Roy's plays have a lot of Roy in them. I think they're Roy. I do. 'Cause Roy's a little bit off-the-wall. He's a typical writer, I guess – director, artist" (Arnoldus 2004). He is now commonly labelled "brilliant," "intelligent," "a real thinker," "smart," "intellectual," "imaginative" and "talented."

Honing his artistic skills and his creative talents, Roy spent four years in the big city, studying at UBC and eventually graduating with a BFA in creative writing, a degree which included coursework in playwriting, although he did not, ironically, enjoy his playwriting courses. He paid for his education by working summers in a Quesnel sawmill, Weldwood – the workplace of his father (who had switched to there after Kersley Lumber folded). While Roy was bucking the Cariboo norm in choosing *not* to work fulltime at the sawmill, like his father, or study a profession, his parents were always very accepting and encouraging of their eldest child's creative endeavours and aspirations. Feeling no pressure to be "practical," Roy states that he "was going to post-secondary education to – for the learning experience. You know, for the – I don't know how to explain it – you were going there to learn something. You didn't – you wanted to learn rather than going there to find a profession, which I don't think would – well, I don't think a lot of students go to university for anymore" (2004a). Roy sought an education for education's sake and learned, as many Arts and Humanities students do, that it often takes some creative

economics to get by. He was impoverished by the time he finished university, but stayed in Vancouver with hopes of getting a novel published. And while a former professor's agent apparently tried to sell the work in Toronto, Roy lived as a starving artist, making ends meet with "absolutely the worst job I ever had in my life" (Teed 2004a), a telephone solicitor for the *Province* newspaper. He eventually got fired, which he remarks "was quite possibly one of the happiest days in my life, 'cause I do not like telephones. I didn't like telephones before then and I detest them now" (2004a). His job loss precipitated a phone call to his parents, who "came down and we loaded up my desk and typewriter and moved back to Kersley" (Teed 2004a). The strange bird was back home in the Cariboo to roost.

Kicking around Kersley, living with his parents, single and unemployed – when many of his Cariboo peers were married with kids and mortgages and fulltime mill jobs – Roy was approached by John Grimm, the Kersley Community Association president, in 1980 and offered the fulltime position of recreation director. He accepted the job and is still there after a quarter of a century. As recreation director, Roy is a jack-of-all-trades, his duties often dependent upon the time of year: "I just finished being arena manager and now I'm starting to be facilities manager. Later on, I will be maintenance person and then, I could, who knows, I could be paperwork person, filling out grant applications, so I wear many different hats. I essentially do all the jobs that a big place like Quesnel has forty people to do, except on a smaller scale" (Teed 2004a). Roy is the man with the keys to Kersley's communal centre, organizing, maintaining and coordinating the communal facilities and their many activities. He mows lawns, makes ice, liaisons with various community groups, collects monies, rents the hall, scares children and on it goes. As

others made their daily work commutes to Quesnel, Roy walked the perhaps 150 metres from his tiny log cabin beside the school to the arena (see fig. 3.1).¹⁰³

JGJ: I think J-- always used to be envious of your job – thought you had the perfect job.

RT: It is perfect in many ways, because I don't have the – don't have bosses hanging around all the time. I can do things like this, or I can – I can – you know, in the winter, when the ice is there, I can read. I read all winter because you need to be there, but you don't need to be doing a lot of physical things like hammering nails or, you know, you yell at some kids and that was a good day's work. Made a kid cry.

JGJ: You get to be the mean old guy who's managing. You can be scary.

RT: Yeah, that's right. Authoritative. Intimidating. Stern. (Teed 2004a)

While Roy expresses now a certain malaise with his work, drifting inertly along, there is a communal sense that this *is* the perfect Roy job, a job that allows Roy to do what he really wants to do, which is write.

In her work on community characters, Diane Tye investigates “how and why people become characters, and what provisions are made for their accommodation into the overall community” (1987, 99). This idea that communities seek to accommodate their “characters” is particularly salient in Roy's case. One of my informants suggested that the offering of a community job to Roy, in the first place, was an attempt at bringing this fringe character in, at integrating this liminoid, and that the work allowances made were for community maintenance:

He [John Grimm] saw the skills that Roy had and thought that this would be a good thing. I mean, instead of discourage him. 'Cause a lot of times, he would let Roy do some of these plays while he was working, you know. And they [KCA] let him have the hall. They could have said, “No, we're

¹⁰³ These are my early memories of Roy, ambling along in his big, brown, down parka past the schoolyard with his terrier, Gub, in tow, going back and forth between the arena/community complex and his home.

going to charge you for it.” You know, they could’ve killed it right there. But no, he had the foresight to see that it’s all about community, you know. (Koning 2004)

The dangerous, fringe element is communally contained through a kind of hegemonic absorption; his “neat” skills utilized for the communal good. “[N]ot an outsider looking in [but] an insider looking on [Roy was and is] a watcher to be carefully watched” (Ives 1964, 184), not unlike Sandy Ives’s folk poet, Larry Gorman. As the saying goes, “Keep your friends close and your enemies closer.” And while it is tempting to want to interpret this process negatively, another informant asserts that this communal care, concern and involvement provide Roy with a protective zone from which to pursue his creative ambitions:

He’s a – I think that he would not do well not being where he’s comfortable. Like Kersley is – he’s very comfortable and it allows him to do what he does best. If you put him into a different situation, I don’t think he’d do nearly as well. I think he’s very frustrated with the system because I know that he’s submitted a lot of these plays and other writings to different competitions and things, and again, hasn’t done well because people don’t know how to – they don’t know how to take it. (Wark 2004)

Community outsiders do not know how to “take” Roy, whereas Kersleyites have been seeking to at least accommodate him and perhaps even understand him for much of his lifetime.¹⁰⁴ Accommodation, though, has the potential to become synonymous with control, and Roy has been increasingly dissatisfied with the expectations and assumptions of his controlling communal patron and their subsequent attempt at creative containment – issues to be explored further in the next Act.

¹⁰⁴ As early as 1972, many Kersleyites, especially amongst his peer group, were open to Roy’s creative ambitions, performing in his silent movie, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* (See Appendix I), a classic tale of good and evil, complete with a damsel in distress, a true blue, damsel-rescuing hero, a dastardly fiend and his posse, lovely saloon ladies, true love, treachery, gunfights, trusty snowmobile steeds, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil – all that in five minutes of grainy, action-packed silence.

Contained in Kersley for many years, working in a decidedly non-mill job as the community's recreation director, Roy maintained his fringeness, his "different" status. He lived in his primitive log cabin, even as his peer group had moved into their split-level homes with carports and carpets and natural gas heating. He remained a bachelor. He had no children, but developed contacts with a generation of Kersley boys in the early to mid 1980's in his capacity as the local scoutmaster and baseball coach. This led to the establishment of lifelong friendships with a couple of young men, years his juniors – friendships solidified through elaborate, ongoing gaming nights held in Roy's hut. For some gossip community members, this had all the untoward makings of paedophilic predation – bachelors and boys never being seen as a healthy mix. John Szwed notes on the nature of bachelorhood:

Bachelorhood in many societies is a potentially disruptive status (at least in those societies where marriage implies manhood): the bachelor rests in an uneasy category filled with some of both boy's and man's characteristics...In such a setting, the bachelor holds a position that is simultaneously seen as pitiful and threatening. On one hand, he is socially incomplete, unable to fully participate in the usual pattern of reciprocity that involves food and farm [mill] labor (such as wife and children can provide), and on the other hand, he is a source of potential disorder, lacking sons that bring continuity of land and solidarity of community territoriality. In the same manner, the bachelor's lack of legitimate sexual outlets is a source for community concern. (1970, 162-3)

Lacking a *real* man's job and a *real* man's familial and financial responsibilities, Roy was very much in this uneasy, interstitial category of neither boy nor man. The fact that he hung out with young men, finding cohorts in boys and playing games, confirmed his pitiable, threatening, cusp status. Roy remained decidedly different – "clearly a man apart from his fellows...a man going his own way" (Ives 1964, 183).

For the young men under his mentorship, Roy “represented a different model in a forestry town. Men could read poetry and not be effeminate. We could talk about literature and history – and you just didn’t talk about such things with others” (Jules Grant 2007). So, while the community kept a watchful eye, Roy fulfilled an important mentorship role for those adolescent boys, allowing them to develop ideas outside of the Cariboo’s industrial parameters and ultimately to form adult relations. And all this as they played games in that little shack. In keeping with Roy’s keen military interest, the games they often played were military board games, along with elaborate and extensive role-playing games, the favourite being a Sci-Fi one by the name of *Traveller*.¹⁰⁵ Roy was also the first person in the community with a computer, so computer games and basic programming were also given a try. As the referee for *Traveller*, Roy essentially wrote the storylines or stages, making them as compelling as possible for his players. This used up much of his creative energy, so his short-story writing of the 1970’s fell somewhat to the wayside as he concentrated on gaming. And the gaming fell to the wayside as he began to write plays.

As noted previously, Roy was approached to write a Christmas play in 1986, having been singled out because he was communally recognized and “known as someone who had done a bit of writing” (Teed 2004a). Indeed, it had been collectively acknowledged for years that Roy was special, living in such a way so as to ensure his creative impulses were given space and form, not submitting to the dehumanization of

¹⁰⁵ These intricate games were precursors to the RPG’s (role-playing games) so popular now on gaming consuls, just without the computerization. Paper, pens, dice, figurines, maps, boards, etc were utilized instead, and as these games could take weeks to complete, an area needed to be designated “gaming” space. That area was Roy’s house.

capitalist labour, so rampant in the area. Like the renowned woods poet of Maine, Larry Gorman, who “was not a woodsman and river-driver who wrote poems; he was a poet who worked in the woods and drove logs on the river” (Ives 1964, 187), Roy is a writer first and foremost, his plays and novels and short stories being “his constant preoccupation – at work, in the evenings, playing cards” (Ives 1964, 187), living his life.

When, in the early 1990’s, Roy, in living his life, met a woman, fell in love and married, there was probably a collective sigh of relief, as he had finally “grown up,” following a socially integrative and culturally normative rite of passage. Yet, Roy being Roy, it was not completely normative; Pam was an older woman, widowed with nearly grown children and a capable career woman running her own secretarial business, who *hyphenated* her name upon marriage. The union to Pam prompted Roy’s move from the tiny Kersley cabin into Pam’s two-storey house, complete with garage and carpets and all the rest, *outside* of the community, in Richbar.¹⁰⁶ He now commutes south to work, while nearly everyone else goes north. Although no longer living in Kersley itself, he still remains a fixture in the community, managing the facilities and, more importantly, the Kersley Players for whom he writes, directs, acts and produces. He associates himself less and less as a Kersleyite since his marriage and move, thinking and associating in more general terms – Caribooite, British Columbian, Canadian. He continues to hunt and fish and camp and head into the bush, like any good Caribooite, while still reading his books and writing his stories and listening devotedly to his CBC radio. And he continues to be a man apart, a truly ambiguous character.

¹⁰⁶ Richbar is a community/suburb of Quesnel situated almost midway between Kersley and Quesnel, just north of Dog Prairie on the western side of the highway, along what used to be the old highway (before the renovations in the 1970’s).

Roy's non-normative relations in nearly all aspects of his life – friends, job, hobbies, living conditions, family – are apparently the norm among creators of traditions. According to Henry Glassie, creativity is often causally connected to unusual socio-economic circumstances, to “out-of-alignment” positions. He writes:

[A] characteristic of the European-American [Canadian] creator of tradition which struck me in looking through such biographical information as we have is that he is an unusual person: often his behavior is out of alignment with the strictest delineation of the traditional role of his sex in his society. This is evidenced in his relations with the opposite sex (he is often a bachelor when it is the norm to be parent and spouse), or his economic situation (he is often a failure at his chosen occupation, changing jobs frequently when it is the norm to be a steady provider).¹⁰⁷ (1970, 42)

Roy Teed, like many folksong and folk art makers, “is typical in being seen as an eccentric and in being held somewhat apart from the community around him. He is ‘a character...a case...a strange one’” (Szwed 1970, 157), an aberration and an anomaly. While deviating from so very many cultural norms, Roy actually aids the community in the construction and maintenance of its identity, through a process described by Kai Erikson, psychiatrist:

As a trespasser against the group norms, [Roy] represents those forces which lie outside the group's boundaries: he informs us, as it were, what evil looks like, what shapes the devil can assume. And in doing so, he shows us the difference between the inside of the group and the outside. It may well be that without this ongoing drama at the outer edges of group space, the community would have no inner sense of identity and cohesion, no sense of the contrasts which set it off as a special place in the larger world. Thus deviance cannot be dismissed simply as behavior which *disrupts* stability in society, but may itself be, in controlled quantities, an

¹⁰⁷ This said, Sandy Ives does contend that there are exceptions to this apparent pattern of strangeness or aberration, using his study on the conservative, socially well-integrated and decidedly normative farmer-poet of P.E.I., Lawrence Doyle, as a counterpoint to this assertion. See Edward D. Ives, *Lawrence Doyle: The Farmer-Poet of Prince Edward Island: A Study in Local Songmaking* (Orono: U of Maine P, 1971).

important condition for *preserving* stability. (1964, 15; emphasis in original)

Through his disruption, Roy stabilizes community and is stabilized himself. Ultimately uncertain if not afraid of him, people remark upon his brilliance, his talent, his creativity, his “neatness” and his difference, attempting to preserve communal norms and structures by magnanimously accounting for and accommodating this strange drake.



Fig. 3.1. Roy Teed’s former cabin, as situated on the north side of Arnoldus Road. The school is to the immediate right (east). Photo courtesy of Jules Grant.

The Gruff Artist’s Straddle Writing

In which the artistic impulse is explored, examining how Roy’s fringe position in the community fuels his writing.

The philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel, once wrote that “All human beings are somewhat ludicrous and grotesque simply because they are human; and in this respect too, artists probably are doubly human” (1991, 108). Doubly human – that is, sillier and

stranger than most of his neighbours – Roy Teed, in his off-to-the-side position, has cultivated this ludicrousness and grotesqueness. He writes:

I believe you can train yourself to cultivate the unconventional and turn normal upside down. All you need to recognize [is] that little spot of meanness in your soul; you need to possess and make yours that fragment of twisted malevolence that wants to screw around with what everyone considers right and proper. You need to release the small green gremlin inside you that takes delight in thumbing its nose at the rest of us...I've often heard that comedy has its roots in anger. It's true. It's the kind of anger that hates complacency and loves to upset the status quo. When you're able to tap into that buggersome gremlin hidden deep inside yourself, you'll discover the two of you can have a great time tweaking the nose of convention. (2004c, 25-26)

Roy's inner gremlin has been nurtured by his liminal position in the community, by "always [having] a foot in both worlds, you know – the world of Kersley and the world of writing and intellectual things and CBC radio" (Teed 2004a). He is truly a "gruff artist" (Jules Grant 2007), as one of my informants so described him, a man melding the creative, intellectual pursuits of "cultured" artists with the hands-on practicalities of gutting ducks and living in the Cariboo.

Standing astride these two diverging worlds informs and forms Roy's writing:

RT: We exist in two different worlds. You know, the world that's presented through the media and CBC radio and everything where it's all sweet and lovely – [and] the real world.

JGJ: So, I mean, in your writing, do you feel like you're bridging that a bit, or does this help you when you're writing to sort of – do you feel like you're existing in the two worlds?

RT: I suppose that's where I find a great deal of the humour. I've been asked to do a workshop the beginning of next month down in Vancouver about writing comedy for the stage and I've been labouring over my notes trying to put four hours together and trying to dissect what makes things funny and it's extraordinarily difficult. So, do you want to try? Since you – since you have a masters, which makes you, you know.

JGJ: Yeah, yeah, so bloody brilliant.

RT: But the thing I know that I – the one thing that I employ constantly, from the very first play I wrote to the play I just finished, is contrast. And it's often contrast between different classes in society. And I've always been fond of – I've been an anglophile for a long time and it was a bonus to have Dave Gunn¹⁰⁸ for so many years because I could write parts for him. And then the typical crude Canadian you met here doing your history book, you know, that's racist and misogynic and all the rest of it and have strong opinions. And so you put those two together and create tension that way. That's how I've often – comedic tension. And I do that, like contrast runs – everything I do is contrast, you know...I just revel in that. I just – it's in everything I write. And I suppose it has its roots in straddling – straddling those two worlds. (Teed 2004a)

Doubly human because he sees double and lives double, straddling two oft-times contrasting worlds, Roy utilizes this interstitial position to write comedy, finding humour in the juxtaposition of difference:

I love things that don't go together...If there is one thing that ties all of my writing together it is the constant of contrast...I take great delight in inventing odd combinations and then watching where they take me...Contrasts and incongruities between characters, whether outrageous or subtle, create friction. Many wonderful things arise when you have friction. (Teed 2004c, 6-7)

For the non-normative, off-to-the-side man, sitting in his frictional cusp position, it is not surprising that Roy's real-life role as a contrary community character should inspire the incongruities, tensions, contrasts, juxtapositions, frictions, ironies, double entendres so prevalent in his writings. Roy's plays do indeed have a lot of Roy in them.

While Roy and his writings have been shaped by the bush, trained in the citified auspices of higher learning and just generally considered "different," it is still difficult to pinpoint precisely what it is that compels Roy to write, to utilize such a literary avenue

¹⁰⁸ A well-known Kersleyite, born and raised in Sheffield, England, who immigrated to Canada in 1969 with his wife, Jean, and arrived in Kersley in 1979, having found work at CPP. His role in the Kersley Players will be discussed in Act IV.

for expression. Certainly, the artistic impetus remains a much-discussed mystery. So whether it's wiring in the brain or one's formative upbringing or some combination of nature *and* nurture is all arguable, but for Roy, it just is: "Frankly I'm not sure if I can tell you how to write comedy because I'm not quite sure how I do it myself...I honestly think it's something you're born with; a gift like the ability to run fast or blow smoke rings or appreciate opera" (Teed 2004c, 1). Although unsure as to why he has this writing compulsion, Roy can expound on the creative process:

You know, I look at the writing part – personally, this is my little vision of the creative pool – like I have a well of creativity that needs to be dipped into constantly whether I am writing or whether I am doing stages for recreational shooting or writing stages or, when J-- still lived in Kersley in the early 80's, we played *Traveller* constantly and I did all the writing for that. So, I have this creative pool or well that I dip into, and then can dip into only so much before I become burned out or tired or exhausted and then I don't do anything creative and so it slowly fills up again. Now, I suppose books must be what are filling it up or whether it's just all the rest, I don't know. (2004a)

Tapped into this creative spring, Roy creates until he tires and/or the spring runs low.

Time spent away from water hauling, in working, reading, radio listening, observing, hunting, playing, travelling, living eventually renew the spring and reinvigorate Roy and his creative wanderings.

As a lover of language, it is natural that Roy should find enjoyment, escape and well-filling inspiration in words, in books:

I read mostly for escape, however, I do read occasional Weighty Books or Literature – did you notice the capitals on those words? They were capitalized – mostly for escape. I enjoy science fiction and I enjoy historical novels. I also read military history and Canadian history and contemporary political science books. I just finished a book by Mel Hurtig

called *The Vanishing Country*,¹⁰⁹ which was enough to make your blood boil. (Teed 2004a)

While reading all his sci-fi, history and poli-sci books, Roy does not neglect the writers of laugh-out-loud funny prose. His favourite funny writers include: George MacDonald Fraser and his *Flashman* series,¹¹⁰ Sue Townsend and her *Adrian Mole* series,¹¹¹ Patrick O'Brian and his *Aubrey-Maturin* series,¹¹² Mark Twain, especially *Huckleberry Finn*, and last, but by no means least, the famed Canadian humorist, Stephen Leacock, in particular his brilliant *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*. As a writer of plays and a Canadian one at that, Roy is also a keen reader of Canadian playwrights, namely, Michel Tremblay, David French, Tomson Highway, Norm Foster and Sharon Pollock, whom he once had the distinct pleasure of meeting at a Theatre BC competition.

A patriot at heart, Roy's writing is greatly informed and formed by his stalwart Canadianism, which typically means anti-Americanism. One of my informants observes:

GM: Roy is very, *very* much against Canadian writers writing about the US or people in another country. Roy tries to keep everything in his play in Canada. When we did the playwriting course, he was quite adamant about that – that Canadians should write about Canadians. Canadians should write about Canada. I had a – pirates are always good in plays and I have always liked any movie I've ever seen with a buffoonish type hillbilly. According to Roy, "hillbilly" is an American word – "We do not have hillbillies in Canada."

JGJ: What are they called here? Hicks?

GM: Hill-people. I don't know. So I didn't write about hillbillies, hence the time-travelling cavemen.

¹⁰⁹ A book examining the slow demise of Canada through the process of Americanization; Mel Hurtig, *The Vanishing Country: Is It Too Late to Save Canada?* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2003).

¹¹⁰ A series of semi-historical books chronicling the wartime "heroics" of Harry Flashman.

¹¹¹ The well-received "diaries" of Adrian Mole, chronicling his development.

¹¹² Novels set during the Napoleonic Wars, following the friendship of the English Naval Captain, Jack Aubrey, and the Irish-Catalan doctor, Stephen Maturin.

JGJ: Because that's *so* Canadian.

GM: From Canada! [*laughter all around*] Very Canada-oriented. Roy's a very patriotic sort of guy. (Minnett 2004)

The extent to which this Canadianism infuses Roy's work, not necessarily overtly so, but certainly humour-wise and sensibility-wise, will be discussed further in this Act. Suffice it to say, the liminal nation with its inherent divisions and doublenesses and penchant for ironic discourse is voiced perpetually by the equally liminal Roy Teed, who lets slip his silly Canadian bugger, his inner gremlin, and dips into his creative pool to create some decidedly silly plays:

If you're not already a silly bugger you need to become one. In here (head). You don't need to be the silly bugger that's the life of the party or the class clown. In fact you should be the one watching those public performers so you can put them in your next play. This silliness needs to find life in your imagination. You should learn to think like a kid again; ask dumb questions; pursue things to their illogical end; ask "*what if*" all the time...After my first play someone came up to me and said, "Roy, that was funny," in a tone of total disbelief, "You never say boo to anyone, how could you write something like that?" Well, you and I know the answer to that. We keep it up here (head) under control and let it out in measured amounts to write funny plays. (Teed 2004c, 3-4; emphasis in original)

While never blatantly the class clown, Roy has always been a keen observer of life's incongruities and these observations find their comic form in his writings.

Clowning on the Transcendental Cusp

In which the meaningfulness of clowning characters, which is to say, transcendental buffoons, is investigated, along with how their social commentary is often place specific.

Clowns, noted by Beverly Stoeltje, "are ubiquitous characters who challenge the essence of human beliefs about propriety in the social world, about the potential for human actions based on natural laws, and about the power of the mystical and the

dangerous.¹¹³ Their acts affirm that boundaries can be tested and tensions exposed” (1985, 155). Because clowns tweak the nose of convention, overstep boundaries, push limits, turn everyday structures upside down, they are often considered ambiguous characters. In controlled amounts and under socially sanctioned conditions and frameworks, they are funny, providing, as Barbara Babcock suggests, a kind of “spiritual shock therapy which breaks up the patterns of thought and rationality that hold us in bondage and in which the given and established order of things is deformed, reformed, and reformulated; a playful speculation on what was, is, or might be; a remark on the indignity of any closed system” (1984, 103). Yet, by the very fact that they deform, reform, reformulate and playfully speculate on culturally codified structures, they are also dangerous, threats to the established order of things, as Handelman so observes:

Clown types are out-of-place on either side of a border, and in-place in neither. They have affinity with dirt, primarily through their ability to turn clearcut precepts into ambiguous and problematic ones. Therefore, if there is an affinity between boundary, dirt, and power, and one between the clown type, boundary, and dirt, then there likely is an affinity also between the clown type and that sense of power that inheres in the alteration of borders and in the dissolution of mundane realities. So it is not surprising that this type often is perceived as highly dangerous. (1990, 247-8)

Twisting the realities of everyday, muddying boundaries and obfuscating certainties are Roy’s art and delight. In this sense, he is well and truly a clown, which subsequently means that he “is really an ethicist” (Babcock 1984, 121), a philosopher, a transcendental buffoon.

Transcendental buffoonery, so dubbed by Friedrich Schlegel, is the philosophical notion that clowning, laughter and irony intuit the greatest insight, that buffoonery can, in

¹¹³ For a history of the role of the fool in society, see Welsford 1968.

“survey[ing] everything and ris[ing] infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius” (Schlegel 1991, 6), become a vehicle to enlightenment. Indeed, Stephen Leacock asserts that the humorist is one who has come to understand and interpret the meaning of life: “Teaching humour would not mean teaching people to make fun of things, but teaching people to understand things. Humour, at its highest, is a part of the interpretation of life” (1935, 5). Leacock continues:

[H]umour in its highest meaning and its furthest reach...does not depend on verbal incongruities, or on tricks of sight and hearing. It finds its basis in the incongruity of life itself, the contrast between the fretting cares and the petty sorrows of the day and the long mystery of the to-morrow. Here laughter and tears become one, and humour becomes the contemplation and interpretation of our life. (1935, 17)

The idea that the contemplative, inquisitive, philosophic life is somehow synonymous with the comic, with a well-developed sense of the ironic, is one that is explored in Barbara Babcock’s bricolage piece, “Arrange Me into Disorder: Fragments and Reflections on Ritual Clowning” (1984). Utilizing citations and observations from a long range of anthropologists, theorists and philosophers,¹¹⁴ she argues that “[b]oth clowning and criticism are ‘sanctioned disrespect,’ ways in which society paradoxically institutionalizes doubt and questioning. Both...are forms of irony” (1984, 107). She further asserts that clowning can be seen “as a sophisticated form of sociocultural self-commentary, as irony writ large” (1984, 107).

¹¹⁴ She cites, among others, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schlegel, Carlyle, Burke, Arendt, Turner, Goffman, Boas, Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, etc. While I am certainly no student of philosophy, by any stretch of the imagination, from what I can glean, this notion of irony, of the link between the inquisitive and the comic, is one that weaves its way through much of western philosophy’s philosophizing. Again, I am no philosopher and I recognize that the intricacies and nuances of philosophical irony are well beyond my current comprehension and the scope of this dissertation.

As sociocultural commentary, clowning tends to associate itself with a specific society and culture, adapting to the sociocultural conditions in which it finds itself. This is not to say that clowning and humour are not universal; they are. But according to Suzi Jones, folklore transmission is often subject to regionalization, that is “it undergoes whatever modifications are necessary for its survival in the new environment; it adapts ecologically” (1976, 111), becoming an oikotype of place. As a reflection of place, the clowning commentary within a particular society is designed “to comment on ideas, practices, and beliefs of that society. The clown of the rodeo qualifies as the clown of cowboy society, and thus in the rodeo [s]he exaggerates, satirizes, rearranges, and challenges the assumptions upon which the social and natural relations of the cowboy world operate” (Stoeltje 1985, 155). Despite claims of universality, Roy’s plays ultimately exaggerate, satirize, rearrange and challenge the assumptions upon which Cariboo society is built – a point explored in greater depth in the next two Acts. He is the clown of Kersley, Quesnel and the Cariboo. And as such a cusp, clown character, dirtying staid structures with his constant *what iffing* and iffy relations, Roy challenges communal conventions, but at the same time is very much a part of the community, a key figure in its continuity and identity. Diane Tye explains:

As transmitters of tradition and/or media of catharsis and control, characters help the marked and unmarked better understand themselves and the group(s) of which they are a part. In a multifaceted role that may represent continuity, introduce the play [clowning] element, articulate community personality, and/or emphasize rules that govern interaction, characters both help to clarify group boundaries and establish the relative relationship of individual members and subgroups, one to another. (1987, 111)

Roy clarifies boundaries by straddling them, allowing the community to reify relations through his clowning, through his “Roy” plays.

End Act III, Scene 1.

In which a brief biography of Roy Teed has illustrated his imaginative influences, from the literal and figurative Cariboo “bush,” in which he has grown up and currently lives, to his university education and CBC-radio devotion to the writings of Stephen Leacock and Tomson Highway. The interstitial status of this clowning community character has been looked at, as well as how this position informs the contrast that is so intrinsic to his comic playwriting. It was argued that it is this same cusp position which helps to clarify community boundaries. Indeed, the community does much to accommodate and/or control Roy and his writings, as Act IV will investigate further.

Scene 2 – What a Farce!

In which the elements and workings of farce as a genre are discussed, after which the Caribooite's need for comic release is explored.

Lights up on small, middle-class apartment. BIG AL, proprietor of Big Al's Exotic Message Service, sits stage left rubbing his foot, looking imploringly at ALGERNON BUGGERS, a P.I. with a British brogue, who has just stomped on his foot. BUGGERS is clad in a classic P.I. overcoat and black bowler hat, while BIG AL sports cowboy boots, Wranglers, etc. BUGGERS is investigating the suspected infidelity of BUSTER HIPCHEK, while BIG AL is looking for his FANNY, one of his exotic messenger girls, who was rudely dismissed from this apartment. Neither belongs in this apartment; its owner being MILES MYERS, who has been unwillingly and unwittingly caught up in this farce.

BIG AL

Who the hell are you anyway?

BUGGERS

Superintendent Crumble, RCM Police. My card. (*Offers card.*)

BIG AL

This card ain't got nothing on it.

BUGGERS

What did you say?

BIG AL

I said there ain't nothing on this card. Look.

BUGGERS

Well of course there's nothing on it. I'm undercover, aren't I? How would it look if I gave out cards to the criminal elements saying, "Superintendent Crumble, RCM Police?" It would blow my cover straight off, you twit.

BIG AL

How do I know you're really a cop then?

BUGGERS

Do I look like a bloody Mountie?

BIG AL

No.

BUGGERS

There you go, I'm undercover, aren't I? I'm not supposed to look like a bloody Mountie.

BIG AL

Okay, I get it. But I better keep this card to remind me.

BUGGERS

Keep my card?! (*Snatches card back.*) And have some bloody great git pass himself off as Superintendent Crumble? Not bloody likely.¹¹⁵

Lights down.

Simply put, Roy writes farces. Of the twenty plus plays written and performed since 1987, the vast majority would fall into the farce category (see Appendix I for detailed descriptions¹¹⁶ of the plays, as well as photos, cast lists, playbills, etc.), with four exceptions: three dramatic comedies,¹¹⁷ *The Good Game* (2008), *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* (2004) and *Strangers on a Glade* (1994), and one “serious” drama, *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall* (2001). In being a *farceur*, Roy has yoked himself and his Players with

one of the least respectable members of the family of drama. [Farce] romps noisily across the stage, briskly opening and closing bedroom doors. Her character is simple, her mind is empty, her behaviour is outrageous, even violent. Her actions are predictable, full of silly coincidences and cross purposes and mistaken identities. She is sexy. She is vulgar. She is beyond the pale. And, guiltily, we love her so much that she supports many a theatre on her disreputable earnings. (Messenger 1980-81, 3)

¹¹⁵ Dialogue from Roy Teed's 1990 play, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*. See Appendix I for cast members, character descriptions, play synopsis and pictures.

¹¹⁶ As detailed as one can be considering that farce plots are slippery, quick and generally hard to pin down, despite their apparent simplicity and straightforwardness.

¹¹⁷ The difference between a comedy and a farce, as explained to me by Gary Minnett, is that “a comedy generally has a setting, a time, and is specific about, like, an event in time, whereas a farce can be...can go way out; it can cross the line” (2004). These three plays all have serious tones – from ageing hockey players and unattained dreams to the treatment of women on the frontier in the nineteenth century to the strained relations between sisters – which are duly balanced by comic relief.

Indeed, farce, not unlike folklore, is often “still a pejorative term” (Davis 1978, 1), a dismissed genre of apparently “small literary merit, but great entertainment value” (qtd. in Bentley 1958, vii), lacking subtleties and dealing in absurd extremities. It is “joking turned theatrical” (1965, 234), as Eric Bentley so describes it. Farce is, according to Jessica Milner Davis, “broad, physical, visual comedy, whose effects are pre-eminently theatrical and intended solely to entertain; comedy which is slapstick, if you like, in a more or less coherently funny narrative” (1978, 1). As “the most ancient and perennial form of drama, and one which the playgoer would least gladly part with” (Styan 1975, 78), farce is a crowd-pleasing, fun-making form that delights in improbabilities, repetitive predictabilities, raw sexual urges and taboo-busting violence. It is the apparently vacuous filling, a necessary vulgar indulgence, which pays the bills allowing for the pursuance of more “serious” dramatic endeavours. After exploring the general structure of farce, this Scene delves into the release nature of comedy and why such catharsis is apparently so necessary to the Caribooite.

The Meaningful Mechanics of Farce

In which the inner workings of farces, with their stock characters, foreseeable repetitions and haste, are analyzed.

Generally considered such empty fluff, it seems rather fitting that farce, the word itself, “is actually derived from the Latin *farcire*, ‘to stuff’” (Davis 1978, 7). Indeed, Jessica Milner Davis notes, “Being short and often episodic in structure, farce is by nature suited to this role of ‘filling’” (1978, 7). As such a filler, farce does not have the time nor the desire to enter into metaphysical conceits, soul-searching soliloquies or maudlin moralizing. The playwright Eugène Ionesco observes: “Take a tragedy, speed up the movement, and you will have a comedy [farce]. Empty the characters of psychological

content, and again you will have a comedy [farce]: make the characters exclusively ‘social beings’ – i.e., captives of the social machinery – and once more you will have a comedy [farce]” (qtd. in Styan 1975, 84). Always leading up to the inevitable punch-line(s), there is a forthright structure to farce, a structure that relies heavily upon type characterizations, mechanical repetitions and rapid-fire transitions.

“The simplest kind of farce,” writes Jessica Milner Davis, “requires little more than a suitable victim, a practical joker and a good idea for a prank” (1978, 25). This combination of the straight man and the joker is a classic contrast, but one must not forget the third member of this group – the laughers, the audience. And this triumvirate of joker, straight man and audience is the *modus operandi* of farce. To this howling punch-line end, stereotypes, caricatures, clichés and type characterizations are the norm in farce, giving you “a type that is immediately recognizable to your audience” (Teed 2004c, 17). This is not to say that these stock characters cannot be innovatively quirky and detailed, but their role function within the farce itself should be readily apparent to the audience. Indeed, there is a directness in farce, or a simplicity, as Eric Bentley observes: “Farce is simple...because it goes right ‘at’ things. You knock your mother-in-law down, and no beating about the bush” (1965, 241). And this directness in characterizations and actions is, by nature, aggressive, and “[w]ithout aggression farce [simply] cannot function” (Bentley 1965, 240).

Highly dependent upon aggression, farce often “presents a comically balanced struggle for power between two opposing forces – husband and wife, parent and child, master and thief” (Davis 1978, 12), twins, doubles. The importance of balancing these

type-characters and their violence is not to be underestimated. Jessica Milner Davis

writes:

[S]ince farce, more than any other comic forms, depends upon the direct, dramatic enactment of its jokes and humiliations, it is in more danger of becoming merely and violently aggressive. The strictness of its rules is necessary to prevent farce from over-balancing into an outright attack upon social conventions of its time. If the farcical conflict is released from its traditional patterns of balance, farce becomes dangerous and liable to provoke the response of censorship...If it is provided with characters who are self-conscious about the wrongs they inflict and suffer, farce becomes pathetic, a tragical romance...The simplest farcical structures display clear signs of this attention to balance and patterning, to the stylization of acting and to the depersonalization of character. (1978, 24)

While comedy may indeed have “its roots in anger” (Teed 2004c, 25), in aggression, the farcical form must always seek to maintain its light-hearted, entertainment value. It needs to be outrageously ridiculous and dreamily depersonalized. Utilizing stereotypes and caricatures, with nil self-awareness or inner dialogue or conscience-racking guilt, farce characters are overtly automatic, mechanical beings, “whose playful plight demands little sympathy, whether they are the first or last victim of the round” (Davis 1978, 86). They are not there for empathy or sympathy, but for laughs.

Expediting this depersonalized laughter at these farcical type-characters is the mechanical predictability of farce. Just as the stereotypical characters are present for quick and easy recognition, so too are the plots, workings and patternings of farce readily recognizable. Ann P. Messenger explains:

Of course all farce is “mechanical,” in various senses of the term. If a gentleman in a farce sends a letter to his mistress, it goes astray and is delivered to his wife instead. If Dromio of Ephesus is sent to find his master, he finds Antipholus of Syracuse. If a banana peel lies on the sidewalk, a toff in a top hat, never a man in a cloth cap, is the one who slips on it. These are the laws of the farcical universe, so thoroughly understood that even greater hilarity results when the toff neatly sidesteps

the banana peel, because we know he will forget, back up, and take his tumble anyway. The very predictability along with the occasional evasion of predictable action is the source not only of the form but also of the fun of farce. (1980-81, 3)

Indeed, for Roy Teed, this banana-peel expectation is a technical truism for farcical humour, in that one can fulfill the expectation in three ways: (1) as expected: “man tosses the peel, steps off the curb and slips on it” (Teed 2004c, 6); (2) in an opposite manner: “man tosses the peel, steps off the curb and chokes to death on the first bite of the banana” (Teed 2004c, 6); or (3) with something completely off-the-wall: “man tosses the peel, steps off the curb and is hit by a truck” (Teed 2004c). It is known and it is expected of farces that something will happen with this metaphoric banana peel – messages will go astray, identities will become criss-crossed, deceptions will run amok and misunderstandings will reign. The audience knows these patterns and delights in this mechanical predictability. But the automaton characters of farce do not possess the foresight or wherewithal to ascertain these patterns. They are oblivious type-characters who mechanically perform a functional role to further the equally mechanical plot to typically very humorous ends. Davis notes:

Type-characters are...quite unconscious of their limitations. They act and react blindly, driven by their rigidity. Although a type is certainly capable of congratulating himself [herself] on his [her] cleverness or his [her] good-fortune, [s]he will lack self-consciousness. More often than not, the audience's position of privilege permits it to foretell a downfall that is concealed from the character himself [herself]. (1978, 63)

Not recognizing the inevitable machinations at work, farce types are what the French philosopher, Henri Bergson, would call “inelastic,” cardboard-like caricatures, who “lack the flexibility and the individuality of life” (Davis 1978, 63) and are doomed to repetition.

In his classic essay, “Le Rire [Laughter],” Bergson explores the mechanics of laughter, that is, the structure of comedy, drawing heavily upon the theatrical farces of his day for illustrative examples. He defines the comic as any situation when “[s]omething *mechanical is encrusted upon the living*...when *some rigidity or other* [is] applied to the mobility of life” (1956, 84-85; emphasis in original). Accordingly, Bergson argues that this mechanical rigidity or encrustation finds comedic form through three basic principles: repetition (of actions, characters, dialogues, plots, problems, etc.), inversion or “topsyturvydom” (oppositions, reversals, backfires, repetitive twists and contrasts) and the reciprocal interference of series (all those misunderstandings, cross purposes, mistaken identities, double entendres, etc.). The repetitive, topsy-turvy, cross-wired machinations of farce and its robotic characters – the blatant mechanical artifice – result in “both a distancing of the characters from the audience and a lessening of their humanity” (Davis 1978, 63). This aggressive repetition creates depersonalization and laughter, as Bergson observes with a Punch and Judy show:

No sooner does the policeman put in an appearance on the stage then, naturally enough, he receives a blow which fells him. He springs to his feet, a second blow lays him flat. A repetition of the offence is followed by a repetition of the punishment. Up and down the constable flops and hops with the uniform rhythm of the bending and releasing of a spring, whilst the spectators laugh louder and louder. (1956, 106)

Indeed, Styan states that “repetitions are at the core of all [farce] business...one character bounces off another until no one can mistake the source of laughter as it grows louder and louder” (1975, 90). Yet, while the robotic characters bounce perpetually off one another, often creating a pecking order of violence, the violence of the attacks, verbal or physical, remains abstract. The characters, with their encrusted, metallic machinations, never seem

to feel, the attacks simply bouncing off their mechanical encrustations: “Prongs of a rake in the backside are received as pin pricks. Bullets seem to pass right through people, sledge-hammer blows to produce only momentary irritation...All of which signifies that, in farce...one is permitted the outrage but spared the consequence” (Bentley 1965, 222).

Furthering this consequence-free abstraction and depersonalized repetition is the speed, “the preposterous pace at which events move” (Styan 1975, 84). Farces go fast. Outrageous events are inevitably set in motion, requiring their equally exaggerated symmetrical fulfilment. Writing on the masterful French *farceur*, Georges Feydeau, Marcel Achard comments on the “ineluctable fatality” present in both tragedy and farce:

Feydeau’s plays have the consecutiveness, the force, and the violence of tragedies. They have the same ineluctable fatality. In tragedy, one is stifled with horror. In Feydeau, one is suffocated with laughter. We are occasionally given some respite by the heroes of Shakespeare and Racine, when they melodiously bemoan their fate in beautiful poetry. But Feydeau’s heroes haven’t got time to complain. It is characteristic of their destiny to make us laugh, while the small catastrophe, which barely manages to come off, paves the way for an immense vexation, which, we know, will be only the first in a whole series of new ones. (1958, 363)

Farces are ineluctably fatalistic, in that they tend to adhere to the law of motion, that physical law which states that once an object is set in motion, it tends to stay in motion. Repetitions, inversions and crossed wires snowball in farce, accumulating speed and hyperbolic excessiveness, until all is resolved in the denouement. The type-characters of farce simply have no time to explore the depths of human consciousness, “[t]he speed and impetus of events limit[ing them] to helpless gesticulation, in contrast to the decisive exercise of volition permitted a fully dramatic figure” (Davis 1978, 64). Transitions are expeditious, as Roy Teed notes: “In a drama the playwright might feel obliged to spend eight pages evolving a character from bug-eyed outrage to a clam state of reconciliation.

In a comedy [farce] we can do that in a single line. Some really serious artsy type comedy writers might spend three lines, but no more” (2004c, 18). The plot always needs to get a move on, and this farcical element is more than simple slick showmanship. Eric Bentley argues that “the speeding up of movements has a psychological and moral – or rather, immoral – effect, namely, that of making actions seem abstract and automatic when in real life they would be concrete and subject to free will. This effect being of the essence, rapidity is not merely a technical asset, it is a psychological necessity” (1958, xx). Indeed, he concludes that “[t]he devil is in farce rhythm” (1958, xx), in its consistent symmetrical patternings of characters, plots and pacings.

Despite its apparent devilish, immoral effect, farce tends to remain the innocuous, inoffensive joke, enjoyed heartily by many an audience. While frolicking in taboo violations, “[i]t nevertheless avoids giving offence...by adhering to a balanced structure in which the characters and values under attack are ultimately restored to their conventional positions” (Davis 1978, 85). Although, throughout the course of a farce, marriages are battered, families vivisected and hierarchies inverted, a typical farcical conclusion makes amends. The marital, hierarchical and familial institutions remain intact. So indulgent and over-the-top, farcical jokes do not function as hard-hitting satire, but as ironic play. Farce type-characters, in their blatant unselfconscious oblivion, are silly, demanding little more of the audience than laughs. In short, as Davis notes, “the comic spirit of farce is one which delights in taboo-violation, but which avoids implied moral comment or social criticism, and which tends to debar empathy for its victims” (1978, 86). Simply put, farce is fun.

If We Couldn't Laugh, We'd be Crying All the Time: The Cariboo's Comic Catharsis

In which the meaningfulness of farce is investigated, especially its significance to the working class of the Cariboo.

Given that farces are indeed fun and that fun is often considered the fluffy, divertive filling, possibly best done without, in this serious job of living and writing theses, there is a persistent notion that “a great gulf [is] fixed between the laughable and the meaningful” (Messenger 1980-81, 3). With all its outrageous machinations and repetitive mechanisms, farce can appear meaningless, an empty caloric snack. And yet, those very artificial machinations and repetitions are its depth. A psychological necessity is indeed met in farce, the necessity to laugh, fantasize, dream, play, have fun and make fun. As my Nana continually reminds me, “If we couldn't laugh, we'd be crying all the time”¹¹⁸ and as one of my informants astutely comments, “His [Roy's] plays go way deeper than they appear on the surface – always, even the – mostly the farces” (Minnett 2004). This tangible link between life's tears and tragedies, its injustices, doldrums and depths, and its guffaws and outright, apparently superficial silliness is simply a matter of perspective and time, as Margaret Atwood points out, utilizing a common adage, “[W]e live each event twice, once as tragedy and once again as farce” (1995, 109). The notion that tragedy, that most hard-hitting, serious and sorrowful of genres and events, is also, potentially, utterly ridiculous, a farce, certainly illustrates that something more is indeed going on in farce. Underlying the laughter is a telling seriousness, illuminating the inescapable yin and yang balance between tragedy and farce. Farces do indeed “go way

¹¹⁸ Just one of my Nana's many sayings. Other Nanaisms include: “If brains were ink, s/he wouldn't have enough to dot an ‘i’,” “If B.S. was bricks, s/he'd be the next federal building” and “If shoes were clues, s/he'd be barefoot.”

deeper than they appear on the surface” (Minnett 2004), and this section explores that depth, localizing the psychological significance of the genre to the Cariboo frontier, as it meshes with the wryly fatalistic, working-class worldview prevalent in the area.

In his work on the psychological meaningfulness of farce, the dramatic literature professor and theatre critic, Eric Bentley, contends that, as one of the melodramatic arts, farce is heavily imbued with the symbolic. He writes: “If art imitates life, it should be added that while naturalistic art imitates the surfaces, ‘melodramatic’ art imitates what is beneath the surface. It is a matter, then, of finding external representation – symbol – for what cannot be photographed or described” (1958, ix). Thus symbolic, farces are, according to Bentley, “[l]ike dreams...show[ing] the disguised fulfillment of repressed wishes” (1958, x). He even admits that in the examination of his own dreams, he has been

not a little surprised to discover how many affinities they show with Chaplin films [farces] – in ideas for a whole sequence of action (chases in automobiles, “routines” of dressing or moving furniture) or in characterization (heroes and villains, “chickens” and bullies) or even in style of performance (large grimaces and gesticulation being very much in order). (1958, x)

Rife with such hyperbolic dreamlike patternings, characterizations and stylizations, farces dramatize “the inner experience” (Bentley 1958, xv). Bentley argues: “In speaking of exaggeration, it is important to see what is exaggerated in farce and what is not. While, certainly, the external facts are distorted, the inner experience is so wild and preposterous that it would probably be impossible to exaggerate it. To the inner experience, the farceur tries to be utterly faithful” (1958, xv).

Faithful to the apparent inner workings of the psyche, all these unrealistic, farcical types and tropes are, it is argued, “meaningfully human...reveal[ing] much about

humanity” (Messenger 1980-81, 5). In truth, as Ann P. Messenger maintains, “Paradoxically...farce, this most mechanical of genres, images the essence of vital humanness: that we are a most ingenious paradox” (1980-81, 7). For Bentley, these farcical types reveal

human nature in the abstract, in the mass, in the rough, in the raw...They are monuments to stupidity, disturbingly yet, surely, deliberate reminders that God lavished stupidity on the human race with a reckless prodigal hand. They put us in mind of our own stupidities. They even teach us (if we are not too stupid to learn) what stupidity is...[While] tragedy presents a nobler, more profound image of man...[f]arce confronts the cruder kinds of man’s strength, all of which he misuses. Man, says farce, may or may not be one of the more intelligent animals; he is certainly an animal, and not one of the least violent; and one of the chief uses to which he puts his intelligence, such as it is, is to think aggression when he is not committing it. (1958, xix)

While acting as fantastical vehicles for bringing repressed wishes, unconscious dreams, stifled aggressions, violent fantasies, animal instincts and general human rawness and stupidity to the fore, farces also act to contain these basal, primal, uncivilized urges, since – like the jokes so analyzed by Freud – they are essentially an emotional purge, a release, a catharsis, a harmless and clean projection of what, in reality, would be emotionally dire with no end of the messy repercussions.

Bentley discusses the cathartic nature of farce:

Farce in general offers a special opportunity: shielded by delicious darkness and seated in warm security, we enjoy the privilege of being totally passive while on stage our most treasured unmentionable wishes are fulfilled before our eyes by the most violently active human beings that ever sprang from the human imagination. In that application of the formula which is a bedroom farce, we savor the adventure of adultery, ingeniously exaggerated in the highest degree, and all without taking the responsibility or suffering the guilt. (1965, 229)

Purged of the guilt and the responsibility, farces are escapist in nature and humour is the result, as Chris Brookes observes of mummering, itself a farcical form: “Only as a mummer [farceur] is gross sexual humour not untamed manners but quaint humour” (1988, 241). Arts of escape, farce and melodrama “are running away from...not only social problems but all other forms of moral responsibility. They are running away from the conscience and all its creations” (Bentley 1965, 255). An informant discusses this escapist nature of farce and humour, as people inwardly identify with the zany characters, projecting themselves into this conscience- and consequence-free realm:

I think people like to laugh. People like stuff that’s outrageous. I think they see – maybe they see in people on the stage what they’d like to see in themselves. I don’t know. Maybe they would just like to be outrageous for two hours in front of a bunch of people they’ve never met...Yeah, I really don’t know what it is. I think – I think a lot of people that go to theatre – it’s kind of like watching a movie, you kind of put yourself in a role. Or reading a book, you know – the guy in the book – you kind of identify with the guy in the book. And it’s the same with theatre. I honestly think people like to laugh. (Minnett 2004)

And one should never underestimate the importance of laughter, especially as manifested on the frontier, since, as Marshall McLuhan notes, “[t]he frontier is naturally an abrasive and rebarbative area which generates irritation and grievance, the formula for humor” (1977, 232-33). For the Canadian imagination thus perennially surrounded by the frontier and stuck in paradoxical tensions, laughter is an imperative release: “In our precarious and complicated circumstances, and given our national character, Canadians must either cry with frustration or laugh with Leacock” (Watters 1966, 546-47).

Much has been written on the humour that was born out of the frontier’s irritations and grievances. As Albert Bigelow Paine describes in his multivolume biography of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (a.k.a. Mark Twain),

[T]he frontier itself, even with its hardships and its tragedies, was little more than a vast primal joke; when all frontiersmen[women] were obliged to be laughing philosophers in order to survive the stress of its warfares. A word here about this Western humor: It is a distinct product. It grew out of a distinct condition – the battle with the frontier. The fight was so desperate, to take it seriously was to surrender. Women laughed that they might not weep; men, when they could no longer swear. “Western humor” was the result. It is the freshest, wildest humor in the world, but there is tragedy behind it.¹¹⁹ (1912, 454)

Laughing so as not to cry, the comic form favoured by such frontier fatalism, or unending determination (if one is more given to optimism), seems to be that of gross exaggeration. This hyperbolic impulse is plain in what is often regarded as a standard frontier form of comic expression and one that has been cultivated in British Columbia, as mentioned in the previous Act, namely, the tall tale. Constance Rourke makes this link between the grossly exaggerated form of tall tales and the overwhelming environment of the frontier:

Tall tales were often like wrestling matches or the rhapsodic boastings and leapings and crowings and neighings that prefaced a fight in the backwoods, with one tale pitted against another. A knock-down force belongs to many of them; the competitive purpose is plain in the unexpected thrust at the end. Almost always the listener loses a foothold or draws a sudden breath. It was the wilderness with its impenetrable depths, the wild storms of the West, the great rivers, the strange new wonders on every side, that produced the content of the stories – those natural elements that had brought terror and suffering to earlier pioneers and still belonged to the farther, unknown West, but now were apprehended with an insurgent comic rebound and a consciousness of power. (1931, 49)

Indeed, tall tales are often “seen as effective strategies for coping with, and surviving against, the unfamiliar, the dangerous and the hostile” (Byrne 1991, 320). In his work on the tall-tale impulse in Newfoundland, Pat Byrne argues that, while the harsh, unforgiving

¹¹⁹ Mody Boatwright takes exception to this despairing vision, arguing that optimism, not pessimism, defined pioneers and their humour: “There is actually more reason to speak of the optimism of the frontier than of its pessimism...For the pioneer regarded no defeat short of death as final. As long as there was a frontier, there was, as he thought, opportunity” (1949, 166).

physical environment certainly plays an integral part in the tales' perpetuation, it is, more significantly, "the psychic environment" (Byrne 1991, 320), the imaginative mould, which truly fosters the form. He argues: "In short, Newfoundlanders have struggled for four centuries against an environment built on outrageous paradox, and how better to cope with outrageous paradox than through outrageous hyperbole. The tall tale impulse has provided the Newfoundlander with the mechanism, not simply to laugh in the face of death, but to roar in the face of survival" (1991, 321). Expanding this argument across a continent, I would suggest that this tall-tale impulse, this penchant for the hyperbolic, the outrageous and the paradoxical, founds the farces so enjoyed by the Caribooite, providing laughter in the face of working-class vastation.

Farce and, by extension, its tragic counterpoint, melodrama, are both genres of exaggeration, characterized by ineluctable fatalities, and both have found fertile ground for growth in the soil of the Cariboo. As briefly discussed in the previous Act, melodramas were extremely popular amongst the early gold-mining populace of British Columbia, apparently reflecting something of "the collective soul of the people" (Evans 1983, 70). Melodramas are, according to Bentley, primarily concerned with the violent vagaries of fate, in which apparent coincidences reveal themselves to be "part of a baleful pattern" (Bentley 1965, 245), leaving hapless innocents helpless in the hard hands of fate. He writes, "In tragedy, man is an angel, but also a beast; and the two wrestle. How terrible! How much nicer it would be to identify oneself with angels, and blame everything that goes wrong on the devils! This is exactly what the melodramatist does. This is exactly what melodrama is for" (1965, 261). Bemoaning their own unjust and undeserved victimization, working-class miners found within the inflated and, therefore,

decidedly *unrealistic* melodramatic form a medium for articulating this powerlessness, thus escaping from any sense of personal responsibility or self-determination. According to Chad Evans, these melodramas “fit” the psychic environment of the BC frontier rather well, emphasizing how uncontrollably hazardous and unfair life could be:

But how unrealistic were melodramas, the plays of mere action? The plays were concerned with the plight of a downtrodden proletariat, oppressed by a new moneyed class which had no ingrained sense of decency. The economic pressure on the upwardly mobile proletariat, (a historical accuracy, particularly for the goldseekers of the Far West), caused the problems which, in turn, became the plots of melodrama. In the Far West the sudden vicissitudes suffered by dramatic characters were not unlike the ups and downs of everyday existence. A frontier person's fate often depended on a roll of the dice. The transience of life created a need for action almost regardless of the consequences... Given the short life expectancy, and the sense of hazard that impinged on every aspect of human relationships, one can see why scenes of intense suffering and domestic trials appealed. (Evans 1983, 72)

In his characterization of melodramas as “plays of mere action,” Evans highlights their fatalistic nature, but this same description could be used for farces, which are often considered “all plot” (Bentley 1965, 247) and, hence, plays of mere action, as well. Just as the coincidences in melodramas compound into a deliberate, fateful pattern, so too do the coincidences in farces compound into a predictable, mischievous pattern. Eric Bentley observes:

What do the coincidences of farce amount to? Not surely to a sense of fate, and yet certainly to a sense of something that *might* be called fate if only the word had less melancholy associations. In farce, chance ceases to seem chance, and mischief has method in its madness. One final effect of farce is that mischief, fun, misrule seem an equivalent of fate, a force not ourselves making, neither for righteousness nor for catastrophe, but for aggression without risk... The heaping up of crazy coincidences in farce creates a world in which the happily fortuitous is inevitable. (1965, 245; emphasis in original)

Wrapped in a pall of melodramatic pathos, Evans's "downtrodden proletariat" could release, through tears of self-pity, woe-is-me frustrations over its victimization. That said, the miners, as noted in Act II, also loved their farces, and this love has persisted to this day amongst the Cariboo working class. Cloaked in a cape of farcical madness, the current, Cariboo "downtrodden proletariat" can release, through guffaws of high-paced hilarity, woe-is-me frustrations over its alienation.

During my earlier assessment of the Cariboo worldview in Act II, I emphasized the importance of release to a working-class populace, with an insistence upon ownership of post-work life and having fun, or, as Evans puts it, with "a need for action almost regardless of the consequences" (1983, 72). In his study of "the Boys" (working-class men in Thunder Bay, Ontario) and their play forms, Thomas Dunk contends that "[t]he importance of fun as a goal of the Boys' leisure should not be underestimated...[A]gainst the seriousness of the world of work, the civilities of bourgeois society, and the melancholy of Western Marxism which pretends to speak for the working class, the importance of a laugh to people like the Boys takes on a symbolic significance" (1991, 92-93). Leisure-time fun is integral to counteract the deadening nature of capitalist, colonialist work, and a major element of this fun is an emphasis on release. Robert Crawford notes,

The releasing motif suggests pleasure-seeking rather than ascetic self-denials, the satisfaction of desire instead of repression of desire. Release is the antithesis of discipline, a disengagement or extrication from imposed and internalized controls. Instead of a language of will power and regulation, there exists a language of well-being, contentment, and enjoyment. (1984, 81)

And farces, with their basal animal aggressions and scatological humour, their over-the-top high tempos and spit-in-your-eye crassness, are all about release from stultifying propriety and escape from conscience-wracking guilt, “running away from...not only social problems but all other forms of moral responsibility...running away from the conscience and all its creations” (Bentley 1965, 255). Yet, in that running away, there is also an enjoyment of violence, since, as Bentley argues, “the principal motor of farce is not the impulse to flee (or Fear), but the impulse to attack (or Hostility)...If in melodrama fear enjoys itself, in farce hostility enjoys itself” (1965, 255).

Situating this enjoyable release motif in the Cariboo, one of my informants observes:

There’s definitely a Cariboo culture and I think maybe one of the reasons the farce goes over so well with the Kersley part of it is the fact that it’s the opposite side of that culture. You know, you’ve got the cowboys and the millworkers – the whole town’s full of millworkers and truckdrivers and cowboys and farmers and ranchers – and then you go down there and these same guys that are doing these jobs through the day are the outrageous and the far end. (Minnett 2004)

The sheer outrageousness of farce, as it grotesquely mirrors in super-hyperbolic form the daily mechanization and routinization of an alienated working class of cowboys and millworkers and farmers and ranchers, just seems to “fit” the roughness and rawness of the Cariboo, as another informant suggests:

When I think about it, we’re fairly unique here in the Cariboo where we have trouble, I think, defining ourselves. We’re not rural and we’re not urban. You know, Cariboo is – it’s a little bit backwater, but I think we have our own style here and I think Roy’s writing kind of fits that – our style of living, you know. It’s kind of rough and raw, in a way, a little bit bawdy. (Drewcock 2004)

Roy and his farces suit the Cariboo sensibilities, with their penchant for exaggeration and aggression. And they make a “downtrodden proletariat” laugh, as so explained to me:

I mean, so many people carry so many problems on their shoulders their whole entire lives and, you know, they just never seem to get out from under the burden, and Roy brings laughter to people’s lives. And for just a very short period of time, they can forget about all their problems, just kill themselves laughing at something really stupid, really insane. (Koning 2004)

Bogged down in the seriousness of life, with its tears to fight back and its lusts to bridle, and trapped within the Cariboo’s fatalistic trajectory, there is something of a frontier mantra to just have fun, for, indeed, as an informant explained, “life’s a short trip and you might as well do some enjoyable things as you go along” (Wark 2004), like experience the cathartic pleasures of a “Roy” play.

End Act III, Scene 2.

In which farce, as a genre, has been assessed, expounding upon its structural machinations, namely its reliance upon stock characterizations, foreseeable repetitions and snowballing speed in order to generate laughs. This Scene also explored the psychological relevance of the farce genre, arguing that, through the hyperbolically hostile and mechanical presentation of humankind, there is a release from the moralizing conscience and the confines of social propriety. It was further suggested that such an exaggerated form and style of release – whether through farce, melodrama or tall tale – “fits” the frontier as a cathartic coping mechanism for dealing with the fatalistic vastation of the frontier. Situating this genre on the Cariboo frontier, hostile, hyperbolic farce grotesquely mirrors the daily alienation, routinization and mechanization, fitting the roughness and rawness of the place and providing much-sought-after fun.

Scene 3 – Madly Off in All Directions:¹²⁰ A “Roy” Play *In which the characteristics of a “Roy” play are listed and examined.*

Lights up on a well-to-do sitting room, where an upper-class couple, AGNES and HUMPHREY, are haughtily discussing their daughter, KIMBERLEY, and her penchant for producing an alarming number of bastards, who are never seen or heard but are nevertheless referenced to with regularity.

AGNES

You don’t intend to present her with yet another suitable husband, do you Humphrey?

HUMPHREY

Yes, how did you know?

AGNES

Every time you present our daughter with another paternally approved husband she gets pregnant.

HUMPHREY

The girl does have an awkward sense of timing, doesn’t she?

AGNES

Yes. The moment your young men are introduced to Kimberley’s bulging belly they immediately flee to some godforsaken part of the country like Toronto.

HUMPHREY

This time will be different.

AGNES

Why, Humphrey, will this time be different than any other time?

HUMPHREY

Because, Agnes, I have here (*produces letter*) a letter of intent indicating the young man has no objections to pregnant women.

AGNES

Are these lack of objections categorical or unconditional?

HUMPHREY

I think it best if you hear his words firsthand. He writes (*reading*): “And let me assure

¹²⁰ Famous line from Stephen Leacock’s *Nonsense Novels* (1948): “Lord Ronald said nothing; he flung himself from the room, flung himself upon his horse and rode madly off in all directions” (63).

you, sir, if your daughter's already knocked up, it don't matter, it just saves me the work of doing it myself."

AGNES

Good heavens. Who is this paragon of laziness?

HUMPHREY

His name is Basil Calhoun. He's a friend of a son of a cousin of a friend of a friend at my club.¹²¹

Lights down.

"Oh, it's a *Roy* play," I heard a woman say, using that one modifier to sum up and categorize a Kersley Player play (See Appendix 1 for an overview of "Roy" plays). All the women around her clucked in agreement and nodded in comprehension and I suddenly realized that "Roy" is often locally used as an adjective to describe Roy's plays. When, in local parlance, someone says, "It's a 'Roy' play," everyone knows just what is meant. It is an emic descriptor of an emic genre, as one of my informants so points out: "I don't think it would do to use the term outside of the Quesnel-Kersley area, because nobody would know what you were talking about" (Drewcock 2004). While generally understood and used by locals, it was an enlightening and somewhat challenging task getting my informants to articulate and define just what is meant by the term:

JGJ: I've heard people say – they've described something as a "Roy" play and I'm just trying to understand what maybe the characteristics of – what people mean when they say that. What do you think – of a Roy play?

PD: Well, yeah, Roy's writing is very unique. It has a – I guess his sense of humour is just kind of stilted, I guess, compared to most playwrights that I've read anyway. And, I guess, we don't really have a way of defining what Roy writes except "Roy's plays." You know, it's kind of – it's not really definable. It's a mixture of slap-stick humour – oh dear, I

¹²¹ Dialogue from Roy Teed's 1991 play, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*. See Appendix I for cast members, character descriptions, play synopsis and pictures.

don't really know how to describe it. As we go along, I'll probably think of different things...

JGJ: Yeah, it's very much – you have to be in-the-know to know who Roy is to know what his plays are.

PD: It's interesting that you're not the only one to try and grapple with this. The – when we went to some of the zone festivals, the adjudicators have had the same – have been in the same dilemma, trying to define what this kind of humour [is] that Roy writes, and they haven't been able to define it either. You're not alone. We're not alone. (Drewcock 2004)

Considering that “Roy's plays have a lot of Roy in them” (Arnoldus 2004), it is not surprising that this mucker-upper of categories and buggerer of boundaries should apparently write indefinable “Roy” plays.

With their improbable plots, outrageous machinations and exaggerated, stock characters, the vast majority of “Roy” plays, as already mentioned, are what would be classified as farces. And since, as the French theatre critic, Francisque Sarcey notes, “All farces congeal when they are transferred from the stage to a cold description of them” (qtd. in Achard 1958, 357), it is indeed a near impossible task to convey the liveliness of them. It is also a potentially destructive task, full of intricacies of which to be mindful, according to Marcel Achard, who compares this descriptive process to “being in the position of the clockmaker who has to dismantle the carillon on the Strasbourg cathedral” (1958, 357), vivisectioning a masterpiece of artful engineering. So, while a definitive description of a “Roy” play will be eternally elusive, I will attempt to list and explore the general characteristics and makings of a stereotypical “Roy” play, characteristics drawn from my informants' astute observations. These makings include: nonsensical realms, shock factors, juxtapositions, incomprehensible language, human relationships, fast-paced inevitability, transvestism and patriotism.

Prolonged Introductory Nonsense

In which the believability and sincerity of a “Roy” play’s nonsensical structure is explored.

A play needs only a germ of probability to begin, but once begun it can soar with the madness of hysteria or race faster than nightmare.

– J.L. Styan, *Drama, Stage and Audience*

Given that Roy’s plays typically comprise “strange characters in odd situations” (Teed 2004a) and generally tweak conventional norms, it is necessary for Roy to create and introduce, in his playful stage realm, an alternate reality – “a closed mental system, a world of its own lit by its own lurid and unnatural sun” (Bentley 1965, 247). And yet, this reality, however unnatural and improbable, has to be believable and sincere. He writes:

Your characters must be absolutely sincere. They cannot admit to the silliness of what they are doing. They must believe in it totally...Never be afraid of the absurd. It’s only absurd for the first few minutes, after that it becomes your new reality...The world that you create in your writing must be inhabited by characters that absolutely believe in that world. That means you as the writer must believe in that world because if you’re tongue-in-cheek or anything less than sincere, it will come across in your characters and your dialogue. The character’s world must be as real to them as our world is to us. Or at least, for most of us. When you’re writing comedy you can stretch the bounds of reality so far even Star Trek writers become envious. As long as you’re sincere. Sincerity is your greatest defense against disbelief. As long as your characters believe the reality they’re in is legitimate and you believe it’s legitimate, the audience will believe with you. (2004c, 4 & 16)

Like the rules for reasoning found within any belief system, the play’s internal logic must “build stepwise upon their axiomatic foundations and subsequent learning, taking into account their evidence, including observation and personal experience, and testing possibilities and hypotheses” (O’Connor 1995, 13), in order for it to be believable, and hence, sensible and probable in its own bizarre way, as a Kersley Player observes: “It has to be believable, you know. You can’t just go up and wear women’s clothing for no good

reason at all – although some of them have been very thin reasons, I’ve thought – but it still has to be believable” (Minnett 2004). Seeking such believability, “the farceur must have the gift of some lunatics (such as paranoiacs) to build a large, intricate, and self-consistent structure of ‘improbabilities’” (Bentley 1958, xix), “a veritable structure of absurdities” (Bentley 1965, 244).

The audience must be able to follow consistently the reasoning or structure, however outlandish, absurd and improbable, and recognize that “taste of truth” (Koning 2004), as one of my informants so described it:

There’s always a – a taste of truth covered with a little bit of humour, you know. I mean, you look at *Lace Drakes* – I mean the whole procedure was just about not having to clean the ducks. It was all done just because they love to shoot the ducks, but nobody wanted to clean them, right. So, they went to this horrid detail of getting dressed in women’s clothes and all this other stuff, just so they wouldn’t have to clean the dumb ducks, you know. And then, of course, the women found out about the fact that there was something going on in this cabin that wasn’t supposed to be going on and so they got carried away, you know. And – and – there’s always that little bit of truth there that says to yourself, “Yeah, I could see where they’re going,” you know. But how did they get there? I mean, how do you – how do you come up with an idea like men in dr—in women’s clothes, you know, just so you don’t have to clean a duck? (Koning 2004)

While the notion of holding a drag queen beauty contest at a hunting lodge – the loser having to clean the ducks – is quite out there, the reasoning leading up to this event weirdly makes sense within the play’s context. Indeed, *Lace Drakes* is often considered a real favourite because of this succeeding illogical logic: “It was just so outrageous. It just – everybody that was a man was dressed like a woman; everybody that was a woman was dressed like a man. But it all kind of, in Roy’s twisted sort of way, made sense... You could just kind of see – you could almost see where it was going at times” (Minnett 2004). It is this same twisted, internal, taste-of-truth logic which allows for an assassin

specializing in exploding lingerie (hence male cast members wearing women's underwear on the outside of their clothes by the play's end) as in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, for a drooling, hunchbacked Don Juan, who services all the women via his cubby hole under the front desk, as in *Hotel Hysterium*, and for bouts of blank verse (earplugs provided to the audience beforehand for insertion during poetic episodes), a telepathic murder plot, magic potions and an ignored man who believes himself to be dead as in *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*.

Since nonsense, as Elizabeth Sewell notes, "is not merely the denial of sense, a random reversal of ordinary experience and an escape from the limitations of everyday life into a haphazard infinity, but is on the contrary a carefully limited world, controlled and directed by reason, a construction subject to its own laws" (1978, 5), a theatregoer entering into this nonsensical realm, with its twisted internal logic, must discern Roy's reasoning rules of the play, which can initially be rather confusing:

In a lot of them, I know, it seems like it took 'em a while to get going – like introductions and stuff that's all pretty flat to begin, before you actually started getting the gist of the play. You know, there's one, seems like you sit there and go, "What the heck is going on?!" And then you'd start to put the pieces together and start to make a little sense. But one of them was kind of like, "What's going on?!" (Grimm and Grimm 2004)

The process of making sense of the nonsense can prove rather difficult, if not impossible, as an informant admits: "I've had a hard time with a couple of his plays, just making any kind of sense of them at all" (Minnett 2004). One play mentioned repeatedly for its hard-to-follow introduction is *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*, in which an eccentric Buster appears onstage sporting black dots on his face – apparently received while bobbing for felt pens – and looking for Spot, his balloon dog (a regular balloon with a big

black spot on it attached to a leash). While felt-tipped pen bobbing and air dogs certainly attest to Buster's eccentricity, they are not a part of the overall plot structure – a decided bedroom farce – leaving the audience thinking, “Okay, okay...It's taking a long time to get this going. Come on” (Grimm and Grimm 2004). It is nonsense to which they can see no logic or point, and for one of my informants, this is a common shortcoming in a “Roy” play: “There's always moments of hilarity – it just takes a lot of time to get to them” (Jules Grant 2007).

Central to these moments of hilarity and aiding greatly in the nonsensical construction is the character of the trickster, the knave, the buggerer, the prankster, so apparently integral to farces. Eric Bentley explains the role:

If one tells the story of a farce, one may well start talking of young lovers, but if instead of telling the story, one looks at what has remained in one's memory from a farce, one will not find young lovers there but two other characters: the knave and the fool. One will then find that the plot hinges less on what the young lovers do than on what the knave does. The knave in farce is the equivalent of the villain in melodrama. “Passions spin the plot.” If the passion that spins the melodramatic plot is sheer wickedness, the passion that spins the farcical plot is that younger brother of wickedness, the spirit of mischief. Shakespeare's Puck could be the knave of a farce. He is not deep or purposive enough to be a villain. He is a trouble-maker by accident and even by nature but not always by design and never with intent to do serious damage. He is a prankster. (1965, 248-49)

Mischief itself, the prankster always requires someone to prank, the buggerer needs someone with whose life s/he can bugger and the trickster only functions when there is someone to trick. In short, the knave needs a fool, as Bentley notes: “[O]ne of the oldest relationships in comic drama is that between the ironical man and the impostor. These are the comedian and the straight man, one a knave, the other a fool, the fun resulting from the interaction between the two” (1965, 249). Perhaps the best illustration of the knave

role in “Roy” plays is that of Algernon Buggers, P.I., whose character has been central to three of Roy’s productions: *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two-Step*, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* and *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*. Bugging around, Buggers convinces the fools around him that homicidal maniacs are coming, that they are going blind and are near death, that scotch whiskey is really tea, that they really love one another, that a life saver is a listening device and on it goes. It is foolish, it is nonsensical and it is funny. Truly, “[a] play with a cast of fools tells us that it is a world of fools we live in” (Bentley 1965, 251).

Although Roy’s attempts to create nonsensical, fool-filled realms full of pirates and witches, vampire conventions and flashing fiancés, with their tastes of truth, do not always entirely succeed, his plays continue their ongoing quest to present a zany tweak on reality. And in this quest, Roy’s “nonsense expresses more than mere playfulness. In trying to burst the bounds of logic and language, it batters at the enclosing walls of the human condition itself” (Esslin 2001, 341). While good, ol’ commonsense tends to view nonsense as only being appropriate “to the everyday discourse of the socially purposeless, to those on the peripheries of everyday life: the infant, the child, the mad and the senile, the chronically foolish and playful” (Stewart 1978, 5), the eccentric, clowning knave, Roy Teed, nonsense challenges the very notion of commonsense. Susan Stewart notes that “all nonsense divides and rearranges any idea of society as coherent and integral” (1978, 209), flattening, inverting, manipulating and questioning the seemingly natural and permanent hierarchies which inform our sensibilities and lives. In playing with and questioning those hierarchies, nonsense highlights the constructedness of traditions, societies, cultures, ultimately “celebrat[ing] an arbitrary and impermanent hierarchy...[through] undercutting

the world all at once and over and over again” (Stewart 1978, 209). For a man the community in general often has difficulty making sense of, it is not terribly surprising that Roy should occupy the realm of no-sense, writing his fool-filled farcical nonsense.

Shockingly Off-the-wall

In which a “Roy” play’s shock element is explored, especially as it reverberates off of a communally codified virtue.

[T]he unusual can spring only from the dullest and most ordinary daily routine and from our everyday prose, when pursued beyond their limits. To feel the absurdity, the improbability of everyday experience and of our attempts at communication is already to have gone a stage further; before you do this, you must first saturate yourself. The comic is the unusual pure and simple; nothing surprises me more than banality; the ‘surreal’ is there, within our reach, in our daily conversation.

– Eugène Ionesco, Foreword to *Plays*

Describing what others mean by a “Roy” play, Roy quipped, “Generally they mean this incredibly weird and strange and off-the-wall... You know, fringe, anything fringe, anything strange – sick – weird” (2004a). Off-the-wall was used repeatedly as a descriptor for a “Roy” play and by this is meant the unusual, the bizarre and the nonsensical. But again, this nonsense must have some tie to the mundane and the banal, however brief and/or unlikely. It must begin on a tangible wall of reality before taking off, as Eric Bentley notes: “Farce... while it begins by accepting the bland, placid, imposing façade of life, proceeds to become farcical by knocking the façade down” (1958, xv). One of my informants explains:

I look at his plays as being totally off-the-wall. You know, most every play is – they all do have elements of the everyday, normal life, but he just expands on them to the point of making them ludicrous or farces or whatever... I think that he leaves people guessing and that there’s always a surprise and that’s an element that probably lures a lot of people to the theatre. (Lovell 2006)

Taking elements of the everyday, a “Roy” play pursues and expands the normal, the sensible, the known, to surprisingly abnormal, nonsensical and “real mind-bending” (Prentice 2006) ends, “leav[ing] you wondering, thinking. Sometimes you have to – they’re always funny but the comedy is different. I can’t explain it – I’m trying to think of the right word to use... Yeah, a different kind of comedy” (Prentice 2006). Challenging the mind to bend to their kind of logic, “Roy” plays are seen as very much reflecting the playwright, who “enjoys kind of maybe shocking people a little bit” (Prentice 2006), who “likes to have that shock element in there” (Arnoldus 2004). As a self-proclaimed silly bugger, it is characteristic of Roy to bug, pester, push limits, “what if” and hopefully shock sensibilities in the process: “Roy is – he’s definitely not politically correct. But then again, he doesn’t pick on any particular gender or race or, you know, he’s not incorrect – he’s not politically incorrect in that sense. But he does pick away at our sexual sensibilities. He definitely does that. He picks on everybody kind of equal” (Drewcock 2004). Such is the nature of a *farceur*, who “like the lunatic and the unruly child [and the silly bugger], flies in the face of decorum” (Bentley 1958, xv).

In a typical “Roy” play, the curtains are pulled back revealing a recognizable “home” setting – living rooms, dining rooms, barrooms, kitchens, with doors leading off to more rooms. Indeed, “the scene and the characters are arranged in the echoing symmetry of family houses” (Styan 1975, 89). The characters run the gamut of human relations – friends, neighbours, employers, employees, lovers, spouses, siblings, workmates, etc. These are the everyday knowns. Yet, because “[o]utrage to family piety and propriety is...at the heart of farce” (Bentley 1958, x), the mind-bending and picking away quickly begins. A butler appears onstage – a decided aberration from a working-

class home. A private investigator shows up. Call-girls, pirates, wenches, hunchbacks, mad scientists, assassins, flashing sexual perverts, ex-lovers with mink fetishes, balloon-breasted drag queens follow, expanding the everyday to the ludicrous. Murders are plotted, women are openly ogled and belittled, men are cut down to size, trysts are planned. And in this absurd expansion, Roy can indeed shock, “tak[ing] his humour to the point where it can be a little uncomfortable for people sometimes. I think people like that. They like – they like being on the edge of acceptability. He rarely goes over that edge of acceptability, but just balancing on that edge, I think, is what makes people laugh all the harder, you know, and they really let go” (Drewcock 2004).

Perched on the edge of acceptability and eliciting laughs, Roy’s plays have the potential to shock by their content, characterizations and style. In order to shock, though, and for humour to result, there must again be a presupposition of communally accepted and acknowledged social and moral standards. As Bentley notes: “Where there is no established virtue, there can be no outrage...The marriage joke, then, exists only for a culture that knows itself committed to marriage” (1958, xi). Farce and nonsense, as aggressively amoral vehicles, require a *real* moral and sensible wall, a communally codified virtue, off of which to bounce. The sexually aggressive female roles, so stereotypical to a “Roy” play, counter the supportive/subordinate role of the Cariboo female in real life, with her lesser paid job and housewifely duties. The over-the-top, cross-dressing male characters are the opposite of the *real* man’s testosterone-driven, Cariboo living. The violent interchanges, full of harsh put-downs and wicked witticisms, spit in the eye of everyday politeness and propriety. The nearly incomprehensible language, loaded with big words, cruelly expose the general scholastic ignorance of

Caribboites. The inevitable pacing and speed – the comings and goings in and out of doors, the repetitive action and dialogue, the mechanical automatism – mirror grotesquely the post-colonial and capitalist conditions of the Caribboo, with its alienated millworkers and functionalist mindset. Indeed, “Roy” plays are “aggressive theatre in that we laugh heartily at the formidable dilemmas in which others find themselves. We exhibit a cruelty as we would never dare do in life, and we yearn for the breaking of rigid social rules as only those who observe them can” (Styan 1975, 83). And this cruelty has the potential to surprise, shock and offend, since as Roy ironically notes, “Nothing is sacred, but be aware that some things may get you lynched” (2004c, 14). The apparent lynchability of “Roy” plays will be explored in the next Act.

Contrast

In which the thematic and linguistic juxtapositions, so inherent to a “Roy” play, are explored.

The one thing that I employ constantly, from the very first play I wrote to the play I just finished, is contrast. And it’s often contrast between different classes in society.

– Roy Teed

As already discussed earlier in this Act, Roy, from his cusp position within the community, is a man continually seeing double, noting incongruities and finding humour in the frictions caused by juxtapositions. And this love of the incongruous informs his writing, as he writes:

I love things that don’t go together. I love the juxtaposition of difference. If there is one thing that ties all of my writing together it is the constant of contrast. You should always be in search of unlikely combinations and strange associations. I take great delight in inventing odd combinations and then watching where they take me. Remember: court whimsy. Seek out the Absurd...Incongruity works. It’s the fuse that will set off your writing. By incongruity I mean: The unexpected juxtaposition or combination of [a] character with other characters and/or their

occupations, appearances, actions or anything else your wicked and perverted imagination can dream up. Contrast and incongruities between characters, whether outrageous or subtle, create friction. Many wonderful things arise when you have friction. This is where you'll find your comedy. This is also where you can find what your character wants, their motivations, and the obstacles they have to overcome. (2004c, 6-7)

Again, nonsense needs its opposite, sense, and off-the-wall needs to juxtapose off a wall.

There always needs to be a comically balanced juxtaposition of opposites in tension, as has been previously noted with the nature of farce and folk drama, “involv[ing] fairly simple but striking patterns” (Pettitt 1997, 211) that “bring together jarringly the culture’s traditional polarities: male and female, human and animal” (T. Green 1978, 847), that display “a comically balanced struggle for power between two opposing forces – husband and wife, parent and child, master and thief” (Davis 1978, 12). Understanding the necessity of these antagonisms, “Roy” plays are rife with striking patterns, with thematic and linguistic contrasts, incongruities, ironies, juxtapositions, tensions, oppositions, doubles, twins, frictions and factions. Hunchbacked bell-hops are sex objects, twin sisters are only distinguished by patches over opposite eyes, abstract scientific genius is thwarted by practical ineptitude, bird costumes are worn backwards so tail feathers face erectly forward, peg legs jut horizontally off knees, husbands and wives and parents and children and brothers and sisters fight perpetually for one-upmanship, men become women and women men, one shoe on and one shoe off, doors opened and closed and opened and closed and on and on it goes.

Housed within every characteristic listed for a “Roy” play – the transvestism, the nonsense, the language, the patriotism, and so on – is the constant of contrast. Utilizing

one play, namely, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* (2004), as an example of the myriad of contrasts swilling about in his work, Roy observes:

The play I just finished – the one that you came for the auditions for [*Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*] – you have a female and a male mad scientist. And then you have Ivors that are opposite gender and so there's all these little contrasts built in. And there's the way they speak, you know, the Hubert type of – and Hubert and Bridgett who are – who speak properly and finely compared to Pointeteau's broken French accent and Broom who's often off on these big loud flakes of blank verse and fancy, you know. So, I just – I just revel in that. I just – it's in everything I write. (2004a)

Indeed, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* is a good illustration of the antagonisms so prevalent in “Roy” plays. Dr. Pernicious Broom, a female mad scientist, with a penchant for grand flowery speech, is naturally at odds with her male counterpart, Dr. Hercules Pointeteau, a nearly incomprehensible Frenchman. An interchange between the two depicts their antagonism and Broom's proclivity for iambic pentameter, as well as Pointeteau's English problems:

BROOM

Good for nothing

Dear Pointyhead, that's all you are – a waste
Of space, Have you give thought to renting out
The vacant space between your ears to grow
Assorted vegetables? Or failing that
Experiment, give worms a try, they'd like
The cold and dank and utter lack of light
They'd find between your ears.

POINTETEAU

I am insult!

This bimbo now she make me steam from all
My orifice; I fluff from my big bum
Upon your silly word. I belch at you,
Take that big burp and put it where the sun
Don't shine! Hubert, I tell that wench what for.

Both doctors are assisted in their mad scientific endeavours by their efficient and sharp assistants, Bridgett and Hubert, respectively, who also dislike one another, quite naturally. Furthering colouring the mad scientists labs are the two hunchbacks – Pointeteau’s female, Gumbelle, and Broom’s male, Gumball. In the grand farcical scheme of pecking orders, the doctors make demands of their assistants who, in turn, tease and despise the hunchbacked helpers. In the case of Dr. Broom, there is another level in the pecking order, in that she is continually hounded by her own mother, who still finds her daughter lacking, despite the mad genius and accolades, because she cannot fix a leaking sink, find a man and produce grandchildren. So, already with the characters, there are the archetypal polarities between male and female, parent and child, master and slave, employer and employee. And, as in all farces, these polarities are played with.

Although only lowly assistants to their respective doctors, Hubert and Bridgett are sharper, quicker and wittier than their addlebrained bosses, as the following exchange between Pointeteau and Hubert illustrates:

POINTETEAU

Tell me again, Hubert, why it is you are my assistant.

HUBERT

Well, it’s because I’m a foible, sir.

POINTETEAU

And a foible is what?

HUBERT

It’s something to make you look smart, sir.

POINTETEAU

But, I am already smart.

HUBERT

Yes, sir, but think of how much smarter you look when you’re with me.

POINTETEAU

It is like a very handsome halogen lamp next to the stumpy wax candle.

HUBERT

That was very eloquently put, sir.

POINTETEAU

I am the halogen lamp.

HUBERT

Yes sir.

POINTETEAU

And you are the stumpy wax candle.

HUBERT

Thank you, sir. Maybe I'll sneak off now and light my wick.

POINTETEAU

No, Hubert, your candle is wickless.

HUBERT

Don't you mean dripless, sir?

POINTETEAU

Your wick is dripless?

HUBERT

Well, lately it has been, sir.

POINTETEAU

Hubert, enough of this. I am not sure of what we are talk about, but I am feel icky all over.

HUBERT

Maybe you need to plug your lamp into something, sir.

The irony of the assistant, Hubert, understanding and explaining his foible role to his supposed better, along with all of his double entendres, which are apparently lost on a clueless Pointeteau, suggest the underling's superiority. In the case of the underling,

Bridgett, she has the ability to cut through all the crap that spews forth from Broom's tongue and just tell it succinctly like it is:

BROOM

This glorious silver chalice, this lucent receptacle of hope, this highest symbol of metallurgical perfection is destined to be the saviour of us both and the inescapable prison of that vile and insidious invader from above.

BRIDGETT

You're going to use the bucket to catch the drip from the sink.

BROOM

Yes.

Again, with her kind of Emperor's-New-Clothes-like sharpness, Bridgett is able to see through all the fluffy, flowery, possibly awe-inspiring language and just nakedly call a spade a spade, which points to an underling with a clearer and more pragmatic vision than her supposed better.

Into this mix is thrown the oversexed hunchbacks, who are the pets of their masters and the pests of the assistants, since they spend their time making openly lewd comments to Hubert and Bridgett, often obfuscating even the most basic elements of communication, namely, words, as an exchange between Bridgett and Gumball points out:

GUMBALL

(*To BRIDGETT*) What are you?

BRIDGETT

I am efficient.

GUMBALL

You are fish?

BRIDGETT

Efficient.

GUMBALL
Fishing?

BRIDGETT
Shut up you disgusting object.

Given the animosity between the assistants and the hunchbacks, it is rather ironically fitting that, after the atomic transmogrifier has melted down – thanks to Dr. Broom’s ineptitude in dealing with a simple drip – and everyone has been transmogrified, Gumbelle and Gumball are transformed into sexy assistants, while Hubert and Bridgett are changed into those very things they despised, namely, hunchbacks. Of course, despite their new, improved exteriors, Gumball and Gumbelle still prefer lumps and so hook up with Bridgett and Hubert. The good doctors come together, as Mother Broom decries, “No condoms are allowed in this house!” The prize committee of Ms. Sloan and Mr. Tubble, who were there to assess the viability of the atomic transmogrifier and have been transmogrified into one another, which is to say a man as a woman and a woman as a man, decide to go lingerie shopping (see fig. 3.2). And the polarities have certainly been played with.

While, thematically, “Roy” plays always have their sparring and jarring juxtapositions, there is also a contrastive linguistic element as well, which is often utilized to accentuate the thematic incongruities. Just as Broom speaks in blank verse and Pointeteau in pidgin English/French, language is used to differentiate between characters and their respective classes, as has been noted previously:

It’s often contrast between different classes in society...I’ve been an anglophile for a long time and it was a bonus to have Dave Gunn for so many years because I could write parts for him. And then the typical crude Canadian...You know, that’s racist and misogynic and all the rest of it and

have strong opinions. And so, you put those two together and create tension that way...comedic tension. (Teed 2004a)

In his play from 2003, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*, which is set in Williams Creek (a.k.a. Barkerville) during the gold rush, Roy plays with many levels of language to highlight the contrast between characters. The proper, newly widowed, Molly, and the smooth-talking charlatan, Muldoon, speak, what Roy dubbed, “High Victorian” (2004c, 11), which the following passage illustrates:

MOLLY

Sir, my mind is filled with solemn oaths and tales of youthful folly. I have not forgot. Plunge straight to the heart of the matter, sir, you could find no one more ready than I.

MULDOON

Then I am reassured, madam. I will continue. The solemn oath Harper and I made, an oath bound by blood, is this: we each to the other swore, that though we parted, we could be together in spirit always and if one should meet an untimely end, the other would in good faith assume all and any responsibilities for spouse, family and honour of the one deceased. Therefore, I do solemnly declare that I, T. Bannock Muldoon, will be your guide, protector and benefactor from this day forward. I am yours, madam. You may rejoice.

The pompous propriety of this speech is contrasted to the “Canadian Frontier” (Teed 2004c, 11) spoken by the simple, uneducated miner, Ezekial:

EZEKIAL

Beggin’ yer pardon, ma’am, but Doc Bronegal said I was to get my leathery carcass over to yer place on account of how Mr Harry croaked this mornin’ and I was to plant him for you. I brung my shovel.

And then, just to stir it up a bit, there is Doc Bronegal, the apparent surrogate for the playwright, who flings “his words hither and fro with a giddy delight” (Teed 2004c, 11):

BRONEGAL

No sir, no sir, no sir. I refuse absolutely to extirpate anything. The word is offensive. Extirpate?! Bah! Rend! Ruin! Rieve! Good, solid words with

meat on their bones. To hell with extirpate! The word skulks off your tongue like an abashed schoolboy. I expectorate upon extirpate! Ha!

Again, these three speech patterns play off one another in the play, heightening the polarities and antagonisms between the characters.

While “Roy” plays, textually, are full of linguistic and thematic contrasts, there is also another level of contrast operating with these plays, one that manifests itself in performance, in context, in the juxtaposition of *real* life and the play realm. As characters are made real, slight-framed men are playing opposite giants – the little man often getting the better of the big, naturally – wholesome housewives are playing hookers and tall-talking, macho millworkers are sporting skirts. The oft-noted intimacy between actors and audience, an element so apparently inherent to folk drama, creates, as Thomas Green notes, “a constant juxtaposition of fictive and mundane roles” (1978, 847), wherein “the audience in folk theater continually confronts the role which an actor-peasant plays with the actor’s own private life” (Bogatyrev 1976b, 47). For Roy, this kind of para-play contrast, this juxtaposition which extends outside of the play itself, is unintentional, unfortunate, serendipitous, frustrating and best done without:

JGJ: I think what I always noticed about, like in the first plays – and maybe it’s moved beyond that – but the contrast also extended outside of the play itself. I mean, part of the humour, I think initially, at least for me, was the fact that you were seeing, you know, Becky Dale, you know, full-time homemaker, acting as, you know, a bimbo onstage, scantily clad, sort of, you know, and being looped on the arm of, you know, Vic The Stick Stewert, who is actually her brother-in-law, you know. And you would have sort of an outside knowledge contrasting with that character, so in a way, there were always two characters on the stage for me. It was Becky and Bambi, you know. It was Vic and my Dad, you know.

RT: I think that was for the most part unintentional because with community theatre you’re limited to who is willing to do that and you cast whoever you can. And some – and when you’re directing a show, you

never tell your actors who they are in real life should come out onstage. And unfortunately, the audience looks at it from your perspective and they don't see the – what was Becky's character name again? [JGJ: Bambi.] – Bambi. They don't see Bambi onstage. They see Becky onstage, which becomes – it's an impediment sometimes for people to take certain roles, because if they're at all bawdy or racy or – especially for the ladies – they don't want to take them 'cause they're married, they have a husband at home and they have friends and what do these friends do when they take a part like that? They come up and say – they equate the character they've seen onstage with the person, the actor, which is not the way it's supposed to be.

JGJ: Right, so you that somehow that suspension of belief doesn't always

RT: No, it doesn't always exist when you know – when you're personally acquainted with the character – unless you can, you know – and most people can't I don't think – they can't separate the two. They can't separate the actor from the character.

JGJ: Well, I think for the most though, it does create humour, though. I mean, you sort of, you know.

RT: Yeah, but it's a serendipitous humour that's not – put it this way: if I could do without it, I would, 'cause I think the plays have enough humour in them. But you just live with it.

JGJ: You can't really escape it.

RT: No, not unless – not unless you're using totally unknown actors. (2004a)

While Roy, in his quest to be a “serious” and professional playwright, finds this contextual contrast irritatingly inevitable, for many in the community, this contrast, this tension of identities, is the fun and the danger of a “Roy” play, an integral element investigated in Act IV.

Big Word Babble

In which Roy's love affair with dictionaries and his expansive and playful usage of the English language and its many literary devices are investigated.

He uses such big words, people stand there staring at these words when they come out of these people's mouths and they all pretend they

understand the things they're saying, and most of the words are almost unpronounceable. You hear the actors practicing these words. They don't know what they mean either but they're good at it.

– Bert Koning

As a lover of language, a writer of nonsense and a man continually courting contrast, Roy delights in language play. “Roy” plays overflow with assonance, consonance, antonyms, homonyms, synonyms, acronyms, puns, double entendres, metres, rhymes, hyperboles, oxymorons, metaphors, similes and the literary devices utilized continues. A cursory perusal of the plays’ titles and characters reveals this love affair: titles such as, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, *Funny Bunny*, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* and *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, as well as characters such as the Schickerbickers, the Bunwallops, Rosie Rootertooter, Ludmilla Oyster, Bonecrusher Wickham, Will-Bill Bonnigan, Algernon Buggers and the Chicken Merango Kid. “Roy” plays have had a sexualized rumination on the number of s’s in the word, ‘specific’, as in *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogri-fier*, have had a plot involving ineffective explosive lingerie, leading up to the play’s punch-line, “This exploding brassiere is a bust!” as in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, and have had a myriad of double entendres and play-on-words, from empty screw holes to dripless wicks to poems about smoking one-eyed love bandits to nymphobranians (those who are hornier than they think they are). There has been a cheeky listing of the seven seas/c’s in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*:

JACK

Har! I be Cap’n Jack Strathbungo! (*beats chest*) Right true pirate cap’n and scourge of the seven seas.

MS McBURGO

Let me see, that must be constipation, Calgary, callisthenics, cupcakes,
cucumbers, calico cats and cream-coloured camisoles.

There have been “hyperventilating hyperboles” as in another pirate play, *Har! (The Pirate Play)*:

DUSTY

What’s going to happen to us, Captain Packard?

BLODGER

Happen? Happen? I’ll tell you what’ll happen. The lucky ones among us
will die an early death from an undiagnosed but horrifying disease,
shrieking in agony as their bodies are ravaged by legions of suppurating
pustules, while the rest of us beg for pennies in little tin cans while we
huddle for warmth over steam grates after dining on decomposing fish
heads behind Malaysian seafood restaurants.

PACKARD

Control yourself man – you’re hyperventilating hyperbole.

And there have been comically philosophical musings in iambic pentameter as in *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*:

DONEGAL

It’s well I’m dead. Were I alive I would
Needs must converse with such as those four louts.
For louts they are; though three be fair does not
Excuse enthusiastic loutishness.
It’s made of rocks, she says. What’s more, it’s made
Of God’s damned rock; so speaks this harridan,
This gap-tooth graceless, garden slug that bathes
In sun upon the rock of ignorance
Till walruses look brilliant when compared.
Oh dear, I had a thought, a little thought,
Perhaps one half an inch if measured with
A rule, this rule which says a thought, all thought
Is miraculous indeed, however
Insignificant or grossly over
Weight, it’s the fact of thought that counts, not inch,
Nor foot, nor metric tonne. The thought is all.
I had a thought. I wonder what it was.

In short, “Roy” plays play with language.

For Roy, this perennial language play is being witty and wit is a significant part of his writing. He observes:

Humour loves a laugh; wit loves language. Both are amusing, but each causes a different type of amusement. With humour, a belly laugh, and a short, sharp explosion of merriment. As Canadians I think we understand wit because of the British influence on our country. I love wit because wit needs language and I love language...I love language. I love words. I love the rhythm and cadence and music of words put together in wondrous combinations. I’m not quite sure how this relates to comedy but I know it’s an extremely important part of my writing and since I write a lot of humour, I figure they must be related. I encourage all of you to have poetry in your soul when you write. Enjoy the experience of putting words together. Discover the magic in the sounds they make and the images they create and watch how it all changes according to how you arrange the words. Sometimes I write things just because they sound good. And sometimes comedy results...The use of language is one of your most important tools. It helps define your characters, it gives you opportunity to demonstrate your wit and it allows you to create humour. (Teed 2004c, 9-10, 12)

Roy continues, discussing, as an example, how the surly hunting lodge caretaker in *Lace Drakes*, Cabot McDingus, “says a lot of strange things that sound like they should mean something with words that almost sound familiar, but nothing is quite real. The real reason those lines are there is because it was fun as heck to write” (2004c, 10). McDingus certainly spews linguistic nonsense, as the following three excerpts from *Lace Drakes* exemplify:

McDINGUS

The rest of ’em’ll be here soon enough. Reekin’ of city blacktop and fruit-flavoured gun oil. Lopsided, carbunculated lodebones, everyone of you; trippin’ over each and the other, spending all your time here fillin’ up the biffy with a lot of foreign-smellin’, fat-free, high fibre, low cholesterol crap!

...

McDINGUS

Sissified, jackanapular titmouse if I ever seen one, missing duck huntin' for a broke leg. This'll be what? – first time in eight, ten years you all ain't been together for the duck hunt?

...

McDINGUS

Never kilt a duck?! Before me own eyes, a wee pinkulus duck virgin. I thought as much. You got the look. Suckin' on life's hind tit, never doing anything hazulacious, not doing squat worth remembering. Yeah, I know duck hunting, sonny.

In his playful quest to put words together, be witty and sound good, Roy can sometimes end up in kind of a McDingus-like gobbledygook, a language which, in its wide use of words, makes no sense to the general Kersley-Quesnel audience, excepting perhaps those who sport university degrees, listen to intellectual programs on CBC radio and read Lewis Carroll, but even then the language can fly incomprehensibly over one's head. It is a language stuffed with “big” words – real or imagined – requiring a course in Roy's English if it is to be decoded, as one of my informants so notes: “He uses words you didn't even know existed. I think that's why and I felt – I don't think I ever had a part where I had all these great big long words that you didn't even know how to pronounce or what the heck it meant, you know. You pretty much had to take an English course in Roy's language of what that was and what that means, you know” (Zacharias 2006). Indeed, these “big” words characterize “Roy” plays to such an extent that Roy, himself, jokingly describes his own plays as: “Blah, blah, blah, big word. Write that down; that's very important. Blah, blah, blah – big word – blah, blah, blah” (2004a).

Thus distinguishing “Roy” plays, these “big” words are glaringly present in every piece and played with, their presence being generally meta-narratively remarked upon

within the play itself. In *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, for instance, Hubert quips after the operatic interflow of metered prose between Broom and Pointeteau:

HUBERT

It's that awful iambic pentameter, sir. It makes you sound grand even if you are only telling the other fellow to piss off.

In *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues*, Phil Schickerbicker gets the last word in an argument with his wife by stating, rather childishly (which makes it rather ironically funny considering the meaning of the word itself), that he understands what “puerile” means:

HELEN

Spare me your puerile philosophies. I'll get the toothpaste myself.

HELEN *gathers her purse and exits*. PHIL *follows to the door haranguing*.

PHIL

I know what puerile means too, Helen, I looked it up last time you used it. I wasn't born yesterday, you know.

In *The Charles Connection*, ever-ready Vic “The Stick” Stewert remains a man on-the-make, interpreting Miss Millicent Primrose's big-worded remarks as invitingly “dirty:”

MILLICENT

Mr. Stewert, in the brief time I've had the misfortune of knowing you your capacity for carnal excess has transcended the bounds of mere licentiousness. You are a satyr, sir.

BUNNY#1

Is she talking dirty, Vic?

VIC

God, I hope so. What do you say, Hot Stuff, care for a frolicsome foursome?

Later on, Vic receives an incomprehensible earful from the Rothbottom butler, Charles, for messing up the plans he had for Millicent and Reginald. Thankfully, Charles translates the remarks into “plain English:”

CHARLES

What meagre charm you possess seems to have failed abysmally.

VIC

Don’t tell me you’re mad too. Why is it whenever someone gets mad at me they never talk plain English?

CHARLES

Right. Plain English it is – you stupid great git – bugger off.

VIC

Well, I guess that's clear enough, Charlie.

And on it goes.

The examples of this language play are numerous. In *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley*, Charles Kersley asserts that his sophistries are not silken but woollen:

HAMISH

So you’re not the fiendish blackguard who has been weaving silken sophistries around my daughter?

CK

You may be assured, sir, my sophistries are not silken; all my underwear is wool.

In *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, there is an exchange between Algernon Buggers, private eye, and his assistant, Bonecrusher Wickham, discussing the meaning of the word, “platitude:”

BUGGERS

I do love a platitude, Mr. Wickham, keep it up.

BONECRUSHER

You got it, boss. What’s a platitude?

BUGGERS

It's a large serving dish for hambones.

BONECRUSHER

That's right, I think my mom had one.

Later on in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, when the kidnapped Angie Bunwallop meets up with her wannabe-pirate brother, Ernie, and the pirate captain, Jack Strathbungo, she spells out her assessment of pirates in no uncertain, decidedly academic terms – not unlike Dr. Broom's previously cited description of a bucket:

ANGIE

He's not a real pirate captain. This is just a stupid cult and your pirates are nothing but self-deluded, psychologically emasculated, societal rejects huddling together for mutual comfort in the blizzard of ridicule and contempt generated by unexpressably pathetic posturing.

JACK

Har! Them be fighting words. We be carrying on the tradition of piratehood so the old ways not be lost. It be a heavysome burden but no more than any right true pirate would bear.

Again, Jack, not unlike Broom's assistant, Bridgett, calls these words as they truly are, because – however flowery and academic they may be – they are, indeed, still “fighting words.”

This fighting of words – as characters jostle for positioning and attempt to show who is in-the-know or not in-the-know or thinks s/he is in-the-know, but is really not, or really is – is a “Roy” play constant. Perhaps one of the best illustrations of this continual “big” word bickering is with *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*. The whole inciting incident – that nudge which gets the farcical plot moving – centres on a misunderstanding of the word, “paramour.” Miss Birdie, saloon proprietor, openly decries her desire for a paramour, a word and concept which the pompous Constable Ackers then takes upon

himself to pedantically explain to the saloon's hurdy gurdy girls, much to the amusement of Birdie:

ACKERS

South America, my dear, is special simply because it happens to be the home and birthplace of the elusive paramour; as well as that rarely seen but much coveted denizen of the jungle, the long-snouted, yellow-striped ant-eater. Paramours and ant-eaters; two things for which South America is justly famous.

BIRDIE

Ackers, how can anyone sound so good and say so little?

ACKERS

Constant practice, madam, and a liberal education.

As the conversation continues, Ackers links paramours to vegetables, offering Miss Birdie a pick of the hairy ones he has at home. When Birdie's desire for a paramour is mentioned to the villainous B. Bertram Bighorn Smith, Smith immediately sets his sights on becoming Miss Birdie's paramour, thus pointing out to Ackers his gross misunderstanding of the word:

SMITH

You do know what a paramour is, don't you Ackers?

ACKERS

Of course I know what a paramour is. I have several of them in my cupboard. Large, hairy things you hold onto with both hands.

SMITH

You've been looking at the wrong books. What Birdie wants is a man and a lover. That's your paramour. And I'm just the fellow to fit the bill, especially if it means getting my hands on this saloon which will provide the double pleasure of throwing every last one of you deadbeats out on the street.

ACKERS

Oh no. I think I've made an awful mistake.

SMITH

I wonder how I should go about this? Flowers? Moonlit hayrides?
Serenades under the windowsill?

PEACHES

Are we in trouble?

BLANCHE

We're in trouble.

SMITH

Farewell, ladies. Farewell, Ackers. When next we meet, you will the
undoubted pleasure of kissing my bum just before I chuck you headfirst
out of my new saloon.

SMITH *exits the batwings laughing maniacally.*

BLANCHE

(advancing on ACKERS) So a paramour is some sort of vegetable, is it?
Genus Canadianus Paramour; can be eaten boiled, fried or baked. Half-
baked!

ACKERS

In my defense, I must say my vocabulary isn't as exhaustive as it
sometimes seems. To be quite honest there are several words with which
I'm not completely familiar.

PEACHES

Like paramour.

ACKERS

So it would appear.

While Ackers' unfamiliarity with "paramour" causes problems, setting in motion
the whole, off-the-wall premise for the play, it is Mona's unfamiliarity with the word,
"moniker," further on in the play, which sets in motion a kind of Abbott-and-Costello,
never-ending comic round:

MONA

(squinting) Don't I know you?

TOOLEY

I reckon not, ma'am, though I may have plugged your brother at some time. What's your moniker?

MONA

Capricorn?

BLANCHE

Mona.

MONA

What?

BLANCHE

Say your name.

MONA

Why?

BLANCHE

He wants to know.

MONA

What for?

BLANCHE

Ask him.

MONA

(*to TOOLEY*) What for?

TOOLEY

What was the question, ma'am?

MONA

Don't I know you?

TOOLEY

I reckon not, ma'am, though I may have plugged your brother at some time. What's your moniker?

MONA

Capricorn?

BLANCHE
Mona!

MONA
What?

BLANCHE
Say your name!

MONA
(to *TOOLEY*) What for?

TOOLEY
What was the question, ma'am?

MONA
Don't I know you?

TOOLEY
I reckon not, ma'am, though I may have plugged your brother at some time. What's your moniker?

MONA
Capricorn?

BLANCHE
Stop it! Your name is Mona!

MONA
I know that. Geez, Blanche, get a grip on yourself.

It is also Mona's confusion over what was just said which leads to Peaches' very liberal interpretation – a recurring element throughout the play, usually involving Ackers saying something incomprehensible and someone else interpreting it for another – as the following excerpt illustrates:

PEACHES
If you two didn't fight all the time, you wouldn't have to make up. Shame, shame.

ACKERS

You are, of course, spot on, Peaches. If we are to groom Tooley for the arduous task ahead we must stand united. No more bickering. Come along, Blanche, let us slink shamefacedly away, thoroughly chastened by the voice of prudence.

BLANCHE and ACKERS *escort TOOLEY out stage left.*

MONA

What did he say?

PEACHES

He said you talk like a virgin.

MONA

That's a damn lie! Wait a minute, I'll drink to that. Bottoms up! (*drinks*)

In short, "Roy" plays are rife with witty word play, which is perhaps best summed up by the miner, Ezekial, from *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*:

EZEKIAL

Sarah, I believe if you put Doc Bronegal and Mr Muldoon in a room together you could charge admission to hear 'em talk.

Indeed, audience members at a "Roy" play have paid to hear fancy, big-worded talk.

I was once told by my grade six schoolteacher – a man on the edge of a nervous breakdown, I now recognize – that having a fancy, expansive vocabulary allowed one to openly insult people without them even knowing it. As Hubert sardonically notes in *Dr.*

Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier:

HUBERT

There's nothing like a strongly worded letter thick with an assortment of garish adjectives and subtly condescending phrases of belittlement to make the other side feel like absolutely insignificant halfwits.

Roy has such a cruelly fancy and expansive vocabulary, full of assorted, garish adjectives. Years of CBC-radio devotion and voracious reading, along with his academic learning and innate love of language, have fed this word pool – a pool from which he freely draws

when he writes his plays. An informant notes: “He always – you’ll always find in there two or three, well, we always say ‘big’ words, ’cause he said just because it’s a farce doesn’t mean people shouldn’t think or maybe go home and look something up in their dictionary” (Minnett 2004). Somnolent, puerile, asinine, extirpate, expectorate, jejune, cogitate, irrefragable, alacrity, prurient, bilious, scabrous, sycophantic, subterfuge, vacuous, efficacious, commensurate, purblind, braggadocio, suppurating, slattern, subaltern, fescennine, puissance, concupiscence, sanguinary, troglodyte, are but a smattering of the words to look up,¹²² the generally incomprehensible and unpronounceable “big” words which are littered liberally throughout “Roy” plays.

Commenting on the usage of these “big” words, Roy notes:

RT: Perhaps I have a larger vocabulary than most people. But it seems to me, most – like I’m using words that are kind of everyday. What’s wrong with these people?

JGJ: If you listen to CBC everyday maybe.

RT: Maybe, or reading a lot. But I do know that I used to – whenever I read, if I come across a word that I don’t know, I write it down and then look it up later, so I’d get a list of words. (2004a)

Always seeking to expand his word knowledge, Roy loves dictionaries, talking with reverential awe about his precious compact version of the OED, which he needs a magnifying glass to read, and listing the number of dictionaries he has spread over the

¹²² Having had to look up most of the words myself, I will save potential readers the bother and list comprehensible synonyms: somnolent/sleepy, puerile/childish, asinine/silly, extirpate/destroy, expectorate/spit, jejune/uninteresting, cogitate/think, irrefragable/indisputable, alacrity/eagerness, prurient/arousing (sexually), bilious/irritable, scabrous/rough, sycophantic/ingratiating, subterfuge/deception, vacuous/stupid, efficacious/effective, commensurate/proportionate, purblind/dimwitted, braggadocio/bragging, suppurating/oozing pus, slattern/slovenly woman, subaltern/subordinate, fescennine/licentious, puissance/power, concupiscence/lust, sanguinary/bloodthirsty and troglodyte/caveman.

house. It is a love affair that he recognizes is at odds with the local way of things, with the Cariboo norm:

RT: How many people, you know, even have a dictionary at home, let alone use it?

JGJ: Ah, that's true.

RT: How many dictionaries does your house have?

JGJ: Oh, we've been playing Scrabble a lot lately and we've got – I think all of them are my dictionaries¹²³ – but we probably have at least four.

RT: See, I have four in my study alone and then there's dictionaries upstairs and Pam bought me a big one for Christmas one year that I used to set my computer on and that's in the house someplace. We probably have eight to ten dictionaries. And if you have one dictionary in the household, you're doing well. It's probably because the kids are going to school, right? (2004a)

Thus generally lacking “big” word knowledge, not to mention, the wherewithal or desire to acquire such knowledge, Kersleyites and, by extension, Quesnelites and Caribooites, who watch “Roy” plays, can find them elitist, or hoity-toity, in their use of language, as an informant so explains:

I talked to somebody that was in one of his plays there last year, or the year before, and they said, “I was reading my script and was having to ask Roy what every second word meant, or at least how to pronounce it.” And you know, I've read one of Roy's short stories one time too, and I'm sitting there with a dictionary and thesaurus trying to figure out what I'm reading. And, you know, you can't do that. It has to be kept at a Joe-average level. I mean, it's good to throw it in every once in awhile – something just off-the-wall – but you got to keep it – if you're going to go hoity-toity like that, then it's got to not be in Kersley. Kersley just doesn't get that. (Arnoldus 2004)

The “big” word babble of “Roy” plays has the potential to cruelly alienate his audience, but for Roy – straddling as he does two worlds, with creative aspirations beyond the

¹²³ Oh my, trying to make myself sound *so* intellectual...

audiences of Kersley and the Cariboo – this is the point. The witty word jousting and jostling is about smugness and superiority and elitism. Writing about the obscure jokes and references often found in his plays (if you can find them, which I will admit that I cannot, so it is, therefore, difficult for me to comment on them), Roy expounds:

I'm a constant source of exasperation, not to mention a target of ridicule from the actors at the Kersley Players because of the incredibly obscure jokes and references I like to include in my plays. I believe if only one person out of an audience of two hundred gets the joke, then you've done your job. Not only that, but you have the added benefit of blessing that one enlightened person because they feel special when they understand the joke while the hundreds of drooling idiots around them don't. This may be a peculiar idiosyncrasy limited to just me...In any event, don't write for the lowest common denominator, that's what television is for. Write smart, erudite and esoteric material. Even writers of comedy need to feel superior sometimes. (2004c, 22-23)

It is the same need for feelings of superiority which fuels the usage of “big” words.

Estranged from so much of Cariboo culture and norms by his buggersome position in the community, Roy uses his sharp and aggressive wordsmithing to get in his verbal jabs and cruelly crow over those unenlightened, idiotic, Cariboo masses, essentially telling his audiences, in fancy, hoity-toity, polysyllabic, “big” word babble, to bugger off – his own personal vent of anger, so he can continue to live and work in the community somewhat harmoniously.

Break-ups and Make-ups

In which the structural and thematic elements of the “snowball” farce are illustrated, as “Roy” plays move from breaches to crises to redressive actions to reintegrations or schisms just like the social dramas of Victor Turner.

But I don't know, with Roy's plays, I always expect adult comedy and a lot of movement in and out, and love, you know, lovers and break-ups.

– Debbie Grimm

A typical Roy play always has a happy ending pretty well. It does. And you go home feeling good.

– Dave Gunn

Since it is the nature of farce to have “the scene and the characters...arranged in the echoing symmetry of family houses” (Styan 1975, 89), “Roy” plays are, simply put, about human relations. He notes: “But, you know, what good writing is about, it is people. People are about relationships and whether they’re adulterous or married or friends, you know, it’s all about relationships. And that’s what I write about” (2004a). In writing about relationships, Roy is ultimately writing about love, as one informant so discusses:

He usually always has – they definitely always have sexual overtures to them. He usually always ends up having them all pair off and fall in love at some time during the play. You know, most everybody pairs off or whatever. So, he is a romantic at heart, even though maybe he doesn’t admit it. He acts like a scrooge. He does have that – it always comes through in his plays. (Lovell 2006)

Indeed, love and the quests it initiates, the lusts it inspires, the jealousies it instils, the aches and pains it inflicts, the loyalties and disloyalties it engenders, the madness it inculcates, the transformations it provokes and the hatred it can prompt are at the heart of “Roy” plays. And, in dealing with love and human relations – albeit in fine, over-the-top, nonsensical, farcical fashion – “Roy” plays follow structurally and thematically Victor Turner’s four-phase social drama, with its breaches, crises, redressive actions and reintegrations/schisms – a theory which Turner shaped, ironically and interestingly

enough, according to the generic aesthetics of Western drama, with its penchant for plots with beginnings, middles and ends.¹²⁴

Elaborating on the four phases of social dramas, performance theorist and anthropologist Richard Schechner explains:

A breach is a situation that threatens the stability of a social unit – family, corporation, community, nation, etc. A crisis is a widening of the breach into an open or public display. There may be several successive crises, each more public and threatening than the last. Redressive action is what is done to deal with the crisis, to resolve or heal the breach. Often enough, at this phase of social drama, each crisis is answered by a redressive action which fails, evoking new, even more explosive crises. Reintegration is the resolution of the original breach in such a way that the social fabric is knit back together. Or a schism occurs. (2002, 66)

For Jessica Milner Davis, this snowballing social dramatic structure finds form in farces through a three-act structure:

Act I begins in quite normal surroundings of respectability, where a snowball is set rolling by a temporary aberration [breach] on the part of a leading character. Act II finds these indiscretions leading to disastrous consequences [crises and redressive attempts], which are offset by equal problems for many of the other characters. Act III can either bring mutual recriminations, or a shaky restoration of the façade of respectability [reintegration], just in the nick of time. This “snowball” is of course the backbone of all “bedroom-farce.” (1978, 71)

Applying all this to “Roy” plays is straightforward enough. Take, for instance, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, in which an unwed daughter, Kimberley, is pregnant yet again, much to the chagrin, disdain and embarrassment of her well-to-do, conservative parents,

¹²⁴ For Richard Schechner, basing this social theory on Western drama is highly problematic and extremely arbitrary, pigeonholing events and wars and histories and all the other “social dramas” to “fit” a weak, Western-centric model (Schechner 2002, 66-67). It is not my purpose here to use social dramas as Turner applied them – that is, in the *real* world – but to take the concepts and apply them to the dramatic events and plots of “Roy” plays. I suppose it is rather strange that I am using a theory which is based on theatrical plots to read theatrical plots. Kind of seems like I am taking too many steps here – I could just stay where I am. But, if nothing else, Turner is a master at providing frameworks, and it is the conceptual framework I want to use in my analysis of this Western dramatic form.

Agnes and Humphrey. This is the breach “of regular norm-governed social relations” (V. Turner 1987, 74), the indiscretion or aberration. Seeking to rectify the breach, her parents come up with competing plans – her father to marry her off to Basil Calhoun and her mother to hire a private investigator, Algernon Buggers, to track down the father(s) of all her daughter’s illegitimate children. This initiates all sorts of crises, with various “people tak[ing] sides” (V. Turner 1987, 34) and coming up with their own plans as to how to resolve the situation, with disastrous consequences. Humphrey’s selected mate is a sexual pervert and great lengths are taken in order to hide that fact from Agnes. Kimberley and her best friend, Tiffany, conspire to find a “fiancé.” Tiffany’s brother, Myron, decides that he could marry Kimberley. Buggers sows all sorts of confusion, posing as an undertaker, a butler, a literary critic, a spiritualist, a talent agent. Busty blondes jump out of crates. Drunken louts wander around pantless. All men end up collectively flashing the women. And on it goes – crisis after crisis as various redressive actions are attempted to mend the initial breach. In the end, it turns out there was no breach, since Kimberley is not even pregnant, just pretending to be in hopes that it would get her meddling parents off her back. And all reintegrates respectably. Kimberley finds love with Myron. Her parents stop their bickering to enjoy a little frolic time. Basil, the sex pervert, ends up with Tiffany – a woman who can handle such fetishes. The drunken lout settles down with a bottle of whiskey. And the P.I. unleashes his one-eyed bandit on a busty, blonde grammarian.

This pattern is typical of “Roy” plays. Breaches, such as those of grungy hotel rooms with dust bunnies, as in *The Goodtime Motel Blues*, and double-booked convention rooms, as in *Hotel Hysterium*, of downhill-skiing avoidance on a skiing vacation, as in

The Charles Connection, and extramarital affairs (or supposed ones), as in *The Dinner Party*, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step* and *Lace Drakes*, of brothers joining pirate cults, as in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, and inheritance avarice, as in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, set in motion an ongoing, snowballing series of crises, as redress and resolution is attempted by a myriad of sources. Private detectives and hit-men are hired, lovers and ex-lovers hide in closets, nymphomaniacs and call-girls arrive on the scene, men clad themselves as women and women as men, and so on and so forth. Lies accumulate. Secrets abound. Deceptions rage. Slurs are flung with abandon. An errant pair of pantyhose and a suspicious wife lead to a husband claiming transvestite tendencies and donning a dress. The deliberate miscommunications of a recalcitrant and meddling butler have a husband's reluctance to go skiing being interpreted as his wanting a divorce, helping to fan the rekindling of old flames. And on it goes.

Jessica Milner Davis, in comparing the Theatre of the Absurd with Feydeau's farces, notes:

Whereas in the Theatre of the Absurd, frenetic activity alternates with the silence of resignation; in Feydeau, the characters are far too involved in their frenzy to pause for self-contemplation...The sheer madness of the pace...and the casual hurts inflicted not only upon the principals of the piece but also upon reasonably harmless bystanders, as well as the extraordinarily callousness of all the characters in their relationships with one another – all these begin to add up to a rather nasty portrait of human nature. One feels that, despite the impersonal nature of the comic mechanisms at work – coincidence, snowballing, confusions, interferences and reversals – the collective selfish egos of the victims are to blame for their problems. (1978, 98-99)

Or, as Buster Hipchek quips in *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*, "I paid perfectly good money for my troubles." Caught up in the frenzy of snowballing crises, replete with

their vulgarity, mendacity and impropriety – which “grows in speed and size to envelop every bystander in its final explosion and disintegration” (Davis 1978, 71) – there is a general sense that the characters get what they rightly deserve, what they paid for. Indeed, the snowball-effect “is a levelling device, which reveals to the audience, if not to the characters on stage, the equal culpability of all” (Davis 1978, 71), since “[i]nnocent and guilty suffer alike in these snowballs” (Davis 1978, 75). And what these characters ultimately and equally deserve is one another. It has been observed of farces that “choosing a partner can seem as arbitrary as dropping a little juice in the eye, so [that] in...[farces] partners for life are paired off as easily as partners for a dance” (Styan 1975, 90). Because of their selfish superficiality and their stock nature, “Roy” farce characters simply come together for such arbitrary reasons as one has humps and the other likes humps, as is the case with Hubert and Gumbelle and Bridgett and Gumball in *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, as one loves whiskey and the other has access to it, as with Mona and the bartender in *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, and, as is the case in *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two-Step* and *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, characters hook up because they were instructed to do so by a sharp-tongued, truth-twisting Algernon Buggers.

It is this same arbitrariness and superficiality which allows the characters to just ultimately forgive and accept point blank those indiscrete breaches and those cataclysmic crises – breaches and crises that, in real life, would certainly require cops, courts and years of counselling in order to resolve. In *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, Pericles Mavenbrook, driven to homicidal madness by his love of Barbara Fussel, his hatred of Hortensia Fussel and his monetary lusts, hires an assassin and would

have been a mass murderer if not for a malfunction. And yet, in the end, he and Hortensia kiss repeatedly and make up. In *Lace Drakes*, Marie uncovers her husband Frank's cross-dressing secret and Frank discovers Marie's near roll-in-the-hay with McDingus, and still they simply shrug and accept it, with a sexualized wink:

FRANK

You know, Stan, you have a lot to learn about being a man.

STAN/MARIE

And I could show you a thing or two about being a woman, Frankie.

FRANK

This is going to be a really interesting duck hunting trip.

And off they go – all having been forgiven, apparently. In *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch*, *Whee-hee*, after a failed telepathic fratricide, with its subsequent plans to take over Castle Hetch, Gazelle Hetch and her family are openly invited to live in the castle, by her brother, Donegal, as one big, happy family:

DONEGAL

The curse of Castle Hetch descends once more.
You say it is not fair that we alone
Enjoy this place; okay, there's room for all.
It is the law, I think, that castles have
Three witches, so three witches we will have.
My sister, you are welcome here, make this
Your good home. All you had to do was ask.

GAZELLE

What? All I had to do was ask? Who could
Have known the answer would be welcome back?

ANGLE-IRON

So does this mean the war's over and we can all move in and be buddies?

GAZELLE

It looks that way.

ANGLE-IRON

Hot damn. I like it here, honey, let's stay in this universe.

Infidelities, murder attempts, vicious put-downs, kidnappings, usurpations, treacheries, curses, sexual perversions, fetishes, unlawful entries, rude interruptions, lecheries, leechings – all, in this consequence-free genre, is never so broken and far-out that it cannot be accepted, forgiven and eventually mended.

Indeed, for all their callousness, crassness and craziness, “Roy” plays have “happy endings,” meaning that men and women are reintegrated into pairs, often with declarations of love. There are never irreparable schisms. So, despite the fact that relations between men and women in “Roy” plays are typically depicted as volatile hotbeds of tension and discord – full of constant squabbles, aggressive competitions, gigantic gaps of misunderstandings, lusty infidelities and sundering secrets – men and women not only maintain relations and relationships, but seek out love. Wives can be sharp-beaked harpies, who henpeck their hubbies, and wives and husbands can have philandering trysts, and yet, in “Roy” resolutions, they remain together, having apparently reaffirmed their love for one another throughout all of the insanity. Despite having learned of his wife's infidelity, Reginald, from *The Dinner Party*, is still willing to fight for her and his marriage:

HECTOR

You're crazy, I'm not going to fight you over her.

REGINALD

That's where you and I differ. Promiscuous harlot though she is, she's still my wife.

In spite of their acrimonious treatment of one another throughout the play, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*, the Hipcheks give their marriage another chance:

BUSTER

Hell, Phoebe, I married you, you married me – there was something there once. Maybe we owe it to ourselves to find it again.

PHOEBE

I must be crazy.

BUSTER

Great, that's two of us. We got it made.

In *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues*, Helen and Phil Schickerbicker, whose name really says it all and who have not composed two congenial words to one another throughout the entirety of the play, remain firmly intact as a couple despite the crises and the constant callousness (see fig. 3.3):

PHIL

Yeah? I have more sensitivity and compassion in the hair on my butt than you have in your whole body.

HELEN

The last time I looked your butt was bald.

They regard each other for a moment. PHIL lifts the hem of his dress a few inches.

PHIL

Want to check again?

HELEN

You never give up, do you?

PHIL

Not so far.

HELEN

At least you're consistent.

PHIL

It's because I probably even maybe love you, or something.

HELEN

That's why I'm still here, Phil. How can I resist those heartfelt declarations of love?

PHIL

It's all true, Helen, I mean every word.

HELEN

I know it's true, I'll just never understand why.

PHIL

Don't try to understand it, enjoy it. Here we are, first night of our vacation, all alone in this great motel, and hey! – look at this – here's a bed. What do you say, gorgeous?

HELEN

Oh hell, why not. What can possibly happen to us now that hasn't happened already?

In *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, the villainous B. Bertram Bighorn Smith is

transformed into a better man, a good man, by his newfound love for Miss Birdie:

BLANCHE

Smith was going to fire us all as soon as your saloon became his. As far as we knew that was the only reason he had for courting you – to get your saloon.

BIRDIE

That's nonsense, Blanche. Bertram wouldn't do that, would you, Bertram?

SMITH

Not now, I wouldn't. But I admit the thought had crossed my mind before.

BIRDIE

You see, love's changed him.

SMITH

I'm a different man now, thanks to you, Birdie. And I like it this way. Ladies, as far as I'm concerned you can stay here at the saloon for as long as Miss Birdie wants you. And Ackers, feel free to mooch all the drinks you want and you're welcome over any of my saloons for a free drink too. Occasionally, that is. Say, once a week.

ACKERS

I don't know what's more revolting, Smith as a sworn enemy or Smith pretending to be decent.

BLANCHE

I don't think he's pretending, I think it's the power of love.

ACKERS

Another bloody argument for celibacy, you mean.

In *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, the terrible woman, Ludmilla Oyster, who has been out to scuttle Captain Packard's cruise ship plans and has left many a shredded man in the wake of her acerbic wit, delivers a passionate soliloquy on her love for the captain, at the end of the play:

OYSTER

You know the truth, don't you? I've loved you from the moment I set eyes on you in that company boardroom. I suppose it's poetic justice, isn't it? That I should love a man who regards me as his mortal enemy. This has never happened to me. I don't know what to do with love. The only things I know are work and rivalry and competition and winning. Why couldn't you have just taken my hand and said something nice? You were always so damned polite, so damned distant, so damned captainly. All you care about is your ship. I didn't know how to make you love me, Packard, but I damned sure knew how to take away the thing you loved. Or I thought I did. Until you recruited this assortment of lunatics to solve your problems. Half my life is over and I've never heard the words, "I love you." What's wrong with me? I'm some kind of freak. Every time I see a couple together holding hands there's a little hard knot in my chest that says it doesn't matter, you don't need that, you're better. But it's not true, is it? You're never better than love. It's too precious. I don't care if you never love me, Packard, I've loved you and that makes me whole now, damn it.

PACKARD

Yes, Ms Oyster, you are indeed, completely and undeniably whole. (*they embrace*)

JACK

Blast and buggeration! Be that love what sweetly perfumes the air, Louis?

LOUIS

Oui, oui, mon capitanny, l'amour be all around.

This type of denouement coupling, with its suggestions of future copulating, is a standard characteristic of “Roy” plays.

In short, *l’amour* is central to a “Roy” play and, while one should be wary of ascribing morals to farces in general, something resembling a moral does seem to continually peek through “Roy” plays: the power of love. Styan notes,

Only in farce, however, are we at a loss when we look for purposes, or demand some moral evaluation of its final cause. Almost all style, how can farce serve up a moral end? Amoral in itself, how can we pass any judgment upon it but the meaningless one of amorality? When it reduces all of life, any aspect of man or society, to a thing of no dignity, how can we admit that its posture of indifference is valid and valuable in itself?...Yet love and marriage, social forms and other familiar matters are immediately visible in a new way through farce. Its clockwork mechanism by its very consistency disarms us. In its spirit of violence and riot, no doubt we should recognize that hidden depths of the mind are being revealed. (1975, 83)

Indeed, the centrality of love, marriage, family and social relations to farces should not be underestimated. People do tend to end up together – haply, happily, resignedly, repeatedly, restrictively, respectably, shakily, lasciviously, but together nonetheless. As an informant observes of “Roy” plays, “[E]verybody falls in love at the end” (Grimm and Grimm 2004). Big Al finds his Fanny. Phoebe forgives her Buster. Peaches grabs her Kid. Ackers gets his Blanche. Donegal reunites with his family. Felicity learns to love her Reggie. Agnes rediscovers her Humphrey. Martha wants her Harvey. Myron woos his Kimberley. Gerbil kisses her Ouchkins. Buggers loses his bowler to a busty blonde. Captain Jack, Cuticle Clyde and Louis form their horny pirate brigade. Ernie sees the beauty in his wench, Harmony. And on it goes. Perhaps Buggers says it best, as he counsels an unsure Kimberley in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*:

BUGGERS

Well, Kimberley, I expect Myron is waiting for an answer.

KIMBERLEY

It's not easy, Mr Buggers.

BUGGERS

If it was easy it wouldn't be worth doing.

As presented in “Roy” plays, love and its vicissitudes – the ongoing, dramatic cycles of breaches and crises and redressive actions – are never easy, but the resolutions, the reintegrations and the reincorporations hold the promise of making it all satisfyingly worthwhile, however fleeting that may be. Again, Roy truly “is a romantic at heart...[and that] always comes through in his plays” (Lovell 2006).

In and Out

In which speedy, milling-about, going-in-and-out-of-doors nature of “Roy” plays is looked at, as farce characters constantly chase one another and sometimes end up moving in and out of the characters themselves, resulting in playful para-play contrasts and meta-play narratives.

He always has the – how do you want to put this – where everybody's got to switch partners and everybody falls in love at the end and going in and out of doors.

– Debbie Grimm

It's just the way they roll along there.

– Dave Gunn

Farces go fast. Eric Bentley observes: “Human life in this art form is terribly attenuated. Life is a kind of universal milling around, a rushing from bedroom to bedroom driven by demons more dreadful than sensuality. The kind of farce which is said to be ‘all plot’ is often much more than ingenious, it is maniacal” (1965, 247). “Roy” plays display this characteristic manic milling about, complete with “type-characters [who] are barred from exploring their own consciousness...[by the fact] that farce allows them no time to

do so” (Davis 1978, 63-64). Despite their often slow introductions, once they start rolling, “Roy” plays begin to pick up speed, snowballing with crisis after crisis, resulting in “a series of explosions of laughter” (Davis 1978, 75) and “moments of hilarity” (Jules Grant 2007). These explosive moments are often built up by chase scenes, as characters hide in bedrooms, in closets, in crates, under tables, under beds and behind sofas, while being sought out, by other characters, in those same bedrooms, closets and crates, under those same tables and beds and behind those same sofas. Characters go in and out, round and round, often just missing one another, and the audience knows that when they are finally found, it is going to be explosively funny. Life is reduced to a kind of chance choosing of doors – opening the right door at the right time to initiate, at long last, that fateful meeting. That this fateful element should be so integral to a “Roy” play is not surprising given the fatalistic and terminal trajectory of the Canadian hinterland and its dwellers, with its perpetual boom-and-bust lifestyle.

Filled with such chase scenes, “Roy” plays are full of near misses and fateful rendezvous. In *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two-Step*, there is a whole series of milling about as Phoebe Hipchek busts into Miles Myers’ apartment looking for Buggers, prompting Buggers to hide under the dining table. Hearing Phoebe, Big Al – her old flame – emerges from the bedroom, having been told by Buggers to hide under the bed from an at-large homicidal maniac. They meet and embrace, but split up with promises of a reunion; she moving to the kitchen and he back to the bedroom. Into the apartment come Miles and his girlfriend, Fiona, seating themselves at the table. Disgusted by Miles’ behaviour at the table, during which she loses her underwear to the hidden Buggers, Fiona storms out, followed by a confused Miles. A grinning Buggers, with underwear in his

teeth, emerges from under the table, quickly retreating to the closet when Big Al steps out of the bedroom and heads for the kitchen. Buggers then heads to the bedroom, as Buster enters the apartment. He is followed shortly thereafter by the exotic dancer, Fanny. Upon figuring out that Fanny is not Miles' mystery woman, but the escort girl he hired, Buster shushes her into the closet before rushing out of the apartment himself. Buggers emerges from the bedroom, intrigued by the strip-tease music he hears from the closet. He moves to the closet, takes a look, then a double look and smilingly enters. Buster and Miles then return to the apartment. Curious about the music coming from his closet, Miles is barred from opening the closet by Buster. The music suddenly stops as Fiona enters and it is readily apparent that she and Buster are acquainted. And still more doors are opened and closed. In *Hotel Hysterium*, people mill about, going in and out of the lobby, often playing with the sign for the vampire convention/fine art auction, much to the exasperation and desperation of Snoggins and Mr. Bog, who are trying not to alarm the haughty art-lover, Mrs. Venables, regarding their double-booked problem. All this, while a stream of women, including the venerable Mrs. Venables, crawl in and out of Francis's love nest under the front desk. In *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*, Herpes, the castle's wormkeeper and witch, brews a love potion, which crescendos in frantic chasings in and out of archways and rounds after rounds, much to her increasing amusement.

A perusal of "Roy" plays and their structural stage settings reveals the importance of these multi-doored realms. Sets for "Roy" plays often require at least three doorways, usually four, and the number has been known to be even higher on occasion – upwards of six. That is a lot of exits and entrances for a small stage. Such doorways provide the space necessary to accommodate the manic milling about, the snowballing movement so vital to

farces. Stage directions following Millicent Primrose's attempted seduction of Reginald Rothbottom in *The Charles Connection* exemplify this wacky, multi-doored universe, with its inevitable milling about:

REGINALD

Enough chatter. In there. (*points to door one.*)

MILlicent *crooks a finger at REGINALD and exits through door one. REGINALD immediately races out door three. THOR stands behind the sofa and considers the situation. He struts to centre stage, does some grooming and swaggers to door one and exits. CHARLES enters from door three. He tiptoes across to door four and exits. MILlicent enters from door two, looks for REGINALD and exits through door four. VIC enters from door three, is surprised he doesn't find anyone and exits through door one. BUNNIES 1 & 2 enter from door three. They examine the room, look at each other and shrug. BUNNY#1 exits door one; BUNNY#2 exits door four. THOR enters from door two a disappointed man. He moves behind the sofa again, drinks and ducks down. CHARLES, on hands and knees, enters from door four. He is dishevelled and his shirt tail pokes out his fly. He crawls toward centre stage. FELICITY enters from door three.*

FELICITY

What are you doing Charles?

Indeed, as cited earlier, “[t]he devil is in farce rhythm” (Bentley 1958, xx) and its dreamlike abstraction of multi-doored realms mechanizes its characters, turning them into unconscious automatons, who simply roll along, out to serve their rather bodily ends – a facet which, as noted earlier, grotesquely mirrors the alienated, mechanized millworkers with all their capitalist encrustations and strivings for release.

In farce, though, the automatic going in and out extends from the plays' sets and scripted actions to the going in and out of actors with their roles. An informant explains this aspect of farce, as opposed to comedy:

JGJ: What do you see as being the difference between a farce and a comedy? I mean what do you?

GM: Well, comedy – basically, the way I’ve had it explained to me, because Ha! I’ve never looked it up in a dictionary. A comedy generally has a setting, a time, and is specific about like an event in time, whereas farce can be, as long it’s – it has to be believable...But a farce can go way out; it can cross the line. In a farce – a comedy, if you fell out of character for any reason, it would stick out like a sore thumb. But a farce, if you forget a line or something just strikes you uncommonly odd and you start laughing, it’s totally acceptable with a farce. Dropping out of character doesn’t seem to offend even an adjudicator. I fell down some stairs in Prince George that I was supposed to sit on and get off and kind of lost my train of thought and carried on. And he commented on it after that he thought I had done a prat fall to begin with, but he said the coming out of character is perfectly acceptable in the farce. And I’m going, “Hmmm, pulled that one off.”

JGJ: “Yeah, Roy, it’s acceptable.”

GM: Yeah, it’s acceptable, Roy...I guess that’s the main difference – is the character itself. You can be – you can go in or out. (Minnett 2004)

Able to cross lines between real life and make-believe play, farce actors can go in or out, can maintain an awareness of their doubleness and play with that contrast. They can adlib, inserting metanarrative commentaries. They can unmask, revealing non-play-realm identities. Eric Bentley explains:

Comedy makes much of appearances: it specializes, indeed, in the *keeping up* of appearances. Unmasking in comedy will characteristically be the unmasking of a single character in a climactic scene...In farce, unmasking occurs all along. The favorite action of the farceur is to shatter the appearances, his favorite effect being the shock to the audience of his doing so. Bring on stage a farcical comic like Harpo Marx, and all appearances are in jeopardy. For him, all coverings exist to be stripped off, all breakables to be broken. It would be a mistake to bring him into a drawing-room comedy: he would dismantle the drawing room. (1965, 242-43; emphasis in original)

While the unmasking Bentley refers to here is often used to dismantle sexual taboos, social proprieties, cultural norms and haughty aspirations within the play itself, it can also be used to dismantle the very carefully constructed play-form, playing with notions of

what is real and not real and smudging boundaries. A discussion of this enacted and performative in-and-out aspect will be undertaken in the next Act. As noted previously, though, this is not a contrastive, doubled aspect appreciated by the “serious” playwright, however much appreciated by the audiences and the Players.

Gender Bending

In which the propensity of “Roy” plays for fetishized female images, as portrayed by males, is examined, as well as why macho Cariboo men are willing to publicly play female roles.

And of course then there’s the dresses and lots of women’s underwear and stuff, so you kind of go – you say to yourself, “Hmm, do I really want to do this?” But deep down, you know you do.

– Gary Minnett

We all dressed up as drag queens and that was fun.

– Wayne Wark

Just as the first European plays performed in British Columbia by members of the British Empire’s navy featured all-male casts *and* female roles, “Roy” plays are often rife with men mincing and mugging about, dressed in women’s clothing. Indeed, with their hyperbolic excessiveness and their stereotypical portrayals, farces are always open to over-the-top portrayals of flighty women and macho men, especially as performed by members of the opposite sex. There seems to be nothing funnier than men teetering about in high-heels, sporting balloon-breasted brassieres, or than women swaggering around, talking gruffly and scratching their nether regions (see fig. 3.2-3.5). In the case of “Roy” plays, the cross-dressing present is overwhelmingly that of the male taking on female accoutrements, a transformation that is often scripted into the play itself. It has only been in more recent years that a kind of performative transvestism has surfaced, in which male Players have enacted scripted female roles. Whatever the cross-dressing form, whether

scripted or performative, it is an element so seemingly central to “Roy” plays that, when something “serious” is delivered without such gender bending and transvestism and other farcical facets, audience members do not know what to make of it, “puzzled by the fact that ‘Doh, nobody was in underwear’” (Minnett 2004), as one of my informants so jokes. He continues: “We kind of beat up the women’s underwear thing to the limit. I don’t – we kind of took that to as far as you can get it, I think. We haven’t decided yet. You name it, we’ve had it. We’ve had underwear that isn’t even on the market yet” (Minnett 2004).

Whether the underwear is worn over shirts and trousers or under blouses and dresses or is potentially lethal, this men-in-women’s-underwear component is utilized repeatedly in “Roy” plays. In the very first play, *The Dinner Party*, a drunken Dr. Hector Dextor, lover of the party’s hostess, jumps out of the closet wearing nothing but a woman’s fur coat, flashing his “monogrammed monster missile” to the alarmed guests. Bonecrusher Wickham, Algernon Buggers’ recently acquired assistant, in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, goes undercover as Babette, a right true pirate wench, complete with boisterous balloon “bazongas,” in order to rescue his sweetheart, the fair Evangeline Bunwallop. Excepting the hit-man, Skiddy Padoplis, and the man who hired him, Pericles Mavenbrook, all males in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* end up wearing women’s underwear – bras, garters, girdles, pantyhose – over their regular attire. Phil Schickerbicker, from *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* – having been chased non-stop by the local nymphomaniac and hoping to convince his suspicious wife that the pantyhose hanging from his pants are his own – claims a preference for women’s lingerie and changes into one of his wife’s dresses to prove it (see fig. 3.3). He is joined in his cross-dressing by Craddock, the gruff-talking, bat-

swinging, hairy-legged maid. In *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, Blodger and Louis, in hopes of assuring Ludmilla Oyster of the cruise ship's many and varied passengers, don various disguises, including Louis as a newlywed bride, Blodger as a busty ballerina and the two of them as hand-holding, ultra-sexualized homosexuals (no women's clothing, but exaggerated gender bending nonetheless), who drop such lines as "If it's worth doing, honey, it's worth catching," "Don't you just adore these big boats, they're so thrustful" and "We're passengers, and loving every minute of it – or will be. Byesies." Following the meltdown of the atomic transmogrifier, in *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, Mr. Tubble finds himself in his female counterpart's clothing, including short skirt, pantyhose and a thong, apparently (see fig. 3.2). No discussion of "Roy" play cross-dressing would be complete, however, without examining the transvestite play itself, *Lace Drakes*.

As mentioned previously, *Lace Drakes* is often considered a perennial fan favourite because of its successful taste-of-truth, illogical logic, during which "everybody that was a man was dressed like a woman; everybody that was a woman was dressed like a man" (Minnett 2004). Indeed, of the six characters in the play, all but one of them – the Happy Hunting Lodge caretaker and beauty contest judge, Cabot McDingus – is cross-dressed, although the surly Scot does sport a kilt. As Sydney, Frank and Herschel converge on the lodge for their annual duck shoot and, subsequently, their drag queen beauty contest, they transform from duck hunters into the larger-than-life ladies, Annabelle, Desdemona and Lulu, respectively, complete with evening gowns, balloon breasts, wigs, lipstick and the lot (see fig. 3.6 and Appendix I for more photos). Into this mix is thrown Frank's suspicious wife, Marie (alias Stan), and her friend, Sharon (a.k.a.

Charlie), who have clad themselves as ultra-macho hunters, in head-to-toe camouflage and coarse language, in order to infiltrate this bastion of male bonding that is hunting. Naturally, the women are playing their machismo to such excess, especially Marie/Stan, that they are offending the “real” men, who refrain from sexist remarks and generally prefer relationships:

STAN/MARIE

Ain't this huntin' great? Where else can a bunch of guys get together and talk shotguns without worrying about them namby-pamby, bleeding-heart, no-good, do-good liberal, gun-hating dickheads pissing in our party hats.

SYDNEY

Interesting point, Stan.

HERSCHEL

I guess, uh...I guess we've never looked at it quite like that before.

STAN/MARIE

What the hey, a man's got a right to do these things, ain't he? A guy's gotta get out there and kill just because. Hell, someone's gotta look after all them friggin' ducks; they'd be over-running the country if it weren't for us.

SYDNEY

Good point.

CHARLIE/SHARON

Hey, Stan, maybe we should change the subject.

STAN/MARIE

Charlie, Charlie; this is man talk. We're among friends here. So what do you wanna talk about instead? Getting' laid?

SYDNEY

Some of us don't get laid anymore, Stan, we have relationships.

STAN/MARIE

No shit. I must be old-fashioned.

As the men morph into women, though, they too become exaggerated gender stereotypes.

In order to ascertain the winner of the Happy Hunting Lodge Maid of the Hunt Miss Buckshot Beauty Contest, McDingus devises four femininity tests for the ladies to complete, namely, throwing a ball, picking up a coin from off of the floor, sitting with legs crossed and discreetly adjusting a bra strap. This results in awkward, girlie throws, indiscreet bends, prim and proper sitting positions and McDingus' head being thrust into buxom bosoms for adjustment purposes. And then Desdemona arrives on the scene for her examination:

DESDEMONA/FRANK *enters from bedroom three. Sultry.*

DESDEMONA/FRANK
Hello...darling. (*McDINGUS gapes*) Desdemona has come out to play.

McDINGUS
I feels like a mouse on a dinner plate.

DESDEMONA/FRANK
I'm ready. Do your worst. Give it to me.

McDINGUS
Here you go. (*gives ball*) Test one: throw the ball.

DESDEMONA/FRANK
(*looks at the ball*) Baby, the last thing I want to do is throw away a ball this size.

DESDEMONA/FRANK *gives the ball back.*

McDINGUS
Uh, thank you. Test two: would you care to pick this up? (*carefully sets a dime on the floor*)

DESDEMONA/FRANK
A dime? This body doesn't bend over for anything less than a blank cheque.

DESDEMONA/FRANK *walks to the sofa and sits, crossing legs.*

McDINGUS

Good. I was about to mention that.

DESDEMONA/FRANK

Tell me, have you ever nuzzled a luscious white thigh? (*hoists skirt a few inches*)

McDINGUS

Not like that I haven't.

DESDEMONA/FRANK

I especially love the sensual feel of a tooth mark.

McDINGUS

I got false teeth.

DESDEMONA/FRANK

Then gum me, baby.

McDINGUS

Test four: adjusting a bra strap, with discretion.

DESDEMONA/FRANK

Now that's my kind of talk. Go ahead. Adjust me.

McDINGUS

No, the test is how you do it, with discretion.

DESDEMONA/FRANK

Sweetheart, my bra is strapless.

Following Desdemona's drag-queen-with-attitude performance comes Frank's clueless wife, Marie, and her performance of the femininity tests as Stan, the Man, is as over-the-top macho masculine as her husband's had been fetishizedly feminine:

STAN/MARIE

Gimme a sitrep.

McDINGUS

(*looks around, not having a clue, looks at the ball in his hand*) Here.
(*tosses ball*) Throw it.

STAN/MARIE *catches the ball, pretends it's a grenade, pulls the pin with her teeth and throws it stiff-armed.*

STAN/MARIE
What's going on?

McDINGUS
(tosses dime on floor) Pick it up.

STAN/MARIE *belly crawls to the dime and pulls a rubber knife from under her coat and repeatedly stabs the dime. She reaches up and pulls McDINGUS down and threatens him with the knife.*

STAN/MARIE
Now just what the hell are you doing here, fella?

McDINGUS
I'm giving you the four tests.

STAN/MARIE
What dumb friggin' four sissy dipstick tests are you talking about? What the hell do I needs tests for? Ain't it friggin' obvious I'm one of the elite? I'm a duck commando.

Then, just to play with the cross-dressing theme even more and create real gender confusion, Charlie emerges as herself, as Sharon – a woman dressed as a man dressed as a woman – coming full circle, much to the confused consternation of McDingus:

SHARON *enters from bedroom three wearing a gown. She is loaded for bear and has the temperature turned up to scald.*

SHARON
(stretching) I'm in the mood for a man.

McDINGUS
Oh shit.

SHARON
Let me entertain you. Let me make you smile.

McDINGUS
I got a bad case of gender confusion here.

Ultimately unable to administer the test because of gendered turmoil, McDingus runs from the room, screaming about his red-blooded heterosexuality.

While all the cross-dressing taking place in *Lace Drakes* is scripted, as mentioned previously, there is also a performative transvestism happening in “Roy” plays. The first incident of this type occurred with the production of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* in 2000, in which two of the four female roles were played by men; namely, the role of Parsnip Meriberry, the hexing cohort and cousin of Gazelle Hetch, and that of Gazelle and Angle-Iron’s teenage daughter, Gerbil Hetch, whose love story with Ouch, the Guard, features prominently in the play. With the remake of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* in 2005, the fair Angie Bunwallop, who is sought after by pirates and P.I.’s alike, is played by a male, resulting in a scripted Babette-clad Bonecrusher embracing his love, the performative transvestite Angie (see fig. 3.7). In the 2006 version of *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, Roy added a so-called “saloon chorus” comprising three new characters: Slick Joe Weller, Mr. Punch and Mrs. Bardell, the latter being performed by a male. Whether scripted or performative, though, the cross-dressing is always hyperbolically playing with gender stereotypes, resulting in fetishized female images. Even women playing such female roles as pirate wenches, bimbos and ski bunnies become fetishistic, with inflated breasts and behinds. And, as is the case with Dusty Fairweather, the hospitality hostess in *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, her boisterous busts are squeezed into such symbolically “pornographic” attire as nurse uniforms, nun habits and western wear.

Concerned, as farce is, with the symbolic and wish-fulfilment, with fantasies and the unconscious, the image of the fetishized woman is particularly interesting. In her

analysis of a dance performance featuring a young, cross-dressed, male dancer, Peggy Phelan argues how the hyperbolic representation of the female as performed by a transvestite male does in no way “penetrate the ‘identity’ of any female; they are surface representations whose appeal exists precisely *as* surface” (1996, 160; emphasis in original). Cloaked in the superficial excessiveness of mincing movements and extravagant costumes and makeup, the transvestite’s “surface femininity reminds the spectator of the absence of the female (the lack) rather than of her presence...No one forgets that the dancer is male; the invocation of the nonmale is controlled by the security of the performer’s male body” (Phelan 1996, 160). With the male body thus so visibly secure under the wigs and rouge and behind the ballooning breasts, “[t]he fetishized ‘female’ image...works not to bring the female into the spectacle of exchange between spectator and performer but to leave her emphatically outside. In place of the female, a fetishized image is displayed which substitutes for her and makes her actual presence unnecessary” (Phelan 1996, 161-62). In this exclusion of the female, William Gruber suggests that “masculinity is redefined or even reinvented. Mimesis in this case is less representation than aggressive assimilation” (1985, 43). Indeed, Phelan points out how “Freud’s analysis of fetishism elucidated the ways in which all fetishes function as a phallic substitute, a reassuring projection of male narcissistic fantasy” (1996, 162). Thus, the image of the fetishized female, as played by cross-dressed males, “reinforce[s],” as Simon Bronner observes, “male dominance...by directing attention to the absurdity of men taking women’s roles” (1990, 99). In their over-the-top and aggressive absurdity, the fetishized females end up being a “fantasy of exchange *between* men *about* women...In short, the fetishized female image reinforces rather than subverts the structure of the

patriarchal unconscious” (Phelan 1996, 162; emphasis in original). Men are still men and the patriarchal hierarchy of the Cariboo remains intact.

While such feminist readings of female fetishism by cross-dressed males point aptly to the continued subjugation of women, there is a line of thought concerning the symbolic importance of the transvestite, which argues that, in playing with male and female, transvestism and its enactment call into question the very notion of gendered categorization. Marjorie Garber explains: “[O]ne of the most important aspects of cross-dressing is the way in which it offers a challenge to the easy notions of binarity, putting into question the categories of ‘female’ and ‘male’, whether they are considered essential or constructed, biological or cultural” (1992, 10). She continues, “[*T*]ransvestism is a *space of possibility structuring and confounding culture*: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself” (1992, 17; emphasis in original). Not unlike the nonsense so embraced by Roy, which challenges the very notion of commonsense, cross-dressing “disrupt[s], expose[s], and challenge[s], putting in question the very notion of the ‘original’ and of stable identity” (Garber 1992, 16). Thus bugging, confounding and destabilizing gendered identities and the very idea of gender itself, Garber contends that transvestism signifies or marks a “kind of [cultural] displacement, substitution, or slippage” (1992, 36-37), resulting in the cross-dresser becoming “both a signifier and that which signifies the undecidability of signification...point[ing] toward itself – or, rather, toward the place where it is not” (1992, 37). Playing with the apparent “naturalness” of signs and challenging the very arbitrariness of signification, transvestism is, according to Garber, particularly at home in the theatre. Indeed, she argues “that transvestite theater is the *norm*, not the aberration –

that what we today regard as ‘natural’ in theatrical representations (men playing men’s parts, women playing women) is itself a peculiar troping off, and from, the transvestite norm” (1992, 39; emphasis in original). A common phenomenon in theatrical practices around the world and one which is “as old as civilization itself” (Taft 1989a, 20), transvestism is often irrevocably yoked with the theatre. Garber elucidates on the relationship between the two:

[T]ransvestism and theater are interrelated, not merely “historically” or “culturally,” but psychoanalytically, through the unconscious and through language. Transvestite theater *is* the Symbolic on the stage. In other words, the phenomenon of cross-dressing within theatrical representation...may be not only a commentary on the anxiety of gender roles in modern culture, but also – and perhaps primarily – a back-formation: a return to the problem of representation that underlies theater itself. Transvestite theater recognizes that *all* of the figures onstage are impersonators. The notion that there has to be a naturalness to the sign is exactly what great theater puts in question. (1992, 40; emphasis in original)

As Michael Taft states, “Wherever it is found, theatrical transvestism acts as a sounding board for commentaries on gender relations” (1997, 137), on signification, on representation.

Acting as such a sounding board, it is rather interesting to listen to what it has to say, exploring just why it is that Caribboites find theatrical transvestism with its fetishized females so funny and such a necessary, expected and appreciated aspect of “Roy” plays. As one of my informants notes with the production of *Lace Drakes*, “When they were drag queens, they brought the ceiling down” (Zacharias 2006). Indeed, ceilings consistently come down when men mince about onstage as larger-than-life women. It is a guaranteed laugh every time – the gendered and cultural contrast causing humour, as cited earlier by one of my informants:

There's definitely a Cariboo culture and I think maybe one of the reasons the farce goes over so well with the Kersley part of it is the fact that it's the opposite side of that culture. You know, you've got the cowboys and the millworkers – the whole town's full of millworkers and truckdrivers and cowboys and farmers and ranchers – and then you go down there and these same guys that are doing these jobs through the day are the outrageous and the far end. (Minnett 2004)

In their analysis of gender relations at Brady's Bar, Spradley and Mann conclude their study by asserting that "sexual identities are defined in social interaction and masculinity can only acquire its meaning in contrast to femininity" (1975, 148). As already discussed with the nature of fetishism, masculinity is reinforced with the fetishized femininity portrayed by the cross-dresser, what Taft calls "reverse-machismo" (1989a, 19). The question then arises as to why the assertion of masculinity is so imperative to the millworkers and truckdrivers and cowboys and farmers and ranchers of the Cariboo.

In his work on mock weddings – a folk dramatic form rife with cross-dressing and parody – among communities across the Canadian prairies and the American Great Plains, Michael Taft suggests that prairie men use theatrical transvestism to reassert their manliness precisely because their manliness is under threat by socio-economic conditions far beyond their control. He writes:

[T]he men often feel that they are not in control of the agricultural and economic forces which determine whether they will prosper or not...The male farmer or rancher wishes to see himself as the master of his own destiny: someone whose independence is based on land ownership and freedom from the urban workplace. In reality, he is the servant of government bureaucrats, the commodity exchanges, urban consumerism, and international subsidy wars. Women, however, remain the mistresses of their household, and the controlling forces in childrearing and community activities; as well, their outside jobs have given them a sense of independence which their mothers and grandmothers never felt. In short, the good sports of the community are under siege. They need every chance they can get to re-assert their power and control. After all, it is the good sport who manifests the proper qualities of being a man. Despite chronic

hard times, and his resulting disempowerment, he must remain the model of strong, prairie masculinity. The ludic misrule of the mock wedding will not empower him, but allows him to comment on the state of his manhood – whether he is an actor or a member of the audience – in a way which is non-threatening and covert, which is acceptable to the community as a whole, and which is psychologically beneficial. (1997, 137)

Ultimately emasculated through the routinization, mechanization and alienation of the capitalist labour so overwhelmingly present in the Cariboo, Cariboo men need to reclaim and reassert manliness and machismo. Shot guns are loaded. Ducks are gutted. ATV's are bought. Tall tales are told. Trucks are driven. And buxom balloon breasts and big wigs are playfully put on and greatly anticipated and appreciated.



Fig. 3.2. Mr.Tubble (John Foreman) adjusting his g-string after the transmogrifier meltdown, while a suit-clad Ms. Sloan (Amanda Cherry) looks on; from *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* (2004). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 3.3. The Schickerbickers (Kat Popein and Pete Drewcock) stop bickering to finally make up at the end of *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* (1995). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 3.4. Pete Drewcock, the director of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* (2000), trying on a bra backstage. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 3.5. Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn) sporting a not-to-be-missed bra, during a rehearsal for *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step* (1990). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 3.6. The cross-dressers of *Lace Drakes* (1997), Lulu/Herschel (Wayne Wark, right) challenging Charlie/Sharon (Deborah Armstrong-Borisenkoff, left) to be a woman, while Desdemona/Frank (Dave Gunn, centre) looks on in his little black number. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 3.7. A Babette-clad Bonecrusher Wickham (Rory Parr, left) finally finding his Angie (Paul Nichols) in the 2005 production of *The Incredible Pickled Pirate Chase*. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

I Am. Canadian.

In which an examination of the Canadian idioms prevalent in “Roy” plays is undertaken, along with an exploration of how they “fit” Canadian and Cariboo sensibilities.

A typical Roy play would be a heavy connection to England and the colonies and the new country...One thing that I’ve always liked about Roy is he’s very passionately Canadian and the roots of Canada and where we’re from. And he always used to – when we went to festivals and see redone American plays, which everybody likes to do, like [*Steel*] *Magnolias* and stuff like that, that everybody has seen many, many times before – Roy was always original, *is* original, right. He is original. And he wants to put on original stuff that is *our* roots and *our* heritage, that means a lot to us.

– Dave Gunn

It’s his originality.

– Wanda Zacharias

As already investigated in Scene 1 of this Act, Roy is a patriot and, as such, views his work as being home-grown Canadian. He explained to me, during one of our many informal conversations, about how he once heard British farces described as taking normal people and putting them in outlandish situations, as opposed to American farces which take outlandish people and set them in normal situations. He views himself and his works as both – a classic, Canadian cross-breed – resulting in a truly Canadian farce involving outlandish people in outlandish situations. While arguably a simplistic and inaccurate assessment of generic delineations, what is salient here with Roy’s observation about his own work is just that; he considers himself and his work as uniquely Canadian, as reflecting and playing with the American and British influences so readily affecting Canada, Canadians and Canadianness. Indeed, he states outright about his plays: “I think they reflect Canadian sensibilities” (2004b), and then adds, like any good, schizophrenic, unsure, doubled-vision, irony-toting Canadian, “whatever they may be” (2004b). This

section explores just what these Canadian sensibilities may be, examining the apparent Canadianness of “Roy” plays.

There is a tendency, in seeking to determine whether something is Canadian or not, to merely tally up “Canadian idioms,” as Lister Sinclair so dubbed them: Mounties, beavers, maple leafs, maple syrup, hockey players. Sinclair writes, “If a play contains a Mountie, it is undeniably Canadian; if there is no Mountie, we have no idea what to make of it” (1954, 235). And one could certainly fall prey to this idiomatic assignation of Canadianness when looking at “Roy” plays, creating a checklist of Canadian items. *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* sports a member of the Northwest Mounted Police, a Mountie. *The Good Game* is about a group of old, beat-up hockey players. Reflecting the officially bilingual country, the pirate, Louis, from *The Incredible Pickled Pirate Chase* and *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, Dr. Hercule Pointeteau from *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, Jules Quesnelle from *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley*, and Francois Pinkie LaVac from *The Good Game* are all Frenchmen, who speak a kind of pidgin English/French in atrocious French accents, not unlike a certain prime minister of Canada’s past.¹²⁵ An exchange between Ludmilla Oyster and Louis, from *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, illustrates this *canadien* content:

LOUIS

Bonjour mam’selle, je suis be Louis, le sous chef extraordinaire avec le temperament pour l’amour.

OYSTER

I know who you are, little man.

DUSTY

Hello Miss Oyster, nice to see you again.

¹²⁵ I am thinking here of the one and only Jean Chretien.

OYSTER
Where's Packard?

LOUIS
Je suis don't know.

OYSTER
Je suis don't know. What kind of stupid answer is that? Comment vas tu te' defendre petite espesce d'excrément moisi de chien? (*How will you defend yourself, you small mouldy dog dropping?*) Well?

LOUIS
Je prefers le English.

Besides the francophone characters, there are often little French remarks, like the dialogue between Annabelle and Lulu in *Lace Drakes*, in which the shortcomings of bilingualism are alluded to, as well as the general dislike of French teachers:¹²⁶

ANNABELLE/SYDNEY
You know what, Lulu? There's a filthy French word to describe someone like you.

LULU/HERSCHEL
I love filthy French things; tell me.

ANNABELLE/SYDNEY
You are a pomme frite!

LULU/HERSCHEL
Hey! Who you calling a French fry?

ANNABELLE/SYDNEY
Oh, God, I am going to absolutely kill my French teacher.

And the deliberate Canadianisms continue.

Roy comments on the deliberate Canadian elements in some of his plays:

Some of the plays are deliberately – there are things in them that are deliberately Canadian. For instance, *The Rutabaga Ranger* has a scene in it

¹²⁶ My Grade 8 French class prided itself on going through no less than five teachers in one year, eating them up one after one.

where there's a mock parliament going on and there's coy remarks throughout the play about "That's not how we do it here!" in reference to violence and solving the problem with six-guns. And at the end of the play, there's an argument between the villain and the NWMP. The Kid keeps calling him a sheriff and he says, "I'm not a sheriff, I'm a constable." You know, so there's that sort of thing in that particular play. What else? There's – of course, *Low Stone Wall* is Canadian in that it's about Canadian soldiers in Italy. *Bannock Muldoon* is set in Williams Creek, which is the artsy way of saying Barkerville. I'm sure there are other incidences. *The Pirate Play*...it's Canadian. It's set in Prince George. Nobody knows that. (2004b)

The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee is set in a Canadian castle. Marnie and Gloria in *Strangers on a Glade* ruminate continually on the sexual urges of Sasquatches. There is a much-coveted black velvet painting of John Diefenbaker on the auction block in *Hotel Hysterium*. The Habs¹²⁷ are supposed to be coming to town for a game of shinny¹²⁸ in *Tales From Me and Irmie*. They don't arrive, but Queen Elizabeth II does for Sam and Big Beulah's wedding. Upon being called "a broadminded, liberal kind of man," McDingus in *Lace Drakes* decries, "I ain't; I hate Liberals, I'm Tory to the core." And the listing of the deliberate Canadian idioms could go on and on. Yet, as Margaret Atwood argues, Canadianness should not be determined by so-called "Canadian Content," but rather by the way in which the subject matter is handled:

Canadian literature is not equivalent with "Canadian Content." Boy wearing Mountie suit meets Rose Marie with a maple-leaf in her hair is more likely to be an American musical comedy than a Canadian novel. But there's no reason why boy can't meet girl in Canadian literature; Canadian literature does not exclude the universals, it just handles them in a characteristic way. It's not necessarily the "subject matter" – families, Indians, and so forth – that constitutes the Canadian signature, but the

¹²⁷ Which is to say, the Montreal Canadiens. They were once the Montreal Habitants, hence, Habs for short. It's a nickname that's stuck.

¹²⁸ That mythic pick-up, pond or icy street or flooded backyard hockey, where play – without the restricting surveillance of adult referees and standardized play books and regulations and all the expensive gear – is considered liberating, fun and free, allowing for the genuine playing with the hockey rule set, thus making for better hockey players in the long run; or so I have heard it argued.

attitudes to that subject matter, and through the attitudes the kinds of images and the outcomes of stories. (1972, 237)

And the predominant attitudinal set of Canadians is one of irony, doubleness, compromise, as Lister Sinclair expounds:

This [irony] they are beginning to discover is the essence of the Canadian spirit, this it is that enables them to handle contradictions: the surface flow of nationalism, together with the undertow of internationalism; the size of the country, and the smallness of the population; the tradition of the frontier, and the sophistication of the acute observer in an excellent, if rather exposed, observation post. And our famous calculated diffidence can be used as the final stroke of irony to make our small voice influential. It was the weapon of Socrates, and has been the weapon of many good men since. The principle of letting the giants destroy one another by their strength is making Canada's weaknesses into still greater strength. Under the gentle smile of Canadian irony, local colour seems to disappear; the geographical obsession vanishes, and the wild-life gets back to the woods where it belongs. And perhaps one day we may reach the stage where the idea of a Canadian idiom will never be discussed; it will simply not arise in Canadian writers' minds. Then we can look again; because then we will know we have found it. (1954, 240)

The maple leafs can remain on the lawn, the syrup in the trees, the beavers at their dams, the Mounties in Tim Horton's and the hockey players at the rink, because what really constitutes Canadianness is irony.

As already discussed in detail earlier in this Scene, "Roy" plays revel in contrast, in juxtapositions, incongruities and doubleness, and irony, as basically defined, is the contrast of saying one thing and meaning another; it is the art of the double-voice and the double-look. For Roy, the ironic tension so prevalent in his work stems from the contrast between social classes, which is typically realized in "Roy" plays with the juxtaposition of those with snobby, educated, Old-World, royalist airs – whether British or wannabe Brits – to those loudly espousing the crude, crass, racist ideas of your average, rednecked, frontier-living, toolie-dwelling Canadian/Caribooite. Snobby Susan St. Apropos St. Jean,

the narrator in *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley*, claims the ownership of Truth, but in her interaction with the western frontier and a turnip-farming Caribooite, Charles Kersley, that apparently indelible Truth is perennially challenged. By the end, she has opened up to other truths and found a place on the frontier by the side of Charles. In *An Evening with Myron*, Florentia Bigsby-Barnes, the pretentious president of the Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society (called Ruffles, for short), and her sense of propriety are tryingly tested by Cariboo poets, Cariboo stagehands and Cariboo audience members, who simply do not behave as they should. Exasperated by the end, she accepts the proffered bottle of beer and takes a long swig. The haughtiness of the Hurliburtons in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* and the Rothbottoms and their butler in *The Dinner Party* and *The Charles Connection* are contrasted, respectively, with the crudeness and crassness of the sexual pervert, Basil Calhoun, and the used-car salesman and bimbo magnet, Vic “The Stick” Stewert. The insufferable airs of Pericles Mavenbrook, in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, are played off the toolie-dwelling sensibilities of the up-and-coming country singer and used-tractor salesman, Will-Bill Bonnigan, and the pinnacle of his song-writing achievement, his “You’re my Three-Point Hitch of Love in the Turnip Field of Life.” Big words are flouted, High Victorian and Canadian Frontier spoken and on it goes; the juxtaposition reflecting the Canadian propensity to import foreign models that do not necessarily “fit” the reality of Canada, commenting on the country’s continuing colonialist ties to the former British Empire, with the Canadian Brits and wannabe Brits who flaunt proprietary airs,¹²⁹ and illustrating the irony inherent to the classic Canadian struggle for identity.

¹²⁹ In her work on English Canadian culture in Canada, Pauline Greenhill argues that “English immigrants

In, what is perhaps his most “Canadian” play – in the sense that is idiomatically Canadian (set in the Canadian West during the Gold Rush days and sporting a Mountie), as well as attitudinally – *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, Roy creates a schizophrenic character, Tooley, who is a drunken miner to start, but then transforms into a silly, effeminate, aristocratic, snobbish, British twit one moment and a stupid, monosyllabic, ultra-macho, American gunslinger the next. Oscillating between these two roles, Tooley’s identity tug-o’-war mirrors the Canadian condition, with its constant interplay between British and American forces. Perhaps it is simply circumstantial, but Tooley’s very name is a variation of “toolies,” a local slang term, as mentioned previously in Act II, for the backwoods, backwards, uncultured nowhere – ultimately, the view that many outsiders have had and continue to have of Kersley, the Cariboo and Canada, for that matter. Thus apparently having nothing of worthwhile in and of himself, Tooley, as a toolie-dweller, becomes the site of competing outsiders attempting to make him into *something*. It is an expropriating and colonizing process all too familiar in Canada. As Milord, Tooley is a mincing git, espousing entitlement to everything and everyone he meets by virtue of his Old-World ties and certainly not by any hands-on, hard-worked relations he has to the place:

TOOLEY *enters from stage left as MILORD. TOOLEY/MILORD wears a ruffled shirt, knee breeches with buckles at the knees and a beauty spot. He carries a scented hanky. TOOLEY/MILORD does not walk, he skips, he hops, he minces, he prances.*

retain entitlement, which values – as well as noting the presence of – difference. And they can do so because of a colonial heritage they can invoke, explicitly or implicitly, even when it is rejected by other Canadians. Entitlement allows them to define all other forms of language and culture as ‘other’, and thus to de-ethnicize themselves, at the same time as they mark their differences. This is a rather complex symbolic expression of power” (1994, 62).

TOOLEY

Greetings all. Salutations, permutations, indignations. Hello. Hello. Hello.

MONA

What is it, Ackers?

ACKERS

That, Mona, is Milord.

MONA

This is the wild frontier, we can't have something like that wandering around, it'll give us a bad name.

...

BIRDIE

This is the famous Milord?

SMITH

This is the foreign-talking slimy toad that wants to steal my woman?

TOOLEY

Oh my, I've excited some interest amongst the commoners. Yes, children, your master has arrived at last. Allow me to introduce myself: Lord TooleyWood, 17th Earl of TooleyWood on Avon. Your pleasure, I'm sure.

ACKERS

You're supposed to kneel at this point and tug your forelocks.

SMITH

(holds groin) I ain't tugging my forelock for nobody in public.

Equally, as the Chicken Merango Kid, Tooley's violent single-mindedness and rapacious one-track-mindedness do not fit this place of polysemy, irony and compromise either:

BLANCHE

It's the same old litany, isn't it? Plug! Plug! Plug! Can't you relate to another person in any other way but this monotonous urge to plug?

...

TOOLEY

Someone give the man a shootin' iron.

ACKERS

Sorry, Merango, we're all unarmed.

TOOLEY

That's weird. I'm facing down a passel of sissies.

ACKERS

We'd be more than happy to engage you in strenuous debate if you'd prefer.

Again, what fits Canadians is their ability to see double, to see the irony of their interstitial position, and this dipopia is found in "Roy" plays.

Northrop Frye once contended that identity in Canada is parochial, arguing that, in this garrisoned country, identity is to be found in regional locales and not in grand, country-spanning imaginative forms (1995, xxii-xxvi). So, one could contend that "Roy" plays are not so much reflecting Canadian sensibilities, as they are reflecting Kersley and the Cariboo. As already argued, the farcical form itself fits the culture of the Cariboo and the masculinity asserted through ludic usurpation of the female form fits the rationalized worldview of Quesnel millworkers. Indeed, "Roy" plays roughly and rawly fit their place, as noted earlier. And in fitting their place, there are elements in "Roy" plays that reflect a decidedly Cariboo mindset and it is often playing with that mindset, that worldview, that culture, that creates the humour. *Lace Drakes*, so loved for its "taste of truth," plays with the Cariboo truth of hunting, with the fact that Caribooites bundle up, head into the woods and shoot things. In *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch*, *Whee-hee*, Angle-Iron Hetch, smitten with a love potion, delivers a rather homoerotic invitation to Ouch, the sought-after Guard, to watch a hockey game:

ANGLE-IRON

Hi there.

OUCH

Oh shit.

ANGLE-IRON

I'm Angle-Iron. Would you like to watch a hockey game with me?

OUCH

No.

ANGLE-IRON

We could sit together on the sofa and drink beer.

OUCH

I do not like beer.

ANGLE-IRON

We could both eat from the same bowl of salt and vinegar potato chips.
They make me pucker.

OUCH

I do not like potato chips.

ANGLE-IRON

When our team scores a goal, we could touch each other.

OUCH

My team never scores.

ANGLE-IRON

Oh, you must be a Canuck fan.

Considering that getting together to watch hockey, especially the local BC team, the Vancouver Canucks (about whom they often gripe), and drink beer is a standard post-work activity for males in the Cariboo, makes this interchange fittingly funny. In *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues*, the Schickerbickers are accosted by Constance Crutchley, a rabid environmentalist and animal rights activist with GARBAGE (Generic Animal Rights Brigade Allied with Generic Environmentalists), who is out "to stop the avaricious plundering of dust bunnies for profit." In an area based on resource extraction, with an ironically pragmatic worldview best summed up with, "Earth first! Then we'll log the other planets," militant environmentalism is always seen as ridiculously impractical

and misinformed, whether out to save wolves, spotted owls, dust bunnies or whatever current, generic “in” thing there is to save. The self-righteous rhetoric of Constance fits the Caribooite’s sense of outsiders’ meddling incomprehension, since dust bunnies and trees are ultimately meant to be harvested.

As a final example, in *The Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, when the pirate, Cuticle Clyde, bursts in to kidnap the fair Angie Bunwallop, an exchange between Buggers and Bonecusher Wickham plays with the general Cariboo mindset regarding further education:

BUGGERS

Good Lord, we’re being accosted by a rogue hairdresser.

BONECRUSHER

Not really, boss; that’s your standard sort of pirate guy with sword.

BUGGERS

Standard sort of pirate guy with sword? Before we go any further, Mr Wickham, would you please explain to me why you know so much about pirates?

BONECRUSHER

I majored in pirates at university, boss.

BUGGERS

Good Lord, they’re finally teaching something useful at university.

Given that Roy sits in that meagre ten percent of Quesnelites who sport a university degree and, further, holds one in something as impractical as creative writing, he is well acquainted with the general scoffing directed towards institutions of higher learning and their uselessly impractical educations,¹³⁰ which is why the idea of piracy being deemed

¹³⁰ As is this author of this dissertation with her decidedly *impractical* education in English, Humanities and Folklore. *Useful* university educations lead to recognized, economically beneficial professions like medical doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, engineers, social workers, pharmacists, dentists...

useful is ironically apt. In short, seeing as “Roy” plays are created by a Canadian Caribooite, they certainly reflect Cariboo and Canadian sensibilities, whatever they may be.

End Act III, Scene 3.

In which the eight characteristics of a “Roy” play, namely nonsensical realms, shock factors, juxtapositions, incomprehensible language, human relationships, fast-paced inevitability, transvestism and patriotism, were described and expounded upon. It was discussed how the oft-times shocking nonsense and off-the-wall scenarios of “Roy” plays need a “taste of truth,” need to believably and logically bounce off a socially codified wall of belief, however ludicrous that bounce may be. Roy’s cusp position within the community itself feeds this wall-bouncing contrast that is so imperative to his farcical renderings. His farces are further characterized by “big words,” by juxtaposing language play that has the potential to alienate his working-class audience. His plays, though, while threatening to shock and alienate, always thematically centre on love and human relationships. Indeed, despite the violence often committed throughout the plays to and within the relationships, all ends reincorporatingly well, thus ensuring that farce, generically at least, remains innocuously palatable to its audience. Furthering the palatability of “Roy” plays is the ineluctably fatalistic speed at which they move, as characters mill about in multi-doored universes, automatons to the plot, and thereby mirror the general Cariboo condition of alienation. The ins and outs of the milling about, though, can – in enactment – generate a para-play contrast, in which players fictive and mundane roles bounce off of one another, increasing and/or decreasing the palatability of “Roy” plays to their audience(s); a point of elaboration in the next Act. Another element apparently integral to a “Roy” play is the gender bending humour of cross-dressing, as presented in an overly fetishized, stereotypical form. Through this form, masculinity is ultimately reinforced and emasculated men, whose creativity and intelligence have been denied them by the mechanization of their capitalist labour, assert their manliness through this process of reverse machismo. And, finally, all of these characteristics mix together to make something considered uniquely Canadian, reflecting the Canadian penchant for irony and the Cariboo penchant for gross exaggeration.

Act IV

The Enactment, or Everybody is in Everything¹³¹

Scene 1 – The Theoretical Playground

In which an overview of the theoretical musings on play, performance and theatre are related.

Lights up. A blonde, little girl, ALICE, properly clad in dress and pinafore, stands timidly and imploringly at the foot of a great oak tree, wherein sits a large, grinning CHESHIRE CAT, with very long claws and a great many teeth.

ALICE

What sort of people live about here?

CAT

In *that* direction (*waving right paw round*), lives a Hatter: and in that direction (*waving other paw*), lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad.

ALICE

But I don't want to go among mad people.

CAT

Oh, you can't help that: we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.

ALICE

How do you know I'm mad?

CAT

You must be, or you wouldn't have come here.¹³²

CAT smiles wickedly and vanishes into thin air. ALICE looks around, perplexed and rejected. Lights down.

¹³¹ A wonderful description of the inhabitants of Mariposa from Stephen Leacock's *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* (1912): "That's the great thing about the town and that's what makes it so different from the city. Everybody is in everything" (66).

¹³² Dialogue from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1955, 31).

People play, and in that play, there is meaning. It may seem a rather simplistic notion, and indeed it is, but there truly is a “reciprocal relationship between a society and the games it likes to play” (Caillois 2001, 82). In essence, you are what you play. French play theorist and sociologist, Roger Caillois, asserts:

It is not absurd to try diagnosing a civilization in terms of the games that are especially popular there. In fact, if games are cultural factors and images, it follows that to a certain degree a civilization and its content may be characterized by its games. They necessarily reflect its culture pattern and provide useful indications as to the preferences, weakness, and strength of a given society. (2001, 83)

The idea that, through playing and observing play, one can gain insight into a culture and society has been the driving force behind this dissertation on the Kersley Players. Having thus explored the play community’s setting and assessed the textual/generic play-form itself, it is now time to join the “madness” of the playground in practice. This means first an investigation of the theoretical “stage” and its scholarly musings on the significance of play, performance and theatre.

Play Theory & the Performative Stage

In which the theoretical underpinnings of play, performance and theatre are investigated, including their liminality, their interrelationships, their power dynamics, their metacommentaries, their identity constructions, their functions, their forms and so on and so forth.

play (plā) ► v. **1.** To occupy oneself in amusement, sport, or other recreation. **2.** To act in jest. **3.** To behave carelessly; toy. See Syns at **flirt**. **4.** To act in a specified way: *play fair*. **5a.** To engage in (a game or sport). **b.** To compete against in a game or sport. **c.** To occupy (a position) in a game or sport. **d.** To use (a card, piece or ball) in a game or sport. **6a.** To act or perform (a role). **b.** To pretend to be: *play cowboy*. **7.** To be performed, as a theatrical work. **8. Mus.** **a.** To perform on (an instrument). **b.** To perform (a piece). **9.** To perform or put into effect: *play a joke*. **10.** To manipulate: *played the rivals against each other*. **11.** To cause (e.g., a recorded tape) to emit sound. **12.** To move lightly or irregularly: *The breeze played on the water*. **13.** To bet or wager. (*The American Heritage Dictionary* 2001)

Play is a slippery beast, dodging definitions and evading categorical capture. It winks, nudges, jumps, bites, subverts, snickers, flirts, kids, joins, divides, creates, destroys, permits, forbids, bets and betters. It is a state of mind, a mode of being and an activity, and we all do it, think it, are it. *Homo ludens*, the medieval historian Johan Huizinga (1950) once called us humans, a recognition of the innate human nature to not just stand sentiently erect, but to play. Huizinga writes, “The fun of playing, resists all analysis, all logical interpretation...The very existence of play continually confirms the supra-logical nature of the human situation. Animals play, so they must be more than merely mechanical beings. We play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational” (1950, 3-4). Huizinga continues, ultimately arguing that “[i]t is through this playing that society expresses its interpretation of life and the world” (1950, 46). Hoping to pin down this playful beast and understand its playful expression, scholars have come with their categorizations and their definitions, since “[a] principal task of scholarly writing is to find discipline within or impose it on seemingly anarchic phenomena” (Schechner 2002, 82). This section gives a brief overview of the discipline of play, as found and/or imposed, before investigating one play category in greater theoretical detail, namely, that of dramatic mimesis and simulative performance: theatre.

Most definitions of play, as given by scholars and not dictionaries, focus on play’s “free” nature, its separateness/boundedness and its structured rules. Johan Huizinga sums up the characteristics and functions of play thus:

Summing up the formal characteristics of play we might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It

is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. The function of play...can be largely derived from two basic aspects under which we meet it: as a contest *for* something or a representation *of* something. These functions can unite in such a way that the game “represents” a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something. (1950, 13)

When we play, we step “out of ‘real’ life into a temporary sphere of activity with [not only] a disposition all of its own” (Huizinga 1950, 8), but with rules all of its own as well. Not unlike the structure of farcical nonsense, play has a structure despite the fact that it is consciously posited as being “outside” of the structure of “real” life. As Huizinga notes, “All play has its rules. They determine what ‘holds’ in the temporary world circumscribed by play. The rules of a game are absolutely binding and allow no doubt...Indeed, as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play-world collapses. The game is over” (1950, 11). While contradicting the playground’s rules can prematurely end the play, it is also the nature of play to end, to be “‘played out’ within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning. Play begins, and then, at a certain moment it is ‘over’. It plays itself to an end” (Huizinga 1950, 9). Play is limited, bounded temporally, spatially and structurally. Roger Abrahams observes of play:

Play, by definition, arises in an atmosphere which produces the illusion of free and undirected expression while remaining under control. By effecting a removal from the real world into the stylized one, a tension is established through the involvement power of sympathetic identification with the enactment at the same time as a psychic distance is established through the creation of the stylized world and the mannered presentation. This allows for the cathartic response to the activity – the simultaneous identification and distancing. We can identify with the most anxious situations when they are in the controlled environment of the play world. In other words, in this play world the spirit of license reigns, allowing for the “playing out”

of motives which we don't allow ourselves under the circumstances of real life. Any place may become the arena for playing and any time the occasion; but in the more elaborate play genres the times and places are often as traditional as the pieces performed in them. Game playing may arise any place, for instance, but the more complex play activities need a field or stage or consecrated place with evident boundaries to supplement the rules and conventions of playing. (1969, 115-16)

In the controlled, cordoned playground, fun is often made of "real" life and its many responsibilities, consequences and repercussions. Issues, questions, dreams, fantasies and problems, which are denied discussion in "real" life, can be explored in play, just as it is explored in that play-form, farce, by a nonsense-loving Roy Teed.

For Roger Caillois, play is defined

as an activity which is essentially: 1. *Free*: in which playing is not obligatory; if it were, it would at once lose its attractive and joyous quality as diversion; 2. *Separate*: circumscribed within limits of space and time, defined and fixed in advance; 3. *Uncertain*: the course of which cannot be determined, nor the result attained beforehand, and some latitude for innovations being left to the player's initiative; 4. *Unproductive*; creating neither goods, nor wealth, nor new elements of any kind; and, except for the exchange among players, ending in situation identical to that prevailing at the beginning of the game; 5. *Governed by rules*: under conventions that suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts; 6. *Make-believe*: accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality, as against real life. (2001, 9-10; emphasis in original)

Caillois further classifies play into four categories: 1) Agon or competition, in which winners, losers and outcomes are determined by skill and strength; 2) Alea or chance, in which serendipitous luck determines results; 3) Mimicry or simulation, in which illusory and imaginary realms of make-believe are created; and 4) Ilinx or vertigo, in which disorientation is the purpose. Operating within these categories, play moves from the turbulence, agitation, tumult and disturbance of Paidia, with its "taste for destruction and breaking things" (Caillois 2001, 28), to the bounded disciplines and rule-governed

structures of Ludus. In the actuality of play, though, these categorical lines are more often than not blurred and “corruptions” are commonplace. For Caillois, professional players are corruptions of the free, unproductive nature of play, and joining them in corrosively corruptive behaviour are those who subvert civilization and its play rules, cheating, breaking and rejecting. Indeed, there can be a deepness and darkness in play.

The eighteenth-century, English philosopher and ethicist, Jeremy Bentham, first introduced the idea of “deep play,” (1975, 69) contemptible and corruptible play in which the stakes are so high that it is simply irrational, illogical, uncivilized and immoral to play. Expanding on this idea centuries later, Clifford Geertz observes “that despite the logical force of Bentham’s analysis men do engage in such play, both passionately and often, and even in the face of law’s revenge” (1972, 15). Applying this in his analysis of Balinese cockfighting, Geertz argues that it is much more than simply large amounts of money on the line in these deep cockfights, but a player’s very status:

In deep ones, where the amounts of money are great, much more is at stake than material gain: namely, esteem, honor, dignity, respect – in a word, though in Bali a profoundly freighted word, status...It is because money *does*, in this hardly unmaterialistic society, matter and matter very much that the more of it one risks the more of a lot of other things, such as one’s pride, one’s poise, one’s dispassion, one’s masculinity, one also risks, again only momentarily but again very publicly as well. In deep cockfights an owner and his collaborators...put their money where their status is. It is in large part *because* the marginal disutility of loss is so great at the higher levels of betting that to engage in such betting is to lay one’s public self, allusively and metaphorically, through the medium of one’s cock, on the line. And though to a Benthamite this might seem merely to increase the irrationality of the enterprise that much further, to the Balinese what it mainly increases is the meaningfulness of it all. And as...the imposition of meaning on life is the major end and primary condition of human existence, that access of significance more than compensates of the economic costs involved. (1972, 16; emphasis in original)

For Richard Schechner, this kind of absorbing deep play, as it meaningfully meshes with personal identity and significance, can quickly morph into, what he calls, “dark play,” play which is risky, deceptive, thrilling, subversive and, possibly, completely private:

“Playing in the dark” means that some of the players don’t know that they are playing...It involves fantasy, risk, luck, daring, invention, and deception. Dark play may be entirely private, known to the player alone. Or it can erupt suddenly, a bit of microplay, seizing the player(s) and then as quickly subsiding...Dark play subverts order, dissolves frames, and breaks its own rules – so much so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed...Unlike carnivals or ritual clowns whose inversions of established order is sanctioned by the authorities, dark play is truly subversive, its agendas always hidden. Dark play’s goals are deceit, disruption, excess, and gratification. (2002, 106-7)

Dark play, ultimately, calls into question the very concept and structure of play, since “sometimes even the conscious players are not certain if they are playing or not. What begins as a game, as a gesture of bravado, can quickly get out of hand. More than a few have died on a dare” (Schechner 2002, 109). Seen in this corrupted, corruptive, deep and dark light, play is about power, about maintaining it, gaining it, undermining it. Brian Sutton-Smith explains:

Considerations of play and power come under various names, such as warfare, hegemony, conflict, competition, glory, manliness, contest, and resistance. Some of these are quite ancient terms historically, preceding the modern rhetorics of progress, the imaginary, and the self...In modern times, however, the concept of power has also been applied in play theory to solitary play: the child plays because [s]he enjoys the power of being a cause, or because [s]he doesn’t have power and in play is seeking empowerment as a kind of compensation or wish fulfillment. On the social play level, the general idea of the power rhetoric is that play or games or sports or athletics that have to do with some kind of contest and reflect a struggle for superiority between two groups...exist because they give some kind of representation or expression to the existing real conflict between these groups. Whichever side wins the game or contest is said to bring glory to its own group, bonding the members together through their common contestive identity. (1997, 75)

Play has the potential to shape and empower *real*-life identities, both individually and collectively, as well as reflect *and* affect real-life power dynamics. Truly, play's powerful repercussions can be felt long after the whistle blows and the curtains fall, long after its supposed "end."

Recognizing the often blurred interpretative lines between play and reality, between playing and nonplaying, Gregory Bateson wonders about play's beginnings, about the signals used to demarcate something as play, as *unreal* and, therefore, not "serious." His ruminations resulted in his classic analysis of the metacommunicative message, "This is play:"

Now, this phenomenon, play, could only occur if the participant organisms were capable of some degree of metacommunication, *i.e.*, of exchanging signals which would carry the message "this is play."...Expanded, the statement "This is play" looks something like this: "These actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which they stand* would denote." We now ask about the italicized words, "*for which they stand*." We say the word "cat" stands for any member of a certain class. That is, the phrase "stands for" is a near synonym of "denotes." If we now substitute "which they denote" for the words "for which they stand" in the expanded definition of play, the result is: "These actions, in which we now engage, do not denote what would be denoted by those actions which these actions denote." The playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite. (1972, 179-80; emphasis in original)

A wink, a tone of voice, a raised curtain, a bounded playing field – all signify that "this is play," that the untruths spoken, the violence committed and the bites bitten are not be interpreted as "real." Indeed, as Bateson contends, "play is a phenomenon in which the actions of 'play' are related to, or denote, other actions of 'not play'" (Bateson 1972, 181). What becomes problematic though, as Bateson recognizes, is that the discrimination between "play" and "not play" "is always liable to break down, and the ritual blows of peace-making are always liable to be mistaken for the 'real' blows of combat. In this

event, the peace-making ceremony becomes a battle” (1972, 182), the stage flirtations become adulterous and the bites draw blood. Indeed, play always has the potential to become “real.” Analyzing this aspect, Bateson contends that “[t]he message ‘This is play’...sets a frame of the sort which is likely to precipitate paradox” (1972, 190), a kind of non-sequitur, as it attempts to discriminate between “play” and “nonplay.” Interpretatively volatile, the message “This is play” often paradoxically raises the question, “Is this play?” As the “play” realm becomes very “real” and has repercussions in the “real” world, the player, not unlike the dreamer who “is usually unaware that [s]he is dreaming” (Bateson 1972, 185), often “must often be reminded that ‘This is play’” (Bateson 1972, 185), that s/he is supposed to be playing. The *real* repercussions of this play paradox to the Kersley Players and their community will be addressed later on in this Act.

“But is it for nothing that a drama is called a ‘play’ and the actor’s part ‘playing’?” (1969, 12), Richard Schechner once queried, pointing out the link between theatre and play. Indeed, theatre is a genre of play (Abrahams 1969) and is classified, *à la* Caillois, as *Mimicry-Ludus*, in that it invokes illusory, play realms that are highly structured and rule-governed. Seeing as “play and playing are fundamentally performative” (Schechner 2002, 109) and that theatre is a form of play, it follows that theatre is performance and performance, according to performance theorist Richard Schechner, is “any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed” (2002, 2), which “mark[s] identities, bend[s] time, reshape[s] and adorn[s] the body, and tell[s] stories” (2002, 22). Framed, presented, highlighted and displayed, the performative aspect is integral to theatre; the scripts’ stories are to be acted upon, played out and performed

by actors, players and performers. As William O. Beeman points out, performance consists of “several *levels of interaction*: (1) between performers, (2) between performer and audience, (3) between performer, audience, and the larger cultural framework” (1981, 508; emphasis in original). He expounds on the interactive process:

The first level is the level of *message production*. Paradoxically, message production itself requires interaction among performers...When spectators are taken into consideration, the communicative action of the performers constitutes another level of interaction. This can be thought of as the level of *message reception*. The third level of interaction is encountered when the cultural framework of performance is taken into consideration. The collective history, common knowledge, beliefs, and mores known both to spectators and performers form a basis for understanding and reacting to material presented in performance. This third level of interaction is the level of *message interpretation*. (1981, 508; emphasis in original)

Players produce a message, “This is play,” which is, in turn, received by the play’s spectators and then interpreted. Seeing as the delineations between play and nonplay fluctuate, the produced “This is play” message has the potential to go awry and be received and interpreted as “This is real” by not only the spectators, but by the Players themselves, as Scene III in this Act will investigate.

An interactive process of message production, reception and interpretation, performance can also be considered as a sequential time-space process, involving three phases: *proto-performance*, *performance* and *aftermath* (Schechner 2002, 191-214; Schechner 1985, 16-21). Proto-performance, according to Schechner, “is what precedes and/or gives rise to a performance...[a] source or impulse that gives rise to a performance; a starting point. A performance can (and usually does) have more than one proto-p” (2002, 191). The starting points or proto-p’s can be as nebulous as imaginations moulded by the Cariboo bush, as in the case of Roy Teed, or as concrete as a script in

one's hand. It could simply be the desire to do something different for the annual community Christmas party, the impulse that created the Kersley Players. Indeed, much of what has been presented, thus far, in this dissertation has been an examination of the histories, geographies, demographics, economics, imaginations, ideas, worldviews – the larger socio-economic and cultural frameworks, the multiple proto-p's and their ancestries – which have given rise to the Kersley Players and their farcical plays. That said, proto-performance is subdivided, by Schechner, into three performative phases: 1) *Training*, in which “specific skills are learned and practiced” (Schechner 2002, 194); 2) *Workshop*, during which “materials are found, invented, and played with” (Schechner 2002, 199); and 3) *Rehearsal*, “where the specific details of a performance are shaped, repeated, and made ready for a public showing” (Schechner 2002, 202). The following Scenes in this Act will assess, in greater detail, these three aspects as they relate to the Kersley Players.

Following the proto-performative phases is the performance itself, with its four subdivisions, continuing the overall performance process: 4) *Warm-up*, as immediately preceding a public performance, it “readies the performer for the leap-into-performing” (Schechner 2005); 5) *Public performance*, or framed action; 6) *Events and/or contexts sustaining the public performance*, recognizing that “[e]very public performance operates within or as part of a network of technical, economic, and social activities” (Schechner 2002, 209); and 7) *Cool-down*, or unwinding, as “performers move from the performance world back to everyday life” (Schechner 2002, 211). Following the performance is the aftermath, which Schechner describes as “the long-term consequences or follow-through of a performance. Aftermath includes the changes in status or being that result from an

initiatory performance; or the slow merging of performer with a role [s]he plays for decades; or the reviews and criticism that so deeply influence some performances and performers; or theorizing and scholarship” (1985, 19). Finalizing the ten-part performance process, the ongoing aftermath includes: 8) *Critical responses*; 9) *Archives*; and 10) *Memories* – all of which can feed “back into performing” (Schechner 1985, 19). Indeed, having tapped the memories of many Players and accessed the archives of photos, video recordings, manuscripts and the like, this dissertation is a part of that aftermath. Again, this Act, as an analysis of the enactment, examines the performances, including their warm-ups, cool-downs and larger contexts, as well as the personal, collective and communal aftermath.

Examining this ten-phase¹³³ performance sequence, Richard Schechner observes the links between the performance process and the ritual process,

find[ing] a pattern analogous to initiation rites. A performance involves a separation, a transition, and an incorporation. Each of these phases is carefully marked. In initiations people are transformed permanently, whereas in most performances the transformations are temporary (transportations). Like initiations, performances “make” one person into another. Unlike initiations, performances usually see to it that the performer gets his [her] own self back. To use Van Gennep’s categories, training, workshop, rehearsal, and warm-ups are preliminary, rites of separation. The performance itself is liminal, analogous to the rites of transition. Cool-down and aftermath are postliminal, rites of incorporation. (1985, 20-21)

Indeed, for the renowned anthropologist Victor Turner, liminality – that betwixt-and-between state wherein anti-structure rules – is integral to performance. He writes:

The dominant genres of performance in societies at all levels of scale and complexity tend to be *liminal phenomena*. They are performed in privileged spaces and times, set off from the periods and areas reserved for

¹³³ In 1985, it was seven, but by 2002, it had grown to ten.

work, food and sleep....[T]he performances and their settings may be likened to loops in a linear progression, when the social flow bends back on itself, in a way does violence to its own development, meanders, inverts, perhaps lies to itself, and puts everything so to speak into the subjunctive mood as well as the reflexive voice. Just as the subjunctive mood of a verb is used to express supposition, desire, hypothesis, or possibility, rather than stating actual facts, so do liminality and the phenomena of liminality dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their components and “play” with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of perception. (1987, 25; emphasis in original)

Subjunctive playgrounds – whether they be arenas, card tables, temples, stages, screens, courts, pitches, magic circles – are all “forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart” (Huizinga 1950, 10). All are liminal, as are the performances enacted on their grounds.

Victor Turner once described liminality as “fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence” (1990, 12). A counterpart to “ordinary” life and everyday existence and their indicative mood, “where we expect the invariant operation of cause-and-effect, of rationality and commonsense” (V. Turner 1990, 12), liminality is about nonsensical possibilities and *what if*ing potentialities, and the theatrical stage is an important liminal venue and avenue for “raising problems about the ordering principles deemed acceptable in ‘real life’....[and] scrutinizing the quotidian world – seeing it as tragedy, comedy, melodrama” (V. Turner 1987, 27) or farce, as the case may be. Through this subjunctive, liminal scrutiny of the indicative mood of everyday life, theatre, not unlike ritual, has “an important aspect of social metacommentary” (V. Turner 1990, 8).

Truly, “[t]he messages it delivers are often serious beneath the outward trappings of absurdity, fantasy, and ribaldry” (V. Turner 1983, 105). Turner clarifies:

Theatre is perhaps the most forceful, active, if you like, genre of cultural performance...No society is without some mode of metacommentary – Geertz’s illuminating phrase for a “story a group tells about itself” or in the case of theatre, a play a society acts about itself – not only a reading of its experience but an interpretative reenactment of its experience. (1982, 104)

Elaborating on this interpretative re-enactment aspect of theatre, with its social metacommentary, Turner argues that theatrical/stage dramas are fed by and feed *actual* social dramas – with their breaches and crises and redressive actions and reintegrations and schisms – creating an infinite loop of interrelationship (see fig. 4.1). He explains:

[T]he *manifest* social drama feeds into the latent realm of stage drama; its characteristics form in a given culture, at a given time and place, unconsciously, or perhaps preconsciously, influences not only the form but also the content of the stage drama of which it is the active or “magic” mirror. The stage drama, when it is meant to do more than entertain – though entertainment is always one of its vital aims – is a metacommentary, explicit or implicit, witting or unwitting on the major social dramas of its social context (wars, revolutions, scandals, institutional changes). Not only that, but its message and its rhetoric feed back into the *latent* processual structure of the social drama and partly account for its ready ritualization. Life itself now becomes a mirror held up to art, and the living now *perform* their lives, for the protagonists of a social drama, a “drama of living,” have been equipped by aesthetic drama with some of their most salient opinions, imageries, tropes, and ideological perspectives. Neither mutual mirroring, life by art, art by life, is exact, for each is not a planar mirror but matricial mirror; at each exchange something new is added and something old is lost or discarded. Human beings learn through experience, though all too often they repress painful experience, and perhaps the deepest experience is through drama; not through social drama, or stage drama (or its equivalent) alone, but in the circulatory or oscillatory process of their mutual and incessant modification. (1990, 16-17; emphasis in original)

Indeed, the insight to be gained into a culture and society from studying its theatre, its stage drama, within this feedback loop, is the whole theoretical foundation for this analysis of the Kersley Players.

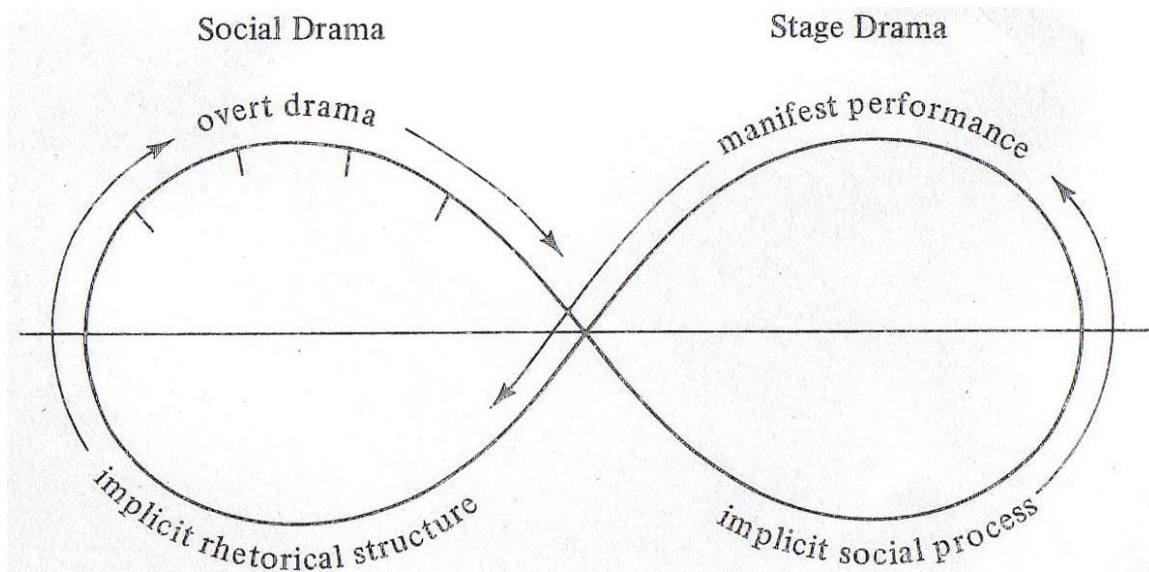


Fig. 4.1. Victor Turner's schematic overview of the interrelationship between stage and social dramas.
Source: V. Turner 1990, 17.

End Act IV, Scene 1.

In which the analysis of play theory emphasized the boundedness of play, its liminality and, thereby, its free, subjunctive mood. Although bounded, play always has the potential to create repercussions beyond the play realm, to become powerfully real, affecting real-life statuses and relationships and going deeper and darker than a player may have initially intended. Indeed, simulative performances (theatre) can become a space for a social metacommentary, as real life feeds the play-form and the play-form feeds real life.

Scene 2 – The Players

In which we meet the Players and hear all about how they got roped into playing in the first place and what ‘bits’ of themselves they brought to the plays, along with the intra-group dynamics and what this play-form has meant to them personally over the years.

Lights up on a classic British nursery. A spritely PETER PAN sits on a chaise by the hearth, as a little girl, WENDY, in her nightgown, sits before him, deftly sewing his shadow back into place.

WENDY

But, Peter, how old are you?

PETER

I don't know exactly.

WENDY

How can that be?

PETER

Well, I ran away the day I was born. It was because I heard Father and Mother talking about what I was to be when I became a man. (*Passionately*) I don't want *ever* to be a *man*! I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things. I don't want to be a man! I want always to be a little boy and to have fun. So I ran away to Kensington Gardens and lived a long time among the fairies. And now I live with the lost boys.

WENDY

Who are they?

PETER

They are the children who fall out of their carriages when the nursemaid is looking the other way. If they aren't claimed in seven days they are sent far away to the Neverland. I'm captain.

WENDY

What fun it must be!

PETER

Yes, but we are rather lonely, for there are no girls. Girls, you know, are far too clever to fall out of their carriages.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Dialogue based on the interchange between Peter, Wendy and Mrs. Darling in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1957, 12-14 & 64).

WENDY *nods and smiles knowingly, as the lights go down.*

Unable to escape to the Neverland and remain forever young and impish, most children simply grow up to be adults, taking upon them all the responsibilities and expectations of adulthood. They get educations, go to work, raise families, make mortgage payments. Yet the play impulse remains. Richard Schechner observes: “We accept our species as sapiens and fabricans: ones who think and make. We are in the process of learning how humans are also ludens and performans: ones who play and perform” (1985, 33). And indeed, this section is about homo ludens and homo performans, the players and performers of the Kersley Players – the housewives turned hurdy gurdy girls, the millworkers turned pirates, the mothers turned vamps and the fathers turned women. It investigates how and why they got involved in this particular type of ludic form in the first place, what they have personally brought to the play, what they have personally taken from the play, how they play and, lastly, why they play.

The Recruits & Their ‘Little Bits’

In which many Players are met and an examination of how they were initially recruited is undertaken, along with an analysis of the ‘little bits’ contributed from their everyday lives to this play-form.

“In the beginning, there was coercion and there still is,” joked one of my informants, as he discussed how the Kersley Players got their start: “Your mom [Bobbi Grant] kind of got him [Roy] started in the actual doing of a play – or, not kind of, she coerced him, much as the rest of us have been coerced, so it’s kind of a traditional thing” (Minnett 2004). With her sparkplug zest, Bobbi Grant fired up and fanned the Kersley Players, or as another informant put it, “got us going and moved us along, did just about everything that needed to be done to get going” (Gunn 2004). Such an organizational role

is common to women in many communities, which Michael Taft points out: “[T]he mock wedding, like all such functions in the prairie community, are usually organized and run by women” (1997, 137). Encouraged, coerced and organized, the cast and crew of the first official Kersley Player play, *The Dinner Party* (1987), were all friends, family members and/or neighbours of Bobbi Grant, roped in by the promise of a good time and a good cause. None had any theatrical training, other than perhaps a school play or two. The success of *The Dinner Party* enlivened and quickened some of the initial Players, causing them to continue playing, while it also piqued interest amongst some of the audience-goers, pushing some to actively join in the fun. Pete Drewcock, a stalwart Player, remembers his initial wariness being washed away by the contagious comedy:

Yeah, I was recruited by somebody, that’s for sure. Yeah, I think, I remember going – I remember being asked if I would be in the first play, that was the [JGJ: *The Dinner Party*.] *The Dinner Party* and I wasn’t really very comfortable with it then and there wasn’t much time. As usual, the Kersley Players are sort of scrambling to find people at the last minute and that’s what we do, you know. That’s how we do things. And I wasn’t very comfortable with getting involved with a new theatre group and putting on this or getting involved in this really, really weird play. I’d read the script and I thought, “No, no, this is just too crazy for me,” you know. And so I declined the first play, but I remember going and watching it and then getting hooked, you know, ’cause the slapstick comedy was kind of cool. So, it didn’t take much arm twisting to get me involved in the first one or my first one [JGJ: The subsequent one.] which I think was *The Charles Connection*. (2004)

He was not the first or the last Player to be hooked.

Scrambling for would-be Players, as is often the case, the Players rely heavily on proselytizing missions, on the ability of those Players already involved to convert some of their associates. For those Players who have been playing and/or played for a long time, their conversion/coercion stories include knocks on the door by a Kersley-wandering Roy

Teed, sweet-talking phone calls from neighbours and hard-line assaults from workmates.

Wayne Wark, another longstanding Player, remembers a visit from a proselytizing Roy

Teed, with his message of community spirit:

Well, one day, I was sitting here in – sitting in the house – well, the other house actually, the white house – and Mr. Roy Teed came banging on the door and he said, “We need somebody to be in this play and we want you to do it.” And I said, “Well, why?” And I, I had heard about the Kersley Players. They actually had just got started probably a year before that and I said, “Well, what’s it all entail?” So he explained to me how the Kersley Players made money and then donated it back to the school and the community, etc., and I thought, “Well, that’s a pretty good thing,” so I agreed to do that. So, I went in the first play [*The Charles Connection*] and been there ever since. (2004)

Following his own personal conversion or “life sentence,” as he jokingly refers to it,

Wayne Wark took it upon himself to recruit/sentence another, his neighbour, Deleenia

Lovell, one of the few consistent female Players, for the 1992 production, *The Rutabaga*

Ranger Rides Again. A recent Kersley immigrant – she and her family had moved into the

area 1991 – she had never actually seen a “Roy” play and was lured to the hall by a

sweet-talking, somewhat elusive, Wayne Wark:

What happened was that Wayne Wark phoned me, 'cause I knew him and I'd known him for a few years. So, he phoned me and told me, “Come over here. Come over to the hall.” He said, “I have something for you to look at or something to get involved with” or whatever. So, I said, “Okay.” So, then I went over there – and actually, the reason I was even involved in that play in the first play, *The Rutabaga Ranger*, was because your mom wasn't able to do the role of Mona.¹³⁵ So then, they asked me to – if I would be able to do that. And I thought, “Oh my goodness.” Like, I said, “I don't know.” And he said, “Well, just sit and watch for awhile and see.” They were all having a great time – like it was a lot of fun and they made me feel very welcome. And so then I said, “Yeah, I think I might be able to do this.” And so that was that. (2006)

¹³⁵ The 1991 production, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, was to be my mother's last onstage performance as a Kersley Player. Later that same year, she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Dave Gunn, a *Dinner Party* veteran, took a much harder lined, incriminating approach when dealing with his fellow CPP millwright, Gary Minnett, a non-Kersleyite and now stalwart Kersley Player, who was having cold feet about the prospect of getting involved in a play:

I talked to Gary Minnett at work, and Gary says, “Well, I kind of always wanted to go into a little bit of acting.” So, I says, “Here’s your chance, you know, like Sunday night we’ve got a practice down in Kersley. We’re doing a pirate play [1993 production of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*].” “Okay,” he says, “I’ll go.” So, Sunday came along, like seven o’clock Sunday night at practice. I get a call at 6:30 from Gary, ’cause I’ve already told Roy, “Not a problem. I’ve got somebody.” Right, so Roy’s happy and we’re going to do a reading of the play. And Gary phoned and says, “[*Throat clearing noises*] Oh Dave – Dave, you know I can’t make it tonight.” And I actually said to him – and you can edit this as well, okay, and I’m sure you will – I actually said, “For fuck’s sake, Gary, everybody’s going to be down here waiting for us! All you got to do tonight – I don’t give a fuck if you don’t do it [the play] – come down here – just show up and do the reading or else I’m going to look like a complete asshole. I told everybody you’re going to come down here.” And I laid it on really thick with him, all this stuff. I said, “Get there!” I was just so pissed. He says, “Okay, I’ll be there.” And he showed up to do the reading and he had a great time. We had a laugh doing the pirate play and he’s never looked back since. (2004)

Gary’s own version includes a bit of skulduggery on Dave’s part, since Dave neglected to tell him that just showing up for a reading meant that you were in the play:

GM: He managed to say, “Well, just come down and we’ll just read it.” However, I didn’t realize that that meant you were in there.

JGJ: You showed up, that was.

GM: That was it. Yeah, you showed up, you’re in. That was the audition. You came in the door – good, we’ll keep you. (2004)

While altruistic motivations, sweet-talkings, guilt-trips and promises of fun have lured many to test this play-form, only a handful have consistently stayed, hooked for reasons they have difficulty in explaining, as Gary Minnett describes:

I think people get involved for different reasons and maybe stay for different reasons than you thought. I really don't know what I expected when I went. I just – if it hadn't have been a pirate play, I don't think I'd have went to begin with. I've always – I mean, there's nothing more fun than pirates. So that was fun. And I knew Wayne Wark was in it and I went to school with Wayne and I knew Dave because I work with him – but that's kind of what gets you there, but I don't really know what keeps you there. There's something – there's something that I haven't even put my finger on yet that keeps you there. (2004)

Just what it is that perhaps keeps them playing will be continually explored as this Act progresses.

Finding his keepers, that is, his core Players, as the years have progressed, has allowed Roy Teed to develop and write characters with certain Players in mind, utilizing their characteristics and capabilities – slight-framed, Sheffield-born, scotch-sipping Dave Gunn's dead-pan, sardonic deliveries in his British brogue; six-foot-five Wayne Wark's larger-than-life presence with his booming, auctioneer's voice; the soft-spoken, eye-twinkling earnestness of the British-born, but BC-raised electrician, Pete Drewcock; the accents and goofiness of the natural-born mimic, the long, lanky and perpetually jovial Gary Minnett. Indeed, Roy admits to deliberately writing roles for specific people, “which makes it nice because they can step right into them and I know the actors capabilities and I can write the role, you know, specifically for their capabilities” (Teed 2004a). Wayne Wark observes: “That's one thing Roy admits to when he's writing a play – he writes it with some of us – like he writes it seeing us do the parts. And I don't know whether that's a cardinal sin or not, but I don't think he's supposed to do that, but he does” (2004). This envisioning of certain individuals for certain roles naturally moulds the characters themselves, aiding in their development, as Gary Minnett points out:

GM: Actually, when I took that little playwriting thing from him [Roy], I find when you're writing you have to put a face – well, I don't know if you have to, but it's so much easier if you can put a face to it, to a character. And then, when you don't get that person after – and if you know the person, of course you've put in what you know about them as you go, so when you don't get that person, then of course, the character all changes. Yeah Roy has actually – he's come right out and said, "I wrote this" – this one play we did, *Hotel Hysterium*, the hotelkeeper, a great part, he said, "Well, unfortunately," he said, "I wrote that for me."

JGJ: Takes the best part, eh?

GM: "Okay, I guess we won't get that one then."

JGJ: I guess that's the playwright's

GM: "Teacher's pet." And he's – I think every play he's written, he's written a lot of the characters with people in mind. But he's also – if, for whatever reason that person can't do that, it's never been, "Okay, we're not going to do that play." *Lace Drakes*, he had Pete as McDingus – he had envisioned Pete as McDingus the whole time. And then when we came to do the play – I don't remember why Pete didn't go that year – he wasn't in it at all, wasn't involved at all and I don't remember what the reason was. And two or three of us read the part and it was really kind of a toss up as to who got or didn't get it. I really don't know why I ended up with it as opposed to somebody else.¹³⁶ (2004)

Drawing upon this knowledge of his Players, gained from both inside and outside of the playing field, from knowing them as actors and everyday individuals, knowledge which necessarily shapes the play form and performance, puts Roy in an interesting position, as Pete Drewcock observes: "It's kind of a unique situation what Roy's in. He writes for a group of actors and he writes for a specific audience. And that's restricting for him and I feel sympathy for him in that respect" (2004). Although perhaps restrictive, it is not an entirely unique situation. Attending a play performance in Copenhagen, which included

¹³⁶ I would assume that Gary got it because he does the best Scottish accent, honed since elementary school when he was known and caught for mocking the Scottish principal. As he says, "That was back in the days when they could actually hit you."

an interview with William Shakespeare, I was struck by the bard's discussion of just how much his characters were shaped by his actors, by his knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses (*Green-Eyed* 2005). Indeed, it is commonly acknowledged amongst Shakespearian academics that Shakespeare's clown/fool roles changed markedly with the departure of William Kempe from the Chamberlain's Men in 1599 and the introduction of his replacement, Robert Armin, in 1600. Different actors required different role characterizations.

Although writing with specific people in mind, Roy does not write material that is so esoteric to a certain Player that it cannot be played by another. In "Roy" plays, there are no scripted para-play pointers, no comic lines that are contingent upon personal knowledge of that Player outside of the playground to be understood; although, in enactment, many are certainly adlibbed into existence and read into the play by the audiences. As already mentioned, characters are written with characterizations and capabilities of certain Players in mind. Requiring a big, dumb galoot of a character, he utilizes the booming stage presence of the giant, Cariboo-born Wayne Wark. Needing a mischief-making knave to play off the big, dumb galoot, he uses little Dave Gunn, countering the "Frontier Canadian" language of Wayne with Dave's "proper" British. He finds a straight-man in the earnest, slight-framed Pete Drewcock and a goof or a fool with the mocking, malleable, native Caribooite, Gary Minnett. In this sense, Roy does play off the *real* identities of his Players. Although, in recent years, as the stalwart Players have increasingly retired from active play and Roy has been redoing older plays with

completely different Players from the original,¹³⁷ the idea that characters were and are so tied to certain Players' personal characteristics and capabilities does not hold. Pete Drewcock observes: "In his head, he [Roy] doesn't write for those specific people anymore, because I think he doesn't really know who he's going to get anymore" (2004). Despite the fact that characters are not necessarily contingent upon certain Players to realize them, in realization, in enactment, in performance, the Players continue to bring to the characters and the plays bits of their *real* selves and lives.

In an interview with Kathie Ardell Prentice, a native Kersleyite and original Kersley Player, she astutely discusses the mosaic of "little bits" – the very physical, tangible markers of an identity and life outside this play realm, as the Players' everyday objects find their way into sets for "Roy" plays:

KP: Yeah, and I remember my neighbour saying to me after, "Well, you guys had *real* furniture and everything." Well, my chesterfield and loveseat – or was it my chair and loveseat; I can't remember what I had – and my velvet pillows and I had a round antique mirror and I had a Boston fern stand I actually bought at a garage sale in Wells. And those were at least three pieces that were in the play and possibly that little round coffee table. And the big joke was that most of my living room furniture was in the play. And then other pieces that other people brought. I think she felt they were just going to have more of a – I don't know really what she thought; maybe cardboard furniture, you know, the odd chair, the odd table – but, you know, it was actually – it was really well done up. And from there, Roy's plays have always been really well done up. But the scene was like a sitting room slash living room of a real well-to-do home and, you know, with the butler bell, the whole nine yards. And I think when the curtains pulled, I remember hearing [*gasps of astonishment*], you know, kind of "Ah's." And the neighbour lady said to me, "I never thought that it would be made up so nice." And from there, it's just grown.

¹³⁷ Since my fieldwork from 2002-2004, both Pete Drewcock and Wayne Wark have been out of active service with the Players; their last play being the 2003 production of *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*. In 2005 and again in 2006, Roy resurrected two plays from years past, namely, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* and *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*.

JGJ: Well, I think that's something that I've always noticed in the plays. You have a sense of everyone else, where they're coming from. In the plays I've watched – old images and pictures – and that's like a picture off our wall, you know. Those are clipboards and gumboots from the mill. I mean, you can sort of see where people have brought in whatever.

KP: Little bits.

JGJ: Their little bits of their other lives. You're bringing in bits of your home, bits of your workplace.

KP: "Gee, isn't that our pillows? This picture looks familiar." Everybody always just contributed a little bit. It was always just so much fun. In – was it *Lace Drakes*? Yeah – I loaned some camo clothes and camo paint from – a few things I had picked up from the boys – but Paul Nichols. He was in the armed forces and he had some army clothing and I used some of it. So it was kind of great. Everybody just brought a little bit of everything. (2006)

Players bring to the performances not just their physical size, their accents, their acting skills, but also their costumes, their couches, their clipboards, their camo gear. The sets of the Kersley Players are constructed by the Players and decorated by the Players. They creatively utilize their everyday handiwork skills – skills gained from repairing pumps, building houses, sewing clothes, painting houses, wiring lights – to physically construct a playground. Gary Minnett asserts that this hands-on creativity and the resulting cooperation of "little bits" is an integral part of being a Kersley Player:

JGJ: I've actually noticed over the years – I don't know, I guess I'm also a little bit interested in the amount that – I mean, you guys aren't professional actors. You know, I mean this is not your – so you're bringing a lot of your own skills from like – like I've noticed in the plays, there's been Cariboo Pulp props.

GM: Yeah. Well, there's been a few people from Cariboo Pulp in those plays. Yeah, and I think when you see some theatre companies – Williams Lake do two or three plays a year and they have a stage crew. They have had the same guy doing lights and sound forever. They've had the same group of people that come. We are the stage builders. They come and build a stage. We go down there and they say – one of these stage guys will

come up and say, “We have all these props. We’ve got this here and this here and if you need anything let us know but just don’t take it, just ask,” blah, blah, blah. You know, we go down there and we do a play and we go, “Okay, we need a set. Okay, who’s got some lumber? Who’s got – who can get some plywood? Who can we coerce out of some 2x4’s?” And I really kind of like that. At first, I thought, “Yeah, that’d be nice if somebody else did all the work of building,” but I think that’s part of the Kersley Players. But that – take the *Bannock Muldoon* play we did, we did that whole play for – Roy’ll give you the exact number – but I think it was something like \$685. Everything. That was the whole. And that was only because we had to build new flats for the walls this year, because ours were – had so much paint and wallpaper and had been knocked apart so many times that we just finally junked them. And then we go to Williams Lake. We did that play down there and we’re talking to them and they were raving because they had only spent \$7000 this year putting their play on. We went, “We haven’t spent that since 1991!”

JGJ: Ever!

GM: Ever! All tolled! So that kind of brings out everybody’s creative side and I – we’ve probably had some sets that were fairly cheesy, but we’ve had some decent sets too.

JGJ: No, I think that – you know, it’s kind of interesting – you know, even down in the sound stage where you guys practice, Roy was showing me the lights that Pete was wiring. I’m like, “I guess it’s good to have an electrician around.”

GM: Yeah, that’s why we’ve got Pete.

JGJ: So, you pick up an electrician. We’ve got a millwright. We’ve got a.

GM: Yup, Paul is a carpenter. He’s not working as a carpenter, but is a carpenter by trade, so he’s very handy.

JGJ: So part of the recruitment is how handy they are.

GM: “So, what do you do for work?”

JGJ: “Excellent.”

GM: “Excellent. A carpet layer? We don’t have one of those. Can you do a French accent?” (2004)

As much as Roy hates a contextual contrast of identities, as play characters are juxtaposed with real-life roles, the contrast is constructed into the very sets themselves, along with all their props. The sets and props stand as markers to lives outside the play realm and, for an audience intimate with its Players, these “little bits” are duly read and interpreted, as Scene 3 investigates.

Positioning the Parrot & Peeing in the Pumpkin: Communitas & the Practical Playground Vernacular of the Performative Process

In which the common factors of the Players as a folk group are explored – factors shared through the performance process, as they move from rehearsals to warm-ups to public showings to cool-downs and back to regular, non-liminal life.

In his analysis of play and its dynamics, Johan Huizinga observed that

A play-community generally tends to become permanent even after the game is over. Of course, not every game of marbles or every bridge-party leads to the founding of a club. But the feeling of being “apart together” in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game. (1950, 12)

Playing and performing within liminal playgrounds and betwixt-and-between frames, people make connections, building relationships and constructing communities. And these play connections, these liminal networks, continue to be present – although certainly less intensely and intensively – after the play is over and *real* life has been reinstituted. For Victor Turner, this liminal community and betwixt-and-between camaraderie is *communitas*, with its intense feelings of togetherness and interpersonal connection. The intensity of putting together a performance, a play, as with the Kersley Players, establishes bonds of *communitas* – bonds which are always felt despite the passage of years and plays, as Wayne Wark points out:

They’re definitely friends. They’re not somebody that you go and visit, you know, but you certainly don’t walk past them and not say hello and

chat a little bit about whatever. When you spend as much time together as we do when we do a play, it's kind of nice and refreshing to get away too for awhile, 'cause you're not there – you're friends, but you're there working as well... You never ever forget like every single person that's ever been in a play. You meet one another and you definitely have a chat about what they're doing and that sort of thing. I'm talking to people that were only there for one play or two plays ten years ago. You still – you run into them and you visit with them. So yeah, there's friendship. (2004)

Given the friendships created and/or complemented¹³⁸ through play, the Kersley Players are a folk group with all the esoteric knowledge that comes with such intimate connections. They have their own anecdotes, histories, ways of doing, superstitions, mascots, practical jokes, hierarchies; in short, their common factors. This section is an examination of the Players as *communitas*, as a folk group and ensemble, following them through the performance process, from the practical jokes of practices to the beer-swilling warm-ups to post-performance depressions.

With little to no theatrical experience or training, the Kersley Players began meeting weekly at the Kersley Hall through the early winter of 1987 to prepare themselves for performance. Rehearsals now are typically three hours in length, three to four times a week, for two months. These play practices, as they are often referred to, were extended social affairs, full of beers, laughter, memorizing lines, constructing sets, snacks, enacting scenes and kids running around (see fig. 4.4-4.5). Debbie Grimm recalls: “I think a lot of times, you¹³⁹ kids came down while we were practicing and stuff...Everything we did in those days – we played broomball or whatever, the kids all

¹³⁸ Since everyone is in everything, most Players – at least as was the case initially – are not meeting for the first time in the playground, but are friendly with one another in a myriad of other networks, whether work, community, church, family, school, etc...

¹³⁹ “You” is being used here since the interviewer, which is to say, me, was one of those kids running around the hall.

came. I mean, that's just the way things were. We never got babysitters. We took you with us" (Grimm and Grimm 2004). Indeed, it was not uncommon in the early days of the Players to have practices with kids and dogs in tow. Sociality was the focus, fun the goal, as Dave Gunn observes: "We're not in a great metropolis in Kersley. And that was really our very nice social evenings, not the performances. It filled in a lot of our wintertimes... We had great times. The practices were brilliant. We had so many laughs. It was our recreation for a lot of years that we would be there, have lots of fun and put on a show" (2004). The play practices, themselves, are the point, since they are "treat[ed]... as your night out" (Zacharias 2006), during which one "met some great people and had a lot of fun and a lot of laughs; drank a lot of beer" (Drewcock 2004). Yet, as the Players become more involved in Theatre BC, learning more and more about how *real* theatre is supposed to operate, the rehearsing dynamics changed, as Wayne Wark notes:

When we first got started, it was, it was a lot more laidback and – and it was a more enjoyable time to go to the practices. In the last five-six years, it's got more serious, like the acting has got more serious, Roy as a director has got more serious, and I find the fun has tapered off. And now it's coming back again. He tried the serious, you know, heavy-fisted type of system and it didn't really work because we're all there for the same thing – we're all there to have a good time and so it's coming back now. (2004)

The professionalized seriousness and its consequences will be explored in Scene 3, but suffice it to say that the fun, free space of play practices was increasingly controlled by Roy Teed and his demands for professionalization, which meant try-outs to see if one was good enough to be a potential Player, soberness and seriousness.

Participating in initiatory play practices in February and March 2004 for *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*, I found the rehearsals to be full of joking, ribbing

and jibes, especially directed towards the new theatre troupe in town, the Kersley Musical Theatre. Complaints over the KMT's free usage of the Players' lights, along with their coattail riding of the Players' reputation and their cash overflow, coloured the conversations. Elodieanne Browning, who was a Player virgin and had just been involved in the Kersley Musical Theatre's recent production, claimed that she'd been in the wrong play for two months; thought she'd been heading for Player auditions and ended up in a musical. And on it went. Scripts were read and Gary Minnett decided that he would like to play the assistant, Hubert, with an "East Indian" accent, which had Roy rewriting lines to reflect this new slant. I was continually prodded to actively participate and ended up reading lines for Dr. Broom. Playing the rat-petting Gumbelle, Deleenia Lovell expressed concerns about touching a rodent, since she hates rats. Roy responded that "You're not *you* on the stage, you're Gumbelle!" There then ensued a lively discussion about where to find real rats, with Gary Minnett suggesting that he could trap some at work (Cariboo Pulp and Paper) and Wayne Wark suggested that muskrat could be a nice substitute, and they could freeze them and pull them out for every performance.

The ongoing teasing and jesting and making fun and having fun at the practices often culminate in practical jokes at the dress rehearsals. The Kersley Players' mascot, a plush toy parrot (see fig. 4.2-4.3), which finds its way onto every set for every performance, started as a dress rehearsal joke, as Gary Minnett explains:

GM: We have had the parrot since the first play I was in, *The Pickled Pigeon*. And then the next year, when we did *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants*, I think we had – we had a very sparse set in that, 'cause – actually I don't know why. Roy decided that we didn't need such an elaborate set and with a tree or something – I think it was a tree in the corner. And as a joke, somebody stuck the parrot in it at dress rehearsal and it ended up staying there the entire play. And we had quite a few people ask about it,

and then after that, it just kind of became a repet – it’s been in every play. It’s somewhere onstage all the time. It’s a kind of a mascot, I guess.

JGJ: Well, it came from the pirate play, which everyone really liked.

GM: Yeah, exactly. It be pirates, we had to keep it [*said in pirate voice*]. (2004)

Some of the dress rehearsal jokes are now legendary, especially the two involving flashing males. In both *The Dinner Party* and *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, flashing is an integral component of the plays and, knowing this, the Players performing the flashings decided to surprise their fellow Players with rather elaborate, strapped-on dildos. Rod and Debbie Grimm discuss the flashing incident from *The Dinner Party*:

JGJ: I think you, Uncle Rod, you were a flasher, weren’t you?

RG: Yeah. He [Dr. Hector Dexter] was a flasher...

JGJ: And didn’t like Grandma make you a?

DG: Yeah, a thing to go on. Although, nobody knew about it. I don’t even think I knew about it, did I?

RG: Nope.

DG: No, I didn’t even know about it because you’d flashed Kathie and me and somebody else...

DG: Anyways, whoever

RG: Whoever was there.

DG: He flashed us and all of sudden this thing was there and then he started – we all kind of went “Aaahhh!” and he started laughing and going doink, doink, doink, doink [*indicating the bouncing of the strapped on dildo*]. Of course, Grandma made it and it looked like a cigarette because she put [RG: It got your attention.] a big red thing on the end and I thought, “What’s that?!” But anyways, it was kind of like a cigarette, [JGJ: Like a rocket.] like a lit cigarette. (2004)

While Rod Grimm utilized his mother's sewing skills to construct his practical joke, in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, Dave Gunn "borrowed" some implements from his workplace, Cariboo Pulp and Paper, in order to construct an alarming "horse cock:"

DG: I forget which one of the Buggers' plays it was, but I was the private detective, and at the pulpmill, we have oil spills around, reservoirs or what have you, so we have to clear up the oil. And we have these long like sausage type things, about this long [*indicating*], about this diameter [*indicating*], very absorbent, and we just put them along the sides of like this table or what have you. Anything's leaking out, it's going to get soaked up. And we're in this play where everybody's flashing – Christ, I forget the play, what it was – and I'm Buggers, I'm a private detective, and I've got a big raincoat on, and it's my job at the end, just like all of these typical private detective shows where they say "I've figured out everything" and what have you and blah, blah, blah. And I had this thing rigged up, when it was hanging down right past my knees there with some twine and I had some fishing line down the arms. Nobody – nobody knew. I did this in practice right. And everybody had been flashing 'cause this is one of Roy's flashing plays. [*Telephone ringing*] And it's my job to do the flashing. The whole cast is around. There's seven or eight of us and we've been flashing all over the place. Like I said, I can't remember what it was. And this was my idea. And I got this what we call, you know, horse cocks – that was the typical name for them, right. So, I've got it strapped around my waist and down there, and then nobody knew this was happening. And I stood there and said, "I'll tell you what's wrong. And you Harry" and blah, blah, blah and hmm, hmm, hmm, hmm and then I flashed everybody. And this fishing cord that I got there, when I opened my arms, made this go [*laughing all around whilst indicating erection with arm*] No really. This is just a little history about the Kersley Players. And I came like that and it came whuumph. And Maz Holbrook was in there and Maz goes, "Ahh!" [*womanly scream*] And then she jumped down, she grabbed a hold of it and she bit the end off it and there was – sawdust went all over the place out of this. It was absolutely hilarious. It was just like a practice. It was my joke, right. And it was absolutely hilarious. I mean, we had such a laugh about that. I was the flasher there. That was the flashing play. You'll fit that in somewhere.

JGJ: I will. (2004)

Safe within the play realm, flashing friends, family and fellow Players – revealing male anatomy (however unreal and exaggerated) – is not deemed improper. A woman turning

the joke on Dave by her aggressively sexual reaction and emasculating chomp is merely funny, not untoward. Such play fits with the farcical play's content and the nature of rehearsals, as Richard Bauman points out: "Performance rests on an assumption of accountability to an audience for an artistic display, subject to evaluation – performance counts. Rehearsals, however, represent a different framing of enactment; they are doings that explicitly do not count" (1996, 310).

While the practical jokes tend to be confined to *unaccountable* dress rehearsals, joking and jibing continue through performance warm-ups, as well as backstage during performances. Ready for performances, the Players congregate across the parking lot from the hall in the arena. Utilizing former fire hall rooms, they repeat lines, discuss tricky scenes, get changed, put on make-up, drink beer and nervously joke (see fig. 4.6-4.8). Judy Arnoldus, former Player stagehand, remembers the social-drinking, pre-performance warm-ups: "Oh, we used to – you know, we'd have a few beers while we're getting ready. I mean it wasn't to the point where everybody's fall-down drunk off the stage and everything. It was never like that. It was more, just like I said, a social thing" (2004). As I watched the preparations for the May 1, 2003 performance of *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*, Wayne Wark joked about how "if it wasn't for makeup, I wouldn't even do this," to which Gary Minnett quipped something about wearing women's underwear. They all joked about their *unreadiness* – the fact that they never peak too early. Roy Teed was making fresh biscuits, props for the play. All were drinking, chatting, snacking, breathing deeply and trying to calm nerves. Dave Gunn recalls opening night for one of the early plays:

When we were very nervously waiting opening night and everybody was at the hall, well fed and watered, in good moods, we were upstairs at the fire hall getting ready to put on a show, going through our lines, practicing, rehearsing. And I believe it must have been very close to the first night when we opened it. I was just trying to lighten the atmosphere was all. And as we walked out of the fire hall to go over to the Kersley Hall to put on the show, I started singing, "Overture, turn the lights, this is it, the night of nights. No more rehearsing or nursing a part, we know every part by heart. Overture, turn the lights, this is it, we'll hit the heights and oh what heights we'll hit. On with the show, this is it!" And we all trooped across with me in the front singing the old Bugs Bunny song, right. But it loosened us all up and we got in there. (2004)

Keeping loose through performances is often maintained by backstage joking and onstage drinking, as Pete Drewcock smilingly notes: "I think we're one of the only theatre groups that when we open a beer onstage it really is a beer, you know" (2004). Nearly every role that Dave Gunn ever played had a hipflask, which was filled with real scotch, and openly swigged of onstage. Behind-the-scenes for *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*, Anna Arnett, the stage manager, also had a little hipflask of rum, which was passed around liberally. Waiting in the green room for entrances, the Players continued their joking, discussing how they could change lines, but how Roy would "kill" them if they did so, since this now was an accountable performance. The females and males bantered flirtatiously, just as their characters do in the play itself; one female actually sitting on the lap of one of the males. Her husband was in the audience that night, so there was teasing talk about how, in one particular scene, where her bosoms are in play, a male Player was "going in."

The teasing was not all talk, though. Gary Minnett actually twisted Stuart Graham's toes during the performance and, considering that Stuart was playing a dead man, it took everything Stuart had not to start moving and laughing. In *The Dinner Party*,

the adlibber extraordinaire, Jack Grant, whose capacity *not* to remember lines is renowned amongst the Players, as well as his ability to hide bits of paper with lines all over the set, purposefully threw off a female Player, Kathie Ardell Prentice, with his unrehearsed bit of acting. She remembers:

Actually, your dad, in the first play, he knew – I believe he thought I was quite shy, 'cause I was, and it was kind of – it wasn't part of the play. He adlibbed. He happened to have a used car salesman business card and I think because he knew he'd get a stunned look on my face and then maybe I'd turn red – and he actually just dropped the business card down the front of my dress in the play. It wasn't written in, but he did it. And I guess the look on my face was pure terror, 'cause I was thinking probably, "He's not going to go retrieve that card, is he?!"...Your dad did his best to make me blush. And he did. (2006)

While some of the playing with the play is for Players' eyes only – like the garter belt attire of Wayne Wark as Basil Calhoun in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, which serves no spectator purpose since no audience member sees inside his coat when he flashes (see fig. 4.9), or the backstage prank in *Strangers on a Glade* of pouring very *cold* water over Deleenia Lovell, who was expecting at least lukewarm water as had been repeatedly rehearsed – there are play script breakages which are very public.

Indeed, lines are changed and forgotten and skipped and looping has been known to occur, where Players repeat the same dialogue over and over again. Players have been known to start laughing at the play itself and the scenes before them. Backstage prompts have been heard by the audience. A Player even made the impromptu decision one time to jump off the stage to retrieve his hat. Another fell down the onstage stairs. One celebrated and fondly remembered frame breakage was when Wayne Wark, as the pirate, Captain Jack Strathbungo, roared onstage something to the effect, "Har! The Captain forgot his line!" or "By God, I think I forgot my line!" as it is variously recalled. Another

memorable mishap occurred in *Lace Drakes*, when Dave Gunn ended up onstage with his boobs on backwards:

And this one time – I had a couple of quick moves to make and I had my boobs on backwards when I put on my bra and I went onstage and I knew that something was wrong. So, I had to play the whole act backwards to the audience and looking over my shoulder. I’m proud of it, because I put my bra on backwards. I think Roy comments about this that I went out saying, “My boobs are wrong! My boobs are wrong!” And they say, “Get out! Get out! Get out!” ’Cause the timing has got to be there. So basically, I had to be booted out there and then I just had to play it all backwards. (2004)

Apparently common to folk drama, such frame breakages – so beloved of audience members – disrupt any dramatic illusion, always pointing to the artifice of this play-form itself, and are a very enjoyable part of the performative process. Although, as the Players turned “professional” or “sophisticated,” with “real” theatre and its dramatic illusion as the goal, such breakages, whether intentional or unintentional, have been increasingly stitched up, filled in and ironed out. Again, these are points to be discussed in greater detail as this Act progresses.

In essence, the Players’ public performances have been very much punctuated with pauses and gaffs and improvisations, just as their backstage performances and practice proto-performances have been based on sociality, drinking and joking. The effects of this proto-performative sociality and warming up/backstage drinking combine into a now legendary emic tale involving a pumpkin as a behind-the-scenes, portable potty. Dave Gunn recounts the story:

Those first performances, we did not have any washroom facilities at all back there. And we’d all had a few beers up in the fire hall, right...And there was no way we could interrupt the show to go out there. And there’s this pumpkin, right. I mean, I did not witness this; I only heard about it. And the ladies had to relieve themselves in the pumpkin in the little green

room, which was little. It was no bigger than a small wardrobe. And that was in the early years of the Kersley Players when we did that. And then we did improve from there actually. (2004)

In one performance of *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*, Lester Pettyjohn, who played Buster, had to urinate so badly that he stood onstage for the final applause with his legs crossed – a fact that was noted, joked about and remembered by many people. While certainly not a part of the scripted play itself, this cross-legged bowing at the end of the play was still deemed something of a clowning performance. Indeed, this immediate post-play performance, as actors stand onstage for audience applause, is an interesting interstitial performative phase, as Players begin the process of re-entering “real” life.

Immediately after the final scripted words are spoken and the lights go down (the curtain is rarely drawn), the lights quickly go back up, as Players stream onstage for the conclusive ovation. Yet, it is more than just a final applause. One Player always steps forward, hushes the crowd and begins an introduction of the Players – the onstage performers and the backstage crew. Typically, the Player performing this emcee role is one of the longstanding males, usually Wayne Wark or Gary Minnett, although in the first play, the leading man, Bill Atkinson, did it and Roy Teed, himself, has been known to do it on occasion. Players are introduced, flowers are given to the women and a kind of meta-performative joking is participated in. During this interstitial performance with *The Dinner Party*, Bill Atkinson awards a shy Roy Teed with a box of floppy disks, so that he could “carry on producing for us fine, fun, feisty, little farces” (1987). Following the performance of *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, Wayne Wark steps forward to state that there is “a *real* play” after the intermission (1994). After the “real” play, *Strangers on a Glade*, concludes, all Players return to the stage. Pete Drewcock,

director of *Strangers on a Glade*, praises Deleenia Lovell and Patti Whitford, saying, “They just seemed to want to do everything that I wanted them to do” (1994), which is met with much hooting and suggestive hollering from the audience. After Steve Koning, the director of *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, says his little spiel and flowers are passed to the women, Wayne Wark takes over, joking about how next year maybe they will learn their lines, to which Gary Minnett pipes up, “There’s a novel idea” (1994). In the interstitial meta-performance following a performance of *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogriker*, Gary Minnett steps forward, introducing the cast, calling the female-clad Larry Foreman, Forewoman. He asks about how dinner was, saying how they now get to eat. And then he slips into his East Indian accent and, quoting a repetitive line from the play, tells the audience to “please be buggered off” (2004). Following a performance of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*, the gendered confusion surrounding one of the Players is played with even more as Chris Helmink, a male performing a female role in that production, is introduced as “Mr., Mrs., Ms.” (2000). With the 1993 production of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, the “har-ing” cast is prevented from leaving the stage by “the boss taking over” (1993) as Wayne Wark quips, when Roy Teed steps onstage and calls for the pirates to return. Along with the other pirates, Gary Minnett returns to the stage retorting, “We didn’t mean to forget those lines” (1993). The women are then called onstage and along with them comes the female-clad Pete Drewcock. Buggers, a.k.a. Dave Gunn is still missing from the stage, and when Roy queries, “Where’s Buggers?” Dave yells offstage that he’s looking for his “bleeding hat!” A complicated passing out of flowers to the women ensues, since Roy claims that he can no longer hug and pass out flowers seeing as he is now married, although Pete

Drewcock, in his purple dress, does try to plant a kiss on him. Patti Whitford jumps into Wayne Wark's arms, as he yells, "Harmony!" – her character name from the production. Dave Gunn tries to give the dress-clad Pete Drewcock a flower. And Wayne Wark eventually hushes the applause once more, thanking the audience for supporting them, and saying that they'll "be down front here so you can throw stuff at us" (1993). Indeed, the post-play interstitial phase is also marked by the intermingling of stage and audience.

Seeing as the Players' dressing rooms are in a completely other building and that backstage space is limited, there is really no opportunity for the Players to hide away initially after a performance. They come down off the stage, in costume, to converse with their audience, which is comprised of friends, workmates, relations, neighbours, acquaintances, etc (see fig. 4.10). In early days, it was not uncommon to actually have audience members go onstage. After a performance of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*, many of the Players simply sat on the edge of the stage (rather symbolic perhaps, with feet dangling in the "real" world), as audience members flocked up to meet and greet them (2000). For the May 1, 2003 performance of *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*, a drama class from one of the local highschools, had a question-and-answer period with the Players. While most interaction is certainly not so formalized, the very fact of the interaction and intermingling is interesting. Schechner remarks that "[t]his transition between the show and the show-is-over is an often overlooked but extremely interesting and important phase. If warm-ups prepare people for the leap into performance, cooldown ushers them back to daily life" (2002, 211). He continues, "The cooldown is a bridge, an in-between phase, leading from the focused activity of the performance to the more open and diffuse experiences of everyday life" (2002, 211). A

bridge back into the Players' everyday lives, kids can suddenly run onstage, pictures are taken, drinks are offered, plates of food are prepared, hands are shaken and the Players eat and drink in the hall before heading home to family and another day of work.

Following months of proto-performative practices and a run of three to five public performances with their warm-ups and cool-downs, the final performance and its final cool-down can lead to a decided letdown. Wanda Zacharias explains:

We were never really totally – totally ready until we performed our first performance and after all the performances were done, there was a letdown. Oh, for sure, 'cause you've been working for two months getting this ready, right. And it is a commitment. And you're not getting paid for it, right. So you're putting in the time and the effort just to have some fun and treat it as your night out which, when you look at the last two weeks, it's going to be a lot, right. And then, all of a sudden, it's over with and there's this letdown. Just like you, well – "How come I feel like I've lost something?" And it was always when it was right at the end too, where you really, *really* knew the play. "Well, let's get going with it now," and it was all over with. (2006)

Ironically, just as the performative flow, with its highs and lows – as the Players feed off of their audience's responses – really gets into high gear, it all ends and the Players can be left with withdrawal pains and a profound sense of loss. If nothing else, this feeling of loss testifies to the liminal nature of the play, to the fact that this is a bounded playground, outside of "real" life and governed by its own play rules. Dave Gunn discusses the depression that can follow the final curtain call, as one is simply thrust back into blah, workaday existence after all the performative, out-of-life excitement and fun:

DG: The interesting thing about finishing a play, actually, is you put so much effort into it for so many weeks, sometimes months, that you're totally depressed after it. It's like a wake – something's gone. It's out of your life what you've been totally immersed in for several weeks. Now, hey, you're just now going to work. "What am I going to do tonight?" There's no practice on. Nothing's happening. And it really is. And we were told that after every production, you should have a wake, have a big

party and all recognize that this is it, it's all over. And Gary Minnett just told me that after that last production of his, *Wagon Wheels West* [Kersley Musical Theatre production for 2004], and he said they were really depressed after that because they put so much effort into that production that they – it knocked it out of them. And imagine what it did to the kids as well. That's probably worth considering. Put enough consideration into that right now that we've got 5,6,7 year old kids who have been totally immersed, totally out of their lives, spending way longer daylight hours out late, and they actually get some of the lee-way from school apparently, that they didn't have to go to school. And when it all finishes, kids are back to being kids and doing what they want to do after this totally exciting time.

JGJ: Well, it's like a space out of time somehow, and then to be thrust back into your regular life.

DG: Yeah and it is – you're supposed to have – well, it's suggested that you have what would be considered a wake. Get rid of it. But that's easy enough to say, not very easy to do. And it is a depressing time after every performance that you put on. (2004)

While a formal acknowledgement of the end would apparently aid in the post-play, grieving process, it is rather difficult to schedule such a wake, since, at the same time, performers have had “it knocked out of them” (Gunn 2004). Roy once described the performative process as a grenade that explodes, scattering bits of shrapnel, which coalesce eight months later to form a new explosive performance. Truly, by the end, Players are exhausted from the performative process and the intensity of *communitas* relations, as Wayne Wark notes: “When you spend as much time together as we do when we do a play, it's kind of nice and refreshing to get away too for awhile” (2004). Any attempts at having such wrap-up parties or wakes have never really worked. Just as Roy Teed refills his creative well through doing other things than writing, the Players renew their capacity to perform by doing other things than performing “Roy” plays all the time. Yet, like gluttons for punishment or moths to a flame, many Players return year after year

because, despite the hard work and exhaustion, the collective performative process and the communitas relations are ultimately fun: “Actually the plays – the people that are in the plays make it fun. Our group makes it fun, ’cause it’s hard work, very hard work, and the group makes it work” (Wark 2004).



Fig. 4.2. Shelves of stuff in Studio P. Notice the parrot on the top shelf.



Fig. 4.3. From his lofty perch, the parrot observes the 2008 Kersley Player production, *The Good Game*. Photo by Annie Gallant. Source: *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, <http://gallery.pictopia.com/quesnel/gallery/42068/photo/quesnel:4296029/?o=2> (accessed September 20, 2009).



Fig. 4.4. Play practice for *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* (1991) in the Kersley Hall. Notice the dog under the table, the beers on the table and the set walls leaning against the hall walls. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.5. Judy Arnoldus and Nick Verbenkov constructing a rock for the set of *Strangers on a Glade* (1994). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.6. Warm-up for *An Evening With Myron* (2002), with a table full of chips, crackers and beer, over in an arena room. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.7. Dave Gunn getting ready for his portrayal of Pericles Mavenbrook in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* (1994). Notice that flat of beer. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.8. Pre-performance making up of Pete Drewcock by Bobbi Grant for *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* (1991). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.9. Wayne Wark's for-Players'-pleasure-only, undercoat attire as Basil Calhoun in *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* (1991). Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, who portrayed the pregnant Kimberley Hurliburton, stands to the right. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.10. Deleenia Lovell, in full costume, mingling with audience members after a performance of *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* (2004). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

‘At Least It Keeps You Thinking’: Personal Transportations & Transformations
In which I investigate the ever-elusive why – why the Players play and why this role-playing play-form in particular – attempting to find out the meaningfulness of this playground in their lives.

People play – that much this thesis has hopefully hammered home already. It is an essential part of our human species. Year after year, Players show up to perform “Roy” plays in the Kersley Community Hall. They cross-dress, put on makeup, wear wigs, blow up balloons for breasts, talk with lisps, walk with limps, sport humps, drink beer, speak unpronounceable words, laugh and laugh. They call it fun and say they are doing it for a good cause and benefiting the community, but there is more to it than that. Indeed, “[t]here’s something – there’s something that I haven’t even put my finger on yet that keeps you there” (Minnett 2004). Something *more* is being created in this playground. The fun becomes deeply meaningful and the altruistic aims are countered by personal gains. As already explored earlier, in play, people can create powerful identities, which can carry over into the *real* world – the play of playgrounds having real-life repercussions. One’s real-life status and standing can be affected by one’s play, as Geertz’s analysis of Balinese cockfighting illustrates. Jack Grant, a Kersley community member and former Kersley Player, recognizes this status-granting power of play and astutely observes: “I mean, there’s some sort of status thing with being in the Kersley Players” (2002). He continues his observation of the Players:

JG: I can see they’ve actually grown as individuals as a result of that [involvement with the Kersley Players]. And it’s been good.

JGJ: In what way have they grown – like what about?

JG: As individuals, they’re able to, you know, sort of stand out in the community, stand out in the crowd, in the workplace. You know, they’re able to speak up and it does develop talents. Just being able to participate

in something like that develops your ability to express yourself and get ideas across to others. So yeah, it's definitely done well there. (2002)

This section is an investigation of how a role-playing play-form can lead to real-life role/status transformations and why playing with roles can be so alluring and meaningful, especially in the context of small communities. In short, I examine what this play-form *means* to the Players personally.

In his work on the performance process, Richard Schechner distinguishes between two types of performances: transformations and transportations. Transformations are “[l]iminal rituals [which] permanently change who people are” (Schechner 2002, 63), whereas transportations are “[l]iminoid¹⁴⁰ rituals [which] effect a temporary change – sometimes nothing more than a brief experience of spontaneous communitas or a several-hours-long performance of a role” (Schechner 2002, 63). He expounds:

I call performances where performers are changed “transformations” and those where performers are returned to their starting places “transportations” – “transportation,” because during the performance the performers are “taken somewhere” but at the end, often assisted by others, they are “cooled down” and reenter ordinary life just about where they went in. The performer goes from the “ordinary world” to the “performative world,” from one time/space reference to another, from one personality to one or more others. [S]He plays a character, battles demons, goes into trance, travels to the sky or under the sea or earth: [s]he is transformed, enabled to do things “in performance” [s]he cannot do ordinarily. But when the performance is over, or even as a final phase of the performance, [s]he returns to where [s]he started. Actually, the ways in through preparations and warm-ups and the ways out through cooling down are liminal, between the ordinary and the performative realms, serving as transitions from one to the other...I want to point out that if a change occurs within the performer, or in his [her] status, it happens only over a long series of performances, each of which moves the performer

¹⁴⁰ Schechner is using Victor Turner's term here, “liminoid,” to “describe types of symbolic action or leisure activity occurring in contemporary societies that serve a function similar to rituals in pre-modern or traditional societies. Generally speaking, liminoid activities are voluntary, while liminal activities are required” (Schechner 2002, 61).

slightly...Thus each separate performance is a transportation, ending about where it began, while a series of transportation performances can achieve a transformation. (1985, 125-26)

While role-playing transportation performances like those of the Kersley Players' are as equally betwixt-and-between as transformation performances, they do not change the Players, per se. They escape to a play realm and flirt with farcical taboos, but they return to real-life about where they started, not unlike the plots of "Roy" plays with their penchant for endings that put people back together again. These transportations, though, are psychically meaningful, despite the fact that they effect no long-lasting transformations. Not unlike the cathartic release inherent to the farcical form itself, the "Roy" play Players can escape from, vent over and, ultimately, make up with reality through their role-playing.

Discussing his favourite role, that of the schizophrenic Tooley from *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again*, Pete Drewcock comments on the fun of hiding oneself behind such outrageous roles and escaping reality:

It was – it was a rowdy play and the characters – my character, I guess, was not only a silly character in itself, but was – my character was being silly onstage, so I could easily hide behind that. And those kind of characters are fun to do, where you can – where you're completely a part from reality, away from reality, so you could pretty much do anything you want because – or say anything you want. I mean, you're not supposed to. You're supposed to stick to the script. (2004)

In the liminal playground, having temporarily taken on a completely *unreal* role or mask, Pete discovers a freeing pleasure in being unrestrainedly silly. So ridiculous, Tooley was a subversive character who tempted Pete to play with the scripted rules of the play-form itself. While real-life is full of social rules and familial responsibilities, things to be respected, taken seriously and ever mindful of, a character like Tooley or Mona – the

drunken barmaid from the same play, who is Deleenia Lovell's favourite role and is generally oblivious with "a bit of a forked tongue" (Lovell 2006) and who "just didn't take nothing from nobody" (Lovell 2006) – is decidedly liberating. Deleenia discusses this liberating, stress-relieving fall from reality that "Roy" play roles offer:

For me, I do very, *very* little for myself. So this is the few hours a week that you can go and you can just fall out of reality really, 'cause you're into these ludicrous scenarios that he's got drummed up, you know. So it's a relief – it's a form of – it's a stress relief for me. You know, a lot of people would say, "Oh, it would cause me so much stress." It's the exact opposite. When I come onstage, I take my glasses off. I can't see squat in front of me, so I don't see anybody out there. I come out and stumble through where I'm supposed to be. And then when you do this play and you have everyone laughing and the responses from the audience and the more they laugh, the more you feed off of them. And I just find that it's something I look forward to doing and it's definitely relieved stress in my life for the short time. (Lovell 2006)

As a mother and wife, who does everything for everyone else, whose life is organized around chauffeuring kids and making dinners and working so as to contribute financially to the household, Deleenia actually finds her own *self* in play. And not just in any play-form, but a role-playing one where she can play rude, oblivious, silly, selfish characters, who "take nothing from nobody," and are a decided contrast to her perpetually-giving, real-life ones. These sentiments are echoed by Mary Beningfield, who deems her involvement with the Kersley Players (and earlier, the Quesnel Little Theatre) as a lifesaver, a lifeline to her true identity and self, a welcome respite from these never-ending caregiver roles of mother and wife:

Oh, it was like a lifesaver. No, it really was. It was like a lifesaver. When you're a housewife and a mother, you feel, you know, "Well, is this *all* it's ever going to be for the rest of my life?" Since I was nine years old, I wanted to be an actress, and I gave up being an actress moving up here to raise a family. I gave up. I gave up being a traveller. I gave up being an actress. I gave up being Mary Westley. You do. When you get married,

you give up your true identity and self. You do. When you have children, you do. You have to almost. You almost have to, because you're so busy taking care of others. (Benningfield 2004)

Having sacrificed herself on the altar of societal expectations and cultural norms to be a “good” wife and a “good” mother and just take care of the men in her life, Mary’s role-playing play-form is ultimately a selfishly healthy outlet, since its liberating, liminal nature allows her to play with those very expectations, norms and everyday roles. And in that anti-structure of the playground, she finds release and can then re-enter her life, better psychically equipped to take up her motherly and wifely duties.

The importance of taking on multiple roles, of playing with and escaping into diverse roles, is especially salient as one considers the context of small communities. In his role analysis of communities, Michael Banton observes that

in small village societies people know one another as individuals and are dependent upon one another for social reputation. One person interacts with another on the basis of several different role relationships, giving rise to a tightly interlocking network of social ties. In the city, on the other hand, many kinds of social relationships are confined in separate compartments and the urbanite has scope to choose his [her] associates; there is much less chance that his [her] partner in one relationship will be his [her] partner in another. (1973, 47)

Given this “tightly interlocking network of social ties” so evident in small towns, people can be increasingly locked into roles, or should I say, *a* role. When everyone is in everything and everyone knows everyone, it is rather difficult to not be seen as or to be the same person whatever one’s role. One is as expected. Melvin Firestone calls this “role-transparency” and explains how it operates in small communities:

Small communities contain much “role-transparency.” That is, the inhabitants tend to have known the other members of the community from birth and are related to many, if not most of them. There, people are aware of how other people operate in all their roles – it is difficult to proceed in

any area of life without others being aware of your behaviour and how your behaviour relates to your actions in other areas. In contrast, in the city the problem of role-transparency is alleviated by distance. For instance, the people one works with are probably not known to one's relatives. It is, therefore, possible to behave in one manner in one relationship and in a somewhat contradictory manner in another relationship, and do this with some impunity. This is not so true in the small community where the individual is more constantly faced with the problem of the integrity of his [her] identity in the face of the community. What [s]he is to [her]himself is more a product of a single constructed community image (hence the prevalence of stereotypic nicknames in small communities) than the product of the reflection of various disparate "role-others." The people [s]he knows tend to all know each other. In the small community, group ritual often acts to alleviate role-transparency by providing a means for expressing the conflict and symbolically reconciling this situation. (1978, 101-2)

The symbolic reconciliatory group ritual, which Firestone analyzes, is mummering, with its masking of identities. Although the Players are never masked in the sense that their real identity is not visible, they do often feel that they are masked while they play, that they can escape reality and hide behind roles; in short, that they are *not* themselves nor their prescribed roles. Wayne Wark states: "When you're onstage, you're a totally different person than when you walk offstage" (2004). The liminal stage grants them a space to be different, to be foreign, to be alien, to go out of themselves, as Dave Gunn explains: "Typically, after I did a play, and when we are in a play, you go out of character. You have to go out of character to do a play. And I wasn't, as far as I'm concerned, Dave Gunn, the millwright, the millworker, what have you. I was – forget my name now – as a lady. Like I have to play that part" (2004). What becomes problematic, though, is that while the Players are in a performatively liminal state on their playfully bounded stage and are *out* of their regular selves, their audience-goers are merely watching the liminal realm from the normal reality, creating a kind of interstitial viewing

during which the Players are not *not* themselves, as play roles and real identities mesh, mingle, collide and confound. The final Scene of this Act explores this tension of identities.

Thus *unmasked*, the Players real-life roles and identities cannot help but be publicly affected by their playing. Their standing in the community can change. They can be transformed. Indeed, as Schechner observes, “a series of transportation performances can achieve a transformation” (1985, 126). Dave Gunn can become so synonymous with a play role that he is known *as* the character *in* the real world: “I know I’ve not been involved in it for a long time, but when we’re doing little theatre in Kersley, I go downtown and I see so many people, who I don’t really know, saying, ‘Oh, how’re you doing, Buggers?’” (2004). Jack Grant can *really* frighten people: “You know, my character as a mad scientist has been perpetrated through the years. I mean, I think all kids – I think kids that are adults now are still kind of scared of me because of my mad scientist role” (2002).¹⁴¹ More subtle, if not more significant, transformations occur within the transportation-performing Players themselves, as shyness and insecurities are lost, confidence gained and inexplicable inner growth the result. Kathie Ardell Prentice observes: “When I was doing plays fairly regularly, I could sort of see the difference, like I was sort of, kind of – I lost my shyness” (2006). Wanda Zacharias reflects: “Once you’ve been onstage and you’ve developed that – you grow, you grow with every play – and if you can make the people laugh, you want to do it more. I do miss it. I really do...It’s such a rewarding inner growth. I don’t even know how else to describe it. It’s

¹⁴¹ Having spoken to more than a few grown-up kids who are still wary of my father, I can attest to the veracity of this assessment.

something you got to experience” (2006). Pete Drewcock discerns: “Well, it’s definitely made me more comfortable in my own skin. I think that’s helped me work with people – learn how to work with people. It’s helped me understand myself a little bit better – my fears – and I think I’m more open now than I was” (2004).

Becoming more comfortable and confident in their own selves, many Players have, through play, abandoned fears to become more open to life and its possibilities. This kind of blossoming metamorphosis is perhaps best explained by Deleenia Lovell, who links her Kersley Player involvement with her transformation from an insecure girl into a self-confident woman:

You know, when I was involved in drama in high school, I was a nervous wreck. I was very naive and very scared, a very scared girl. And then life happens, and I was twenty-three – just about twenty-three – when my husband and I split up and we just had B--. It changed everything ‘cause then I had to go into the world. I had to get a job – a good job – to make a living for us, and I got involved with more people. And I was working at the community law centre: you work with so many different people from so many aspects and walks of life. So, I come out of myself, and then you get more and more secure and self-confident as you become older, as you become a woman. And I think being in the plays has helped a lot that way too, because you just – it gives you a confidence that, you know – especially when it’s a well-received play. (2006)

“Coming out” of themselves, Players reveal talents and skills long neglected by loads of laundry and the repacking of pumps, by work boots and P.T.A. meetings, as Pete Drewcock notes: “It’s very surprising actually to me when you see the talent in people who, you know, have been pumping your propane, or whatever, for years. And all of a sudden, you discover this wonderful hidden talent, you know. And it’s great to see that come out. It’s wonderful” (2004).

Reflecting on what his involvement with the Kersley Players has meant to him, the Cariboo Pulp & Paper millwright, Gary Minnett, states:

I think it makes anybody who does any kind of public speaking – I have no trouble public speaking. I do a lot of retirement stuff at the mill now. I know the thought of doing that ten years ago would have horrified me and now it's just – it just doesn't. There's really – it's like there's nothing to it. It just kind of comes. I think it gives you confidence with people. It's a very positive – I found it a very, very positive experience... We've met a lot of really good people. I can't think of anything negative that comes out on a personal level. A lot of time spent, but I don't think – learning lines probably improves your memory. I'm sure it does, 'cause it drives me crazy. At least it keeps you thinking. (Minnett 2004)

Given that millworking in the colonized Cariboo is essentially about being as stupid as you can while still existing, as it was so described to me once (Jessica Grant 2002), where one is to be an unthinking drone to the rationalized capitalist production process, thought, thoughtfulness and creativity are sought out by many alienated workers in their leisure time, in their play. Players utilize their routinized, workaday skills in creative, identity-confirming, confidence-boosting ways, ways denied during their work lives. Living rooms are temporarily dismantled for topsy-turvy reconstruction in play realms; work boots, sawdust tubes for oil spills and sofas invested with new, fun meanings. Through play, Players confirm that they are more than simply parents shuttling kids from one place to another, more than just alienated millworkers being as stupid as they can while still existing, more than dinner-at-five housewives, more than bringing-home-the-bacon husbands. They are thoughtful, creative, fun-making, intelligent, playful beings. They are *homo ludens*.

End Act IV, Scene 2.

In which an examination of the Players in this playground has shown how and why the Players play and what "little bits" from their real lives they bring to their play, whether

they be carpentry skills, Boston fern stands, camo clothes or British accents. Indeed, Player performances are characterized by a mosaic of little bits, ripe for the reading, as the next Scene further investigates. These little bits coagulate and the Kersley Players are a decided folk group, full of anecdotes and superstitions and liminal camaraderie created during the performative process. And the most beloved and remembered stories tend to focus on the practical jokes of practices, the social drinking of warm-ups and the improvised gaffs during performances. Immediate performative cooldown is characterized by an onstage metacommentary, as fictive and mundane roles openly and comically confront one another during the post-play presentation of Players, and by a literal mingling of Players, still in costume, with their audience. The individual meaningfulness and personal aftermath of Player performances focus on role-playing fun (especially significant given the transparency and stasis of roles in small communities) and the rewarding inner growth of self-confidence. Often denied creativity and thoughtfulness in their alienated workaday existence, Players confirm, “coming out” through their play, their inherent playful humanity, that they truly are homo ludens.

Scene 3 – The Audience(s)

In which the audience-performer dialectic is explored, including the dynamics of the communal dinner theatre framework, the interactions with other theatre troupes, the doubleness of the performances as fictive and mundane roles play off one another, the effects of a growing come-from-away, foreign and theatrically cultivated audience, and the performative dynamics of the intimate Christmas productions.

Lights up on a woodland grove. EEYORE stands resignedly by a brook at stage left, looking at his reflection and muttering to himself about how nobody cares and how pathetic it all is. Crackling noises behind him cause him to turn around, as POOH bumbles onstage from stage right.

POOH

Good morning, Eeyore.

EEYORE

(Glumly) Good morning, Pooh Bear. If it *is* a good morning, which I doubt.

POOH

Why, what's the matter?

EEYORE

Nothing, Pooh Bear, nothing. We can't all, and some of us don't. That's all there is to it.

POOH

Can't all *what?* *(rubbing his nose)*

EEYORE

Gaiety. Song-and-dance. Here we go round the mulberry bush.

POOH

Oh! *(long, awkward pause)* What mulberry bush is that?

EEYORE

(Gloomily) Bon-hommy. French word meaning bonhommy. I'm not complaining, but There It Is.¹⁴²

POOH *nods, sits pensively on large stone and begins to hum Cottleston Pie. Lights down.*

¹⁴² Dialogue from A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1963, 70-72).

“Theatre,” writes Michael Tait, “depends upon concentrated support in each community” (1965, 633). Indeed, as Richard Schechner succinctly states, “No theater performance functions detached from its audience” (1985, 10). Theatre, if it is to thrive and not just barely survive or die out altogether, needs broad-based support, especially in small communities. In its need for an audience, for supporters willing to open up their pocketbooks and give of their time and “little bits,” and for community associations to give of their space, the theatre needs to be tapped into the life of that community, reflecting its desires, concerns, tastes and so on. Commenting on the necessity of concentrated support, one of my informants asserts:

I mean, the Quesnel Little Theatre died because they couldn’t get enough people to support it. It’s alright to put on a play and we’re lucky here in Kersley because – because the play has – the Players and plays have donated so much money to the community that they let us use the theatre for nothing, the hall for nothing. Plus, they’ve given us our own room in the old fire hall, so that we can, you know, do all our rehearsing there. And so, they’ve been really good to us. But if you don’t get that – like they didn’t get that in town. The community’s been good. (Koning 2004)

Reflecting on the goodness of small communities in supporting theatre, another informant notes:

We’re pretty fortunate to have the Community Association behind us as a group, to allow us to have an area to practice in, because it is all non-profit, so it’s not as though you can afford to rent a hall to practice, you know, three nights a week for two and a half months and that sort of thing. Theatre would be totally gone, and that’s why a little community...I think you’re going to find that the smaller communities, just because they have access to a place and I don’t know – smaller communities are more together than – as soon as you get into the bigger city. (Wark 2004)

For over twenty years, the Kersley Players have been receiving this concentrated, “more together” communal support, in contrast to Quesnel Little Theatre who were shunted around from place to place, perennial paupers begging for a space and an audience and

eventually starving to death. Such “good” support has earned the community a theatrical reputation in the Quesnel area, as it is increasingly seen as “*the* place to come for your entertainment” (Grimm and Grimm 2004). While this support is integral to the vitality of the Kersley Players, it is also restrictive in many ways, framing the plays and the Players into a very specific role within the community. Victor Turner once observed that “[a] drama is never really complete, as its etymology suggests, until it is performed, that is, is acted on some kind of stage before an audience” (1987, 27), and to that end, this section explores the audience-performer dialectic, examining the controlling communal framework around the plays, the Players and their performances, investigating the doubleness of the performances, as intimate community knowledge affects how these plays are read, seen, enjoyed or avoided, assessing how the Players’ growing come-from-away and professional audience has generated a theatrical self-awareness within the troupe, with dramatic aspirations going far beyond Kersley, and, finally, looking briefly at the performative dynamics of the Christmas play productions.

For the Edification of the Neighbourhood?:¹⁴³ Communal Allowance, Expectations, Conflicts & Avoidance

In which the dynamics surrounding the performances of “Roy” plays are investigated, looking at the communal controls over the performative format (namely, farces and food for a charitable cause) and the oft-times tense relations between the Kersley Players and the new community theatre troupe on the block, the Kersley Musical Theatre.

“If a community theatre performs in a village hall, say, the community is inevitably in the role of host, because the hall ‘belongs’ to the village...so at the very

¹⁴³ Phrase from Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962[?]). Atticus Finch is chastising Jem, Scout and Dill for pestering Boo Radley: “We weren’t makin’ fun of him, we weren’t laughin’ at him,” said Jem, “we were just —”

“So that was what you were doing, wasn’t it?”

“Makin’ fun of him?”

“No,” said Atticus, “putting his life’s history on display for the edification of the neighborhood” (54).

least space is exchanged for performance” (qtd. in Kershaw 1992, xvii), so comments the community theatre producer, Ann Jellicoe. Her observations are telling. Kersley hosts the Kersley Players, granting them space to perform, but in that apparent hospitality as host, Kersley’s motivations are far from altruistic. The community has expectations to be met and a controlling interest in just how the plays are performed, setting the framework for the productions and influencing their content. Indeed, as cited earlier by one of my informants, “It’s kind of a unique situation what Roy’s in. He writes for a group of actors and he writes for a specific audience. And that’s restricting for him and I feel sympathy for him in that respect” (Drewcock 2004). Roy and the Players sit in the particular bind of having to please their generous, supportive, accommodating and ultimately controlling patron,¹⁴⁴ the community of Kersley, with its demands for a certain type of play – a laugh-out-loud farce, a “Roy” play – in a specific format, namely, the for-a-good-cause dinner theatre.

In her socio-economic analysis of contemporary folk plays, Georgina Boyes suggests that the use of “socio-economic dimensions as a means of categorising plays has the advantage of being immediately related to the processes modifying all aspects of contemporary performance” (1982, 43), including the text and action of the play, the attitudinal set of the performer(s) and the composition, attitude and behaviour of the audience(s) (Boyes 1982, 43-44). In essence, she argues that to what monetary purpose, what material reward, the group is organized will necessarily inform the performance of

¹⁴⁴ I took a class once on Italian Renaissance art, which pretty much washed away any illusions I may have held about the freedom of the artistic genius. Patronage and sponsorship have always been an integral part of artistic creation – artists creating to please their financial backers. And if that meant changing the colours to suit the patron’s tastes or using the Viscount’s daughter as the model for Mary, then so be it.

the play. Breaking the material rewards into a tripartite of (1) no monies to performers, (2) money for expenses only to performers, and (3) all material rewards to performers (Boyes 1982, 43), Boyes links all these types of allocation with varying social organizations. She writes:

The first type of economic allocation is associated with teams with a manifest, structured institutional base, such as the schools...Performers usually receive none of the money they collect – charities or the organizing institution itself are the usual beneficiaries. The organising institution is not necessarily formed for the purpose of performing folk plays. Those institutions which provide the social bases for the second type of performance are usually manifest, in that they are named and frequently overtly structured. They include ‘traditional’ teams...and also groups linked with folk clubs. Some of the money collected after such performances will be returned to the team in the form of expenses (of relatively broad interpretation). The rest will accrue to the organising institution’s funds to cover expenses related to the performances (such as publicity posters, material for costumes, etc.), or to strengthen the social cohesion within the group by subsidising a party or bolstering general club funds. In this case, the institution may or may not be formed for the purpose of performing traditional plays on a regular basis. The third and final category is that of the range of social organisations between the informal, loosely-structured institution and ad hoc, temporary groups. These groups are frequently formed spontaneously or come together for a short time each year for the purpose of performing. (Boyes 1982, 43)

Although interested solely in traditional folk drama, i.e. mummering and its many types, Boyes’s analysis does provide insight into the workings of the Kersley Players.

Within Boyes’s parameters, the Players are an interesting combine of (1) and (2), with exceptions, of course. The Kersley Players are their own group, a group expressly formed for the performance of plays, specifically Roy Teed’s works,¹⁴⁵ but they are also perennial fundraisers for the various other groups in the community. Whatever material rewards the Players receive (around forty percent of the dinner theatre take) are

¹⁴⁵ Although, there has been performed one non-Teed play in 2001, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader*, written by the Kersley Player, Gary Minnett, under the tutelage of Roy Teed.

earmarked for club maintenance and *not* personal gain. The only outright fundraiser for the Players themselves, as a club, is the so-called “Cheap Seat Night,” a performance-only showing, which has been held on Sundays, Tuesdays and now Thursdays, where tickets are purchased at the door for the current price of \$10.¹⁴⁶ In exchange for a “free” space to rehearse and perform, the Kersley Players, by their very name, are beholden to and essentially belong to the community of Kersley, and its governing, institutional base, the Kersley Community Association. As Roy’s employer, the KCA makes allowances for Roy and his writing, letting him utilize work time for his creations. Because of this, his plays can be interpreted as being paid for and owned by the community. So much so, that in 2003, it was simply put to this playwright-in-residence by the KCA that he write a play for the Kersley Reunion, which he grudgingly and painstakingly did. Roy is, after all, the community’s paid jack-of-all-trades, and that seems to include his playwriting, as well as his ice-making, lawn-mowing and hall-coordinating.

This structuring of the Kersley Players under the charitable auspice within the community is no happenstance. As has been noted earlier, Anglophone Canada, in general, has been puritanically wary of the theatre, leading to much moral pontificating. Early amateur theatrical endeavours in BC and the Cariboo were also often bracketed as charitable functions. Indeed, theatre historians Benson and Conolly suggest that by pragmatically bracketing theatre for benevolent and charitable purposes, “society was [thus] encouraged to extract some positive benefits from the production of the plays, rather than to theorize about their moral value” (1987, 6). Chad Evans reiterates this historic philanthropic thrust of early amateur BC theatricals, observing that “[f]inancial

¹⁴⁶ It has been as low as \$5 at one point, but has inflated with the years.

benefaction was also the measure of moral improvement which such events bestowed upon society” (1983, 27). It is this same financial benefaction which causes the workplaces of the playing Players to accommodate work schedules with performance schedules:

They actually did accommodate me when I was doing the play – which one was it now? *Lace Drakes* – they actually accommodated me by – I went to see the foreman and I asked him, “Is there a chance I could be put on dayshift? I’m doing this play and I see you put me down for afternoons and I have to be at the hall for the showing.” And they actually did accommodate me for that reason and I think it’s because it was something for the community, like a non-profit – I was doing something non-profit. (Prentice 2006)

Non-profit play, earmarked for greater communal good, is play worth supporting. Indeed, the practical and pragmatic acquirement of filthy lucre along with a do-gooder sense of just causes do tend to damper the morality meter, as one of my informants so astutely observes:

They [the KP plays] are a little risqué and so some people don’t appreciate them maybe as much, but they all – they all understand one thing and that’s the fact that, whether you agree with the language or not, they all partake in the benefits somehow. So, you know, I mean they’re willing to abide – overlook those things because, let’s face it, there’s something in it for them, you know. (Koning 2004)

With the good ends thus justifying the somewhat questionable means, the boundary-pushing, bawdy content of the plays is socially and safely bounded.

Illustratively, by contrast, the family-oriented, wholesome, crowd-pleasing, maudlin musicals put on by the Kersley Musical Theatre require no such frame, since children singing known and loved ditties has been a safe bet since mining days. While still very much enjoying the concentrated support of the community and the KCA who grant them free hall usage and such, the KMT has no charitable justification. It is well and

truly a (2) in Boyes's classification, a group whose material rewards feed the workings of the troupe itself, including pizza parties for its cast and crew of over one hundred and its newsprint playbills. And if the talk of the Players is to be trusted, the Musical Theatre is a veritable Shangri-La – a land of milk and honey, or should I say, a land of beer and pizza, swimming in government grants (apparently thanks to its kid quota) and glossy programs. As one of my informants notes, "If it's a difference between doing it themselves or spending money, they seem to spend money, 'cause they have money to burn" (Teed 2004a). Free from this benevolent framework, the Kersley Musical Theatre is master over its own monies, burning them as it sees fit, choosing for *itself* a cause worthy of donation if it so desires, as it did in 2003 when the club donated some money to the KCA for the big Kersley reunion. The Kersley Players have no such choice and are inexorably bound to the community fundraiser form, the dinner theatre.

Cloaking themselves often rather proudly in their philanthropic aims, their largesse, the Kersley Players have been community fundraisers from the first, generating tens of thousands of dollars through their performances over the years.¹⁴⁷ The only time funds have actually been sent outside of the community was with the very first play, *The Dinner Party*, when, as noted previously, Rick Hansen was the recipient. *The Dinner Party*, though, was not a dinner party, a dinner theatre; those came about later. Roy discusses the development:

The dinner theatres came about later. We did – the first show was just a show. And then I think the next year we had one dinner theatre out of three performances and then it evolved into the majority of performances would be dinner theatre. And usually one show – cheap seat night, we call it – but even for the last several years, we've sort of dropped cheap seat night. And

¹⁴⁷ As of 2003, Roy estimated that upwards of \$50,000 had been generated for the benefit of local groups.

we only reinstituted it last year because I thought we were getting away – I mean, we’re becoming elitist in that you had to have a fairly big whack of money to come see our show. Forty bucks for two people; twenty bucks a ticket. So, it’s a blessing and a curse. (2004a)

The profitable blessings of the dinner theatre form have been latched upon by various community groups, who provide the paying theatregoers¹⁴⁸ with a standard roast beef buffet, complete with mashed potatoes and gravy, a pre-packaged mix of uniformly sized peas, corn and carrots, rolls with the requisite spread, at least two types of salad (some combination of Caesar, green, coleslaw, copper penny and their innumerable variants), condiments like horseradish sauce and sliced green pickles and, for dessert, coffee along with an array of squares, cakes and/or tarts, possibly with vanilla ice cream; drinks are purchased from the bar. It is not unusual, as one of my informants notes, to “see the same people every year doing the dinner” (Minnett 2004), essentially a core group of women who cater all the dinner theatres, just doing it for a different community group each night, supplementing with assistants as necessary, including a man to stand at the buffet table and carve the roast beef. In all, there are usually six to eight women working in the kitchen, preparing food, bussing tables, doing dishes. Since everybody is in everything, these women are often members of the local Women’s Institute, as well as Mudhens, wives of firemen, KCA activity organizers and grandmothers/mothers of current students and/or alumni of Kersley Elementary School, which means that they also probably have something to do with the local kids’ clubs, the Girl Guides, the Scouts, the 4-H. Suffice it

¹⁴⁸ Dinner theatre tickets cost \$22 each, as of 2009.

to say, these are busy women,¹⁴⁹ who have to come to expect the dinner theatres, slotting the annual catering into the calendars and budgets of many local groups.

While the Kersley Players is a bisexual group, in the sense that both men and women are on the stage, there is still a tendency for the group to be rather male-dominated. The possible reasons for the lack of longstanding female Players will be explored as this Scene progresses, but while the onstage females may be scarce, the longstanding, catering females are in full force year after year. This is their annual performance. Thomas Green, in writing on the testosterone-driven nature of traditional folk drama (a.k.a. the m-word) with its typically all-male casts, argues that “when analyzed in context, it becomes clear that women play a crucial role in performance events” (2009, 217). In specifically examining the mummering traditions of Newfoundland, he notes that “women exercise considerable control over the behavior of male folk drama performers” (2009, 217), by acting “as agents of order in the homes to which traveling troupes appeal for a ‘stage’ and refreshments” (2009, 217). In their *indoor* roles as hostesses, women subdue the untoward and unruly *outdoor* elements. It could be argued that something akin to this control is being exercised by the Kersley Hall hostesses, with their gastronomic spread. Knowing full well that untoward and unruly behaviour is about to take place onstage in the form of a “Roy” play, there is a need to reaffirm communal bonds of togetherness, before the chaos, however controlled, begins. And, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett observes, “[f]easts are prominent in rites of incorporation, where commensality, the act of eating together, is an archetype of union”

¹⁴⁹ Who are often also busybodies, who get involved in community history books and drive a folklorist batty.

(1999, 23). The buffet, in essence, buffers the forthcoming disorder, ultimately “assert[ing] all that [is] stable, unchanging, perennial” (Bakhtin 1984, 9) and, thus, “sanction[ing] the existing pattern of things and reinforc[ing] it” (Bakhtin 1984, 9).

There is indeed an important “interplay of table and stage” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1999, 25), as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett so notes in her work on food as a performance medium, despite the modernist leanings to view theatre as an autonomous art form (since the “serious” arts can apparently always stand alone, thank you very much). She writes:

Suffice it to say that it has taken considerable cultural work to isolate the senses, create genres of art specific to each, insist on their autonomy and cultivate modes of attentiveness that give some senses priority over others. To produce the separate and independent arts that we know today, it was necessary to break apart fused forms such as the banquet and to disarticulate the sensory modalities associated with them. Not until the various components of such events (music, dance, drama, food, sculpture, painting) were separated and specialized did they become sense-specific art forms in dedicated spaces (theater, auditorium, museum, gallery), with distinct protocols for structuring attention and perception. It was at this point that food disappeared from musical and theatrical performances. No food or drink is allowed in the theater, concert hall, museum, or library. (1999, 25-26)

But, within the setting of the community hall, food is very much allowed; in fact, it is an integral part of the dramatic performance itself. And with such expectations, it could be argued that increasingly the form itself, the charitable, feasting frame, is the community’s focus, leaving the performances playing second fiddle to the roast beef money-maker, much to Roy’s annoyance:

RT: But we’re trapped in the dinner theatre mode. I mean, and I don’t think we’ll ever get out of it. And I don’t know.

JGJ: I mean, are you trapped in that because that’s what the community expects or are people depending on it as a fundraiser or is it?

RT: Both. I mean, yeah, it's a little irksome at times because people don't even think about the show we're going to do. All they want to know is if they can have a night. They don't, you know – we could be doing a – it doesn't matter what we're doing. They just want the money. 'Cause you do a dinner theatre and you make a thousand dollars or more for virtually no work... Yeah, but people don't seem to give a flying hoot about what we do, especially in the last several years. Just, "Can we have a night?" [sigh] Yeah, sure. (2004a)

While Roy feels that his plays could certainly stand alone, like *real* theatre, without the accursed mashed-potato-and-gravy imprisonment, this theatre-food fusion, the expectations for a dinner theatre from the community caterers, the audience members and even the Players themselves trump Roy's desires every time. As he notes:

RT: When you eat – cater to the lowest common denominator.

JGJ: That's what somebody said, "That's part of your thesis too – what they serve at those dinner theatres." I'm like, "It's always like roast beef and potatoes" – your very standard, you know, I don't know if it's Cariboo or just North American fare.

RT: Yeah, but we wouldn't dare change that. You would just – you'd have no end of consequences. (2004a)

And Roy knows all about the consequences when you try to shake things up.

When Roy decided to stir things up a bit, by writing his first "serious" play, a drama, *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*, he fought a losing battle to perform it *sans* beef and beer:

Again we're trapped in the dinner theatre. I fought a long time to do the drama as just a show, but without alcohol or anything, 'cause I was concerned that somebody was going to get liquored up. And then you're trying to do this serious scene and some would, you know – because it was so emotional, a lot – some people will put up that façade of bravado and wisecracks and stuff. So, I was – especially when you have a drink inside you – so I thought that – I didn't want any chance of that happening whatsoever. But the folks who were in it prevailed and we went the dinner theatre route...But it worked out okay. (Teed 2004a)

Although Roy wanted a sober audience for his sobering topic, the Players prevailed, insisting upon a dinner theatre, since this is the performing format they like the best. A

Kersley Player admits:

We hate doing the – I don't know if anybody else has said this – but we all hate doing cheap night because there's, like, no drinking, there's no dinner, there's none of this, right. And, you know, you get a scatter of people here. Oh, I don't know, you get laughs, but it's not the same, even though it's a full-fledged belly laugh, you know. And that one can bring you down a little bit, but then, thankfully, we have another dinner theatre after that too, so it brings us back up again. (Lovell 2006)

Feeding off their audiences, the Players prefer the well-fed, well-lubricated, sold-out dinner theatre audiences of 100-plus people over Roy's non-elitist cheap seaters. The caterers prefer it since it generates much more funds. The community enjoys its stabilizing effects. And since the dinner theatre audiences are successively and successfully sold-out every time, as opposed to the often sparsely attended cheap nights, one can certainly say that the audiences love it as well.

“We may be amateurs, but we're vain amateurs,” quipped Gary Minnett backstage, during the Tuesday, cheap-seat-night performance of *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*; his comment on performing for a decidedly meagre house.¹⁵⁰ The laughs were there, but they tended to reverberate around the cold hall, allowing the Players to actually pinpoint which laugh belonged to which audience member. The laughter never developed into that homogeneous roar, a kind of ebb-and-flow sound wave that washes between the audience and the stage, each feeding and fuelling the other. As one of my informants simply states, “If you can make people laugh, you want to do it

¹⁵⁰ Cheap Seat nights are always meagrely attended. Thirty to forty is considered a particularly good turnout.

more” (Zacharias 2006). Laughter is the response that the Players feed off of, giving them that performance high, that adrenalin rush, that “thrill,” as it was so described to me. And there is just something about a dinner theatre, which seems to deliver, much more consistently, this thrilling roar of laughter, making it the Players’ preferred audience and the audience’s preferred theatre. Although, as an informant points out, the uninhibited, roaring laughter is often dependent upon the right mix of people at the performance:

I’ve been on Thursday night, I’ve been on a Saturday night and a lot of it depends upon the crowd. Some crowds you go to – like we usually try to go the Saturday night ’cause that’s usually the most popular night, and by then they’ve had a couple nights to do their screw-ups or whatever. But Saturday night – it seems like that’s the night you get – to me it seems like that’s the night you get the most interactive crowd and they’re the more laugh-out-loud type. You know, I’ve been there before where, “Tee-hee-hee. Oh wasn’t that funny” [*primly*]. But then I’ve been nights when people, “Ha, HA, HA!” [*raucously*] (Arnoldus 2004)

Indeed, the audience feeds off one another, heightening the laughter or dampening it, depending upon how interactive the crowd has been with one another and the collective atmosphere they have created.

“It’s the atmosphere of the tiny, little hall. You’re going in. You sit. It’s all hot and crowded” (Grimm and Grimm 2004) comments Rod Grimm, a former Player himself and dinner theatre aficionado. His wife, Debbie, elaborates, “I think that really gets people, sort of, going to enjoy the play, where you relax and visit with friends and stuff beforehand and, sort of, all the atmosphere, where they sit you down and treat you like you’re somebody” (Grimm and Grimm 2004). Just as the Players warm up for a performance through socializing, joking and drinking, over in the rooms at the arena, their dinner theatre audiences sit socializing, joking, eating and drinking, warming up, as it were, over in the hall. The performances become part of a larger social function, not

unlike those early Cariboo plays, which were often followed by music and dancing and general carousing. It is more than just theatre, as an informant points out: “You get a dinner. You get a night out. It’s not a lot of money...But, as a community, like there’s not just the Players, there’s always the dinner theatre part. There’s always the ladies’ auxiliary doing dinner. The fire department does a dinner. The school does a dinner. And I think, community-wise, it’s very good” (Minnett 2004). Audience members are much more than just theatregoers; they want “a night out,” the full meal deal, as it were: “You know, it’s a nice night out. And where do you go in Quesnel? Where do you go? You know, there’s not much entertainment happening...And to see a live theatre group is wonderful” (Arnoldus 2004). Through the communal eating of the dinner part of the theatre, “a night out” is had and an audience community is formed, or re-formed, as the case may be, since many audience members meet up year after year for these plays. Anecdotes are shared, wine glasses are drained and people are generally feeling groovy – open, comfortable and ready for a “Roy” play. A QLT veteran, Mary Beningfield, in looking at the success of the Kersley Players, links it irrevocably to this “night out” combination of food and farce: “Roy’s plays – they were hilariously funny. They were dinner theatre, where people could drink and have fun [*making drinking gestures with her hand*]” (2004). In drinking and having fun, even before the curtains are drawn back, audience members are in a playful mood, having confirmed their commensality through communal eating and their largesse through ingestion, while setting aside some of their normal inhibitions in preparation to play with the Players.

A major factor in the setting of the playful atmosphere amongst the dinner theatre audience is the fact that many, if not most, of them are dedicated fans of the Players,

willing to forgive long, convoluted intros and other shortcomings of a “Roy” play, as well as share their enthusiasm with their associates by bringing them along to the shows.

These are people who just “really appreciate the fact that you put effort into putting together and working to put on a play that’s got some humour to it or whatever” (Wark 2004). Mary Beningfield continues:

But they [the KP plays] were hilariously funny and he [Roy] had a following. So every year, people were – the tickets were purchased before they were even in the store. They were all marked for purchase before they even reached the store, which is a big plus for his club ‘cause his well-written, hilariously funny plays went off well with this audience. They waited hand and, you know, with bated breath to come, to go and see his plays, his really excellent plays. (2004)

This enthusiastic Kersley Players’ following is almost cult-like, according to Wayne Wark: “I almost call the Kersley Players a cult, because we have a cult following that – they don’t miss no matter what. It’s – they’re the first – they’re our best advertisers for filling the hall, that’s for sure” (2004). Because of this eager and appreciative cult following, the typically four-night spread (two weekends of Friday and Saturday nights) of the Kersley Players’ dinner theatres sell like hotcakes, often sold before they actually get on the market, as it were. These cult followers are “in-the-know,” knowing who to contact for insider information about the Players’ next production, having a knowledge and intimacy with the Players and Kersley, which naturally aids in the intimate atmosphere of the dinner theatres. Indeed, for years, the tickets were sold by many of the Players at their workplaces, which resulted in millworkers buying all the tickets. Since deemed unfair, the tickets are now sold at two vendors, the Kersley General Store and

Cariboo Propane¹⁵¹ in Quesnel. Deleenia Lovell, a longstanding Player, observes of this intimacy:

Most performances are pretty much sold out¹⁵² – all dinner performances, anyway. So, I know that this is something that people look forward to all the time. You know, they – you talk to them: “When are you doing a play? When are you doing a play?” That’s what you get all the time. “Are you gonna be in the next play?” or something. So, you know that they’re anxiously awaiting for this one time a year where they go out and have a wonderful dinner and they sit there and laugh for two hours and go home. (2006)

Judy Arnoldus, a committed Players’ follower and former KP stagehand, admits:

I know, I still – I don’t think I’ve missed one, you know. We still – if I hear about one happening in May, like we’ll make plans months ahead to make sure we go out and see it. And just to support the community too, especially, you know, with the dinners. If it’s the Kersley Mudhens or the school or whoever putting it on, you know, like to support them... They’ve had a reputation. And it’s been a reputation that they’ve had to uphold because, you know, people talk about how great the dinners are and how great the plays are, so they’ve almost got a legacy to live up to now. (2004)

Locally, the Kersley Players are synonymous with dinner theatre, with having good food, while supporting a good cause, having a good time and enjoying a night out:

“People look forward to the plays not only because what they know they’re going to come away with, but what they’re giving to the community too. You know, they know that when they plunk down their twenty bucks for a ticket that that money is going to a good cause, as well as a good time, you know” (Drewcock 2004). And an integral part of having a good time for this good cause is being able to have a good laugh.

When, in 1987, the Kersley Players were getting ready for their first performance, *The Dinner Party*, there was much discussion amongst the Players regarding the content

¹⁵¹ Business operated by Stuart Graham, a Kersley Player.

¹⁵² A sell-out for the dinner theatre is 120 people.

of the play. Roy remembers the initial worrying: “As a group, we used to worry about it, ’cause we had long debates about *The Dinner Party* even, when we first started, ’cause you had – it was an adulterous relationship in the play and how is this going to go over?! And it seemed to go over fine. So, I don’t know. I haven’t worried about it for years” (Teed 2004a). After successive successes, Roy no longer worries about how his plays will go over. The over-the-top farces are well and truly enjoyed by the local audiences: “I have never really heard anybody say, ‘I’ll never go back there.’ And we’ve done some fairly outrageous stuff – stuff that we kind of worried about” (Minnett 2004). So, for all their cross-dressing and sex talk, their aggressive put-downs and their boundary pushing nonsense, the “Roy” plays continue to attract an audience and that “audience comes prepared to laugh. Having seen the performances previously, the guests at a celebration [a dinner theatre] have high expectations for the humour to be presented” (Beeman 1981, 520), and when something else is served up, namely a serious, non-laughing drama, as was done in 2001 with *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*, there is confusion, disappointment and resistance, as well as food for thought.

In 1994, the Players won a berth to Mainstage as a workshop play¹⁵³ with *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* and, after hard work revamping the play under professional guidance, there was the much anticipated re-launch. Roy remembers:

RT: By the time – when it was time to do the second show, right, they had people sitting between the aisles on – like it was packed, like it was beyond packed. I’m sure if the fire marshal was there, he would’ve had a hernia from screaming so loud. And that audience laughed so loud. I was

¹⁵³ Not apart of the official competition, but there to work under the guidance of a professional director. The play is performed twice; first as it was done at home, with the professional director in the audience, then a day is spent working on the play under the director’s tutelage, after which the play is performed yet again with all its many revisions and reworkings.

backstage and I couldn't hear the actors. It was just a solid wall of sound. It was incredible. And I had someone or several people say, "I really want to do this play, but it's just too strange." Like, "You guys are cutting edge humour!" I mean they're telling us this and we're just doing stuff we've been doing for years. It's not cutting edge. But they wouldn't – they wanted to do the play so bad, but they couldn't take it to their home theatre because it was just too off-the-wall.

JGJ: What do you think then it is about – if it's so off-the-wall, you know, that if they took it to their community that it would just never get done – so what developed in Kersley that allowed?

RT: Because we've cult – we've nurtured our audience since '87, for fifteen or more years, and they've – in fact, that's why the drama didn't sell out every night, because it was a drama; it wasn't a comedy. We worked hard to develop that audience. (2004a)

After years of comic nurturing through repeated viewings of "Roy" plays, the audiences expect and want comedy. Indeed, it was with comically attuned eyes that many read the posters warning of a drama: "And even when you put it on there that it's a drama, some people just plain don't believe you. They're afraid you're pulling their legs. I don't know why they would think that [*laughing*]" (Minnett 2004). The need for that laugh-out-loud release, as has been discussed in the previous Act, had some thinking that the "drama" descriptor was a joke, and with the presentation of an actual drama, "they were disappointed; they didn't get their fix" (Drewcock 2004), their annual smack of Roy nonsense. Deleenia Lovell observes:

DL: The ones that just wanted to come and just laugh for two hours and you know – they felt it was a little too serious, because it was too much like life and they were – they thought it was good but they want the other farces back.

JGJ: They're there to escape life.

DL: They wanted to – when they go out Friday night for dinner and everything, they want to not be sad. They want to be laughing the whole time. (2006)

Too serious and, therefore, too much like real life, the drama initially took its audiences aback, as Gary Minnett recounts, “I never really knew how people would take it when you do something different. But you kind of – when you talk to people, they’re a little puzzled by the fact that, ‘Doh, nobody was in underwear.’ But afterwards, when you talk to them a week or so later, it’s always so, ‘Geez, that was a good play’” (2004).

While the farces elicit an immediate response from the audience – laughter – the response to the drama needed time to percolate. Roy Teed reflects:

The crowds were nowhere near as large as they are for the comedy. However, the people who came were – I don’t know if it was universally but – I think they appreciated it more, because it affected them in a different way than a comedy does. It was, you know – that play affected one woman enough to write me a letter thanking me – thanking me for doing the play and writing about it, because it brought her, you know – it made her understand things better. I’ve never, ever, *ever* received a letter from a member of the audience before ’til we did that play. So, and then you hear from the regulars that come every time, you know, “That was the best thing you’ve ever done.” Stuff like that. I’m just sorry that a lot of people didn’t go to it, because it wasn’t a comedy. But that, you know – shit happens. It’s their loss. (2004a)

Although many who were in attendance did come to appreciate the drama, after their initial bewilderment, many potential audience members stayed away, scared off by the thought of a “serious” play. The hall was not filled to capacity, as is the norm, so, for Roy, *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall* was a critical success, just not a box-office one. Although, from the perspective of the QLT veteran, Mary Beningfield, this drama was a decided success: “They kept saying, ‘Oh, we didn’t get as much audience.’ Well, to me, that was lots of audience, because, like, Quesnel never got that kind of audience. But they kept – the regular members said, ‘Well, it wasn’t really well attended,’ compared to the

packed audiences they had received for the hilariously funny” (2004). But with the dwindling audience numbers, the community coffers also suffered.

Serious dramas tend not to go over well with a Cariboo audience, as the demise of Quesnel Little Theatre can attest. As explored in the two preceding Acts, since everyday existence in the Cariboo is considered grave enough, grave subjects are seldom sought out in post-work playtime and entertainment. In seeking to maintain their “Major” aims, QLT often performed “stuffy” plays, as it was so described to me, and their potential audience basically repeatedly told them to get stuffed: “We had the sort of disadvantage in that maybe to fulfil our actors’ need for growth, we would put on a drama that maybe a Quesnel theatre audience didn’t really know about or couldn’t identify with, so they wouldn’t go” (Benningfield 2004). So, when Kersley came on the scene with their raucous, uncouth farces, performing to sold-out crowds, there was some tension between the two groups. Pete Drewcock explains:

We always thought that the stuff they [QLT] did was kind of stuffy and they always stuck with the safe stuff and we did the stuff that wasn’t safe. We got tons of people out to our theatre and they got twenty, sometimes thirty, out at theirs, you know. So, we were a little smug. And well, I think we were right because where’s Quesnel Little Theatre now? [JGJ: Defunct.] Defunct. So, we chose the right way to do it, in a way. Of course there’s a place for normal theatre here in the Cariboo, but you know – I guess there’s a place for it. But who knows where it is. I don’t. (2004)

After years of farces and years of tutelage under Theatre BC, Roy got “serious” in his writing – since “the theatre critics of this world seem to equate serious with good, and they think that if you’re not writing seriously, you’re not writing well” (Drewcock 2004) – and wrote a “stuffy,” “normal” drama, *à la* Quesnel Little Theatre. But, according to

many, the Kersley Hall was not the place and the dinner theatre was not the format in which to do it. Judy Arnoldus observes:

JA: If he wanted to do something more serious like that – to maybe have one like that followed up by a farce or a shorter farce – two one-act plays or something.

JGJ: One being serious and one being

JA: Yeah, but he's got to have the serious one first, because you can't leave the theatre after watching something like that one and feel good. I couldn't: "Oh man, that was heavy. Whew. Where'd that come from? Roy does have a heart!"

JGJ: Yeah, well, I was talking to him about that, you know, that for him, as a writer – as well I mean – yeah, I think a part of him wanted to challenge himself to write something other than comedy, but then, you know, in a way, he's very restricted by his audience. You know, his audience is coming and expecting

JA: A Roy play.

JGJ: And when he doesn't deliver, you know, it's sort of "What the?!"

JA: This is the wrong place. Yeah, I can't imagine like Roy to advertise a play as a dinner theatre and to go out and watch a serious three-act play. I would be – I would be very disappointed actually. You know, 'cause that's one reason I like to go to his plays. Even if they're not as well written, or I mean there's a couple that I certainly wouldn't put on my top list, but still you go away with a good feeling. You know, you've had a night out. You've had a nice dinner. It's been relaxing. You've had a few laughs. And I think that's what people expect when you go to Roy's plays. (2004)

Kersley Player audiences want the immediate gratification of a good laugh and a good feeling, and a drama – however good it may be deemed after a period of percolation – just does not deliver those instantaneous feelings of pleasure like a farce. So, the Kersley Players are back to "giving people what they want" (Drewcock 2004) – farces and food. Farces and food and the good cause they support, though, cannot appease all community members.

Sitting in a local Quesnel church one wintry Sunday, I listened rather bemusedly as the preacher, a Kersley resident, praised certain members of the congregation as being forces for good through their involvement with the Kersley Musical Theatre. Enjoyment of community theatrical productions had apparently been denied him because of the nature of “those *other* plays,” as he so referred to “Roy” plays, and it was only with the formation of the KMT that he could finally participate in the community’s theatre.¹⁵⁴

Thus, despite being yoked with their charitable kitchen performances, the Kersley Players still do tend to offend some in the community, even those who come to every play, as

Wayne Wark notes:

Very, very seldom do you ever hear anything negative about the play. Some of the old people – in fact, I just had a fellow the other day, he was asking about the play that they just finished and wanted to know if I was in it and I said, “No, that’s a different group.” I said, “That’s family entertainment; we do adult.” “Some of that isn’t adult!” And he’s never missed one, but he had that comment that he was appalled a couple of times, I guess. (2004)

Discussing the apparent offending nature of the plays, Pete Drewcock observes:

There’s been lots of people that have said to me, you know, they – I guess, they just don’t get it. And some people are quite offended by what they see and so, you know, that makes me kind of sad in a way, because, you know, you always like to please everybody, but, you know, you can’t please everybody. We’ve done some very raucous comedy and then, on the other hand, we’ve done some very, very serious plays, and the serious plays have been met with at least as much resistance as our comedies, but from a different group, you know. So, of course, you can’t please everybody. It bothers me a bit when we offend people, because I try not to, but I don’t think you can – I don’t think you can take comedy to the edge where we do without offending somebody, you know. But that’s what makes us funny. (2004)

¹⁵⁴ This was rather amusing for me especially considering that the preacher’s brother-in-law was in *The Dinner Party* and that two stalwart members of that congregation, namely my parents, were involved in the formation of the Kersley Players.

While farces, as noted in the previous Act, are often considered, theoretically speaking, simple, innocuous fun, in the real-life performances of “Roy” plays, the case is not so straightforward. There are those who find farcical subject matter morally abhorrent, period.

This puritanical push has become overwhelmingly apparent to the Players with the roaring success of their counterpart, the Kersley Musical Theatre, and that is creating tension between the two groups, not unlike the friction between Quesnel Little Theatre and the Kersley Players during the 1990’s. Roy Teed shares an illustrative anecdote:

Let me tell you a really disgusting story. The first year they [Kersley Musical Theatre] did the show, we were casting right after, same time period, and that year we were doing two one acts. John Stuart was bringing up *Tales from Me and Irmie* from the coast where he had it – they did it down there and he was doing it in the Fringe Festival and stuff, so he was bringing up that play to do here with us. And then we were going to do another one act, so I wrote this stupid little thing in about 6.2 minutes where the – we’d meet up with that. So we’re looking for people to do the play and I get a call from this – or I talked to Lisa van Hees or Lisa Reitsen now – she was that kindergarten teacher out here...She has a background in theatre...So, I talked – I said, “Do you want to get involved?” ’cause I was over there for the school and we became friends over the years, so she said, “Sure, I might try it.” So she read a bit of the script and then said she would think about it. But she talked to somebody she knew apparently and this person called me – the person had a part in the play they did the first year, *Anne of Green Gables*. So, she called me up and I said, “Well sure. This isn’t *Anne of Green Gables*.” Because the gist of the play was – it’s a poetry reading and two of the actors are hidden in the audience and they basically get up and say, “This is bullshit” and all this. And then one of the actors – there’s a male and a female – and the female, of course, is a bimbo ’cause you need a bimbo and this was the part that this woman was thinking about. So I said, “This isn’t *Anne of Green Gables*, you know.” “Oh, it doesn’t matter. We had such fun and we want to keep doing it.” Okay, so I gave her the script and then we meet downtown and she says she’ll call me back, and she calls me and says, “Um, maybe I don’t – this isn’t quite the right play for me. Could you give me a call when you’re going to do something more wholesome?” I said, “Sure.” [JGJ: Never.] I was quite irked because, although this was a little bawdy, it was by no means as bad as this – even close to *Dr Broom and the Transmogrifier*. It

was fairly innocent, like it was almost Walt Disney material. So that's – that kind of put my teeth on edge. (2004a)

Gritting teeth at the puritanical wholesomeness of the Kersley Musical Theatre, the

Kersley Players are also bandaging bruised egos, as Pete Drewcock discusses:

JGJ: I've been noticing a bit of tension between the Kersley Players and the new Kersley Musical Theatre.

PD: Well, they stole a little bit of our thunder, I guess, and we're kind of sitting back, licking our wounds. They've – we kind of laughed it off when they started, thinking "Oh yeah, a musical in Kersley – who's ever going to go and see that?!" you know, but of course, we quickly got slapped upside the face. We learned our lesson well that musical theatre goes down big in Kersley actually. They do a great job and I guess we've been humbled, but we still pick on them. We're sort of the yin and yang of Kersley theatre, I guess, or Cariboo theatre. (2004)

The Kersley Players put on their bawdy adult comedies and the Kersley Musical Theatre

puts on its wholesome family fun and the twain meet daily in the community, with the

Musical Theatre apparently disdainfully disapproving of the Players' farces and the

Players inwardly muttering about how the Musical Theatre has stolen more than just their

thunder, but their precious lights, their theatrically renovated hall and their hard-earned

reputation. Bert Koning, long-time stagehand for the Players, discusses the dynamic:

BK: They borrow all our equipment – all the stuff we've been saving and scrimping for, for years. We give it to them at no charge, so you know...I think eventually there will be a partial merging of the groups eventually. Right now, they're both being controlled by very strong people with strong opinions. I don't think the musical group will ever fully accept Roy's type of plays. But I think maybe the time will come that we will have to be a little more subtle in the way that the plays are perceived and the way that they're performed.

JGJ: What do you mean by that?

BK: Well, farces are fun for people to watch, but, you know, if you have certain religious beliefs or certain social beliefs, you know, three men dressing up in drag, as they did in *Lace Drakes*, would be totally

unacceptable. With *The Marriage-Go-Round*, you know, someone, you know, talking about cheating with another person...And I think a lot of people can't handle the language. (2004)

Indeed, the Musical Theatre is regarded as something of a parasite, which initially rode the coattails of its host, the Players, in order to establish itself and has now surpassed its host in size, much to the alarm of the Players.

Building off of the established theatrical milieu in Kersley, a milieu the Players feel they have painstakingly nurtured and developed, the Kersley Musical Theatre utilizes the space which the Players had considered their own, not to mention the equipment. Beholden as they are to the community at large with their socio-economic basis in their benefaction, the Players do not own much themselves, but they do own lights, and the granting of these lights free-of-charge to KMT is a sticky point of intra-group contention.

Roy explains:

I mean, we've been *the*, I mean *the* theatre group in Quesnel for so long, it's – you try to smooth it out, but it's tough. There's certain – there's some people in the group that just don't want to be placated. And, you know, the fact that we just about broke ourselves to buy these lights to do the drama. You know, we spent \$3000, which is a huge amount of money, because we give most of our money away. And then, I bullied everyone into just lending them to the outfit, you know, without charging. And then I get constant barbs and spears and, you know, people picking at you all the time. And I just thought, "We're two community theatre groups" and when we did our drama, we borrowed blank pistols from Williams Lake, you know – "Oh yeah, come on down and get them, Roy; that's no problem." And to buy a blank pistol is like \$500. So and Quesnel Little Theatre give us the lights. They're dead, but Mary had them and she just gave it to us. So in the spirit of community theatre, I wanted to just have – to let them use it. (2004a)

Once the precedent was set for free use of lighting, it has remained in place, despite the constant intra-group bickering about how they should charge. Yet, the very communal

support which grants the Players usage demands that they grant others usage. Besides, “owned” as they are by the community, it is not really in the Players’ power to deny.

The ongoing drama over the lights is rather indicative, if not symbolic, of the Players’ concerns over losing the spotlight, of being consumed by and confused with another group. And indeed, there has been much initial confusion between the two groups, as Roy explains:

RT: For the first couple, they [audience members] thought it was us doing them, I’m sure. I know this for a fact. Pete can – Pete’s always getting choked because people are saying, “Oh yeah, we really like that musical you did.” “We don’t do musicals!” But I got a phone call this year and Pam answered – ’cause she answers at home – somebody wanting to know stuff about the musical we were doing. Last year, we were on the beg for materials for – to do the studio. You know, we wanted to get some plywood for the stage and stuff and Wayne goes round to Weldwood and they say, “We just give you guys a bunch of stuff.” “That wasn’t us.” So, we had to buy our plywood.

JGJ: Everyone’s giving everything to the other one.

RT: So yeah, and you know, it may not be deliberate – like we’re the Kersley Players – it may not – it isn’t. But people’s perception is that “It’s Kersley and it’s a play, it’s got to be the Kersley Players.” I mean, they go together. (2004a)

As the years have passed, though, discernment between the two has increasingly come.

The KMT has actually come to feed Players into the Kersley Players, as a number of new Players have found their way to Kersley theatre and “Roy” plays via the musicals.

Accommodating shared thespians, the Kersley Players have had increased fall productions, thus separating themselves even more, calendrically, from the Musical Theatre. And the Players now tend to define themselves as the more theatrically cultivated troupe, an interesting development considering their own beginnings with

Quesnel Little Theatre. Yet, despite the intra- and inter-group cafuffles, Kersley remains theatrically large enough to accommodate two diverse troupes and their audiences.

The World in a Wink: Binocular Dipopia & the Reading of the ‘Little Bits’
In which an exploration of the audience-performer dialectic is attempted and the delights and dangers of doubleness are examined.

Kersley play warms audience

By Vern Heywood, *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, 1 April 1987

I attended a dinner party last Friday evening. The Kersley Players, a close-knit theatrical group put on their second play under the capable direction of Bobbi Grant. “The Dinner Party”, a light situational comedy authored by Kersley resident Roy Teed, opened to a good, if somewhat partisan crowd of 50 or so at 8:00 p.m. March 27th in the Kersley Community Hall. Proceeds were to Rick Hansen. The hall was a bit cold, but the players soon warmed us with easy laughter – theirs and ours. One act with fades – a simple play with a clean and efficient set; the storyline and acting quickly captured the audience. Sure, some of us were watching for the odd miscue, as the glitches were handled with such aplomb, and the actors’ real personalities showed through with such good humour, that the great characters Mr. Teed had created often played second fiddle. The lead character, Felicity Rothbottom, gracefully played by Sherryl Martens, her first acting role, was well supported by the eleven other strong characters – husband and guests – invited or not. But, once again, “the butler did it!” Butler Charles, irreverently played by Dave Gunn, became pivotal because of this first-time actor’s natural sense of humour, imported accent and hilarious facial expression. Mr. Gunn told me he wasn’t sure he would act again. Seven weeks of intense rehearsal (one of the reasons for the play’s success) had taken its toll. I say, “Go for it, Dave! You’re a natural!” Written in 25 days, this play shows author Roy Teed’s considerable talents in good light. Author, author! Good entertainment? You bet! I’m not sure who had the most fun – the audience or the Players! Watch for the Kersley Players’ next effort and don’t miss it!

There is a rather famous adlibbed scene during a performance of *The Dinner Party*, where a departing Vic “The Stick” Stewert, with the bimbo, Bambi, on his arm, responds to Reginald Rothbottom’s invitation for he and Bambi to visit again sometime with, “Can I bring her sister, Bobbi, too?” There is nothing particularly humorous or insightful with that line in and of itself, but in context of that performance, with those

performers and that audience, it is comically telling. What makes this improvisation so telling, so semantically engaging and ironically interesting, is the fun it makes in playing “play” identities off “real” identities. Jack Grant played Vic “The Stick” in that production and Bambi was played by Becky Dale, whose sister in real-life is Bobbi Grant, Jack’s wife. With his real-life sister-in-law hanging off his arm, Jack and his quip confound all sense of dramatic illusion. For those audience members intimate with the Players in real life, which at that point was pretty much everyone, this frame breakage was simply a part of the double vision that had been ongoing throughout that performance. The flashing Dr. Hector Dexter, as played by Rod Grimm, ends up incestuously inviting Bambi/Becky, his real-life sister, for “a romp in the woods.” Jack, as Vic, hits on Cecilia, alias Debbie Grimm, yet another sister-in-law. Kathie Ardell Prentice’s loveseat, velvet pillows and the Boston fern stand she bought at a garage sale in Wells grace the stage, as does a framed print from the Grant home. Debbie Grimm/Cecilia wears a dress she bought at Ricki’s along with her granny’s fur coat. Dave Gunn/Charles is sipping real Scotch from his own personal flask. And on it goes. As Jack Grant observes: “I mean, that was part of the thing; that the people that were doing the parts were, you know – I mean, you all – everybody knows each other quite intimately. So, I mean, that was part of the humour of it. And, you know, Dave Gunn with his English accent was always – everybody knew Dave and, you know, so we could laugh and enjoy that part of it” (2002). Indeed, for as much as Roy views this humour generated by the juxtaposition of fictive and mundane roles as frustratingly serendipitous and best done without, the fact is that it remains tellingly and doubly present in Kersley Player productions. This section is an exploration of these audience-performer connections,

connections which affect how the plays, their Players and their props are read and understood, while utilizing theories of doubleness.

Amphibology, as Roland Barthes once dubbed it, is a state of binocular dipopia – the process of seeing double – of seeing two things at once and delighting in the unresolved dialectic, in the ironic wink. He explains:

Each time he encounters one of these double words, R.B....insists on keeping both meanings, as if one were winking at the other and as if the word's meaning were in that wink, so that *one and the same word*, in *one and the same sentence*, means *at one and the same time* two different things, and so that one delights, semantically, in the one by the other. (1977, 72; emphasis in original)

Meaning is found in the wink, in the semantic dialogue. Writing on the workings of irony, Linda Hutcheon observes that irony is about the oscillating play between multiple meanings:

Irony is a semantically as well as ideologically slippery beast. Its very doubleness – the need to keep literal and ironic meanings afloat together – disrupts any notions of meaning as single, stable, decidable, complete, closed, innocent, or transparent. The double, complex meaning of irony is graspable only in context and with the acceptance and understanding of simultaneous double-voicing. To use a famous visual analogy, it is not a case of seeing, in that well-known ambiguous form, either a duck or a rabbit; we must see both at once or we are not dealing with irony. We may alternate rapidly between two semantic poles, more rapidly than our eye will move from duck to rabbit and back, but this vibration or oscillation refuses resolution into either pole; the doubleness is held in tension always. (1991, 11-12)

Indeed, the fun of irony and the amphibologous wink is the tension between meanings, between two poles or roles. And theatre, as a play-form, is particularly fertile forum for enacting this wink and holding this tension.

Given that a theatrical performance is a “highly charged in-between liminal space” (Schechner 2002, 64), performers end up “exist[ing] in the field of a double

negative. They are not themselves, nor are they the character they impersonate. A theatrical performance takes place between ‘not me...not not me’” (Schechner 2002, 64). Performers are not themselves, yet at the same time they are not *not* themselves, as Richard Schechner points out: “It isn’t that a performer stops being himself or herself when he or she becomes another – multiple selves coexist in an unresolved dialectical tension” (1985, 6). Yet, despite the undeniable presence of this dialectic, what remains the prevalent method for acting in this day and age is realism, the idea that performances should be realistic and that performers should disappear into a role, enveloped by it and thus *becoming* the character. The dramatic illusion should be complete.

For the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, realistic acting’s denial of the inherent “not me – not not me” factor of performance is flawed. To this end, he developed a method of acting, which fundament is in openly exploring, expanding and playing with this dialectical tension. In that space between role and actor, between character and performer, between fictive and mundane, a dialogic interplay can occur between characters, performers and audience members. Combating the trance-like state that the dramatic illusion of realistic acting succours, Brecht argues for “bad” acting:

Let us go into one of these houses and observe the effect which it has on the spectators. Looking about us, we see somewhat motionless figures in a peculiar condition: they seem strenuously to be tensing all their muscles, except where these are flabby and exhausted. They scarcely communicate with each other; their relations are those of a lot of sleepers, though of such as dream restlessly because, as is popularly said of those who have nightmares, they are lying on their backs. True, their eyes are open, but they stare rather than see, just as they listen rather than hear. They look at the stage as if in a trance: an expression which comes from the Middle Ages, the days of witches and priests. Seeing and hearing are activities, and can be pleasant ones, but these people seem relieved of activity and like men to whom something is being done. This detached state, where they seem to be given over to vague but profound sensations, grows deeper

the better the work of the actors, and so we, as we do not approve of this situation, should like them to be as bad as possible. (1964, 187)

He further writes that “bad” actors never *become* a character, never transform into what they are portraying:

The actor does not allow himself to become completely transformed on the stage into the character he is portraying. He is not Lear, Harpagon, Schweik; he shows them. He reproduces their remarks as authentically as he can; he puts forward their way of behaving to the best of his abilities and knowledge of men; but he never tries to persuade himself (and thereby others) that this amounts to a complete transformation. (1964, 137)

Shattering the illusion, breaking the trance and acting “badly” requires, according to Brecht, the use of the A-effect, the alienation effect, which is “a way to drive a wedge between the actor, the character, the staging...so that each is able to bounce off of, and comment upon, the others” (Schechner 2002, 152-53). With this winking wedge visibly in place, commentaries can be inserted, as Richard Schechner notes:

The distance between the character and the performer allows a commentary to be inserted; for Brecht this was most often a political commentary, but it could also be – as it is for postmodern dancers and performance artists – an aesthetic or personal commentary...Thus Brecht, like the other master performers-directors, emphasizes techniques necessary for this kind of acting: acting where the transformation of consciousness is not only intentionally incomplete but also revealed as such to the spectators, who delight in the unresolved dialectic. (1985, 9)

Delighting in unresolved dialectics, in adlibs and frame breakages, in ironic tensions and meaningful winks, Kersley audiences of Kersley Player performances see double while holding an interpretative dialogue with the plays, the performers and the props. Indeed, as William Beeman once noted, “The collective history, common knowledge, beliefs, and mores known both to spectators and performers form a basis for understanding and reacting to material presented in performance” (1981, 508).

As was already discussed in Act I, audience-performer intimacy is considered a key element in the workings of folk drama. Because of this intimacy, as Bogatyrev observes, “the audience in folk theater continually confronts the role which an actor-peasant plays with the actor’s own private life” (1976b, 47). Given this constant oscillation between two roles and the fact that both are seen at once, in folk theatre, as Bogatyrev further notes, “neither the spectator nor the actor should have the sensation of a complete transformation” (1976a, 52). Indeed, it could be argued that folk drama, at its essence, “is a Brechtian type of performance, wherein both the actors and the audience are constantly aware of the simultaneity of the actor and the role which the actor is playing” (Taft 1997, 134). Pete Drewcock, in eloquently discussing what makes community theatre and the Kersley Players work, describes the dramatic tension of identities that such small-town, role-transparent connections create:

Community theatre works because people come to watch it – they know the actors – that’s part of the reason it works and that gives it – that makes it – there’s tension there. You want them to do a good job, but you want them to screw up, you know, so that you can laugh at them. You can laugh at them later. You can rib them at work and things like that, you know. So of course, that’s all part of the mix that makes it that much better I guess, knowing, knowing the actor on stage I think is – and knowing that you’re going to be yakking with them later about it later, I think that’s all the more fun...It’s a little different being in theatre and *not* to be anonymous, whereas, you know, in Vancouver you’re pretty much anonymous on the stage, except amongst the theatre group there. So, it’s probably a little bit easier too – you don’t have that tension, I guess, which you have to work through with community theatre...I think that that’s one of the reasons we either – we get along better is that we know that we have to go out and work side by side with these people either in the community or at our jobs later on, so we have to respect each other on the stage too, you know. And I think that maybe that’s why some theatre groups don’t work as well as a cohesive group because there isn’t that respect – that sort of imposed respect – that you must have when you work alongside the people you play with. (2004)

A significant part of the performances of the Kersley Players is that audience members are not merely there to see a play and laugh at scripted lines, but are there to see scenes enacted by their workmates and family members. They are there to support and laugh at the Players themselves. They are there to read the “little bits” and feel the contrastive tension.

It is difficult to write about audiences as a collective, uniform-thinking being, since as Michael Taft notes, even folk drama audiences are often comprised of insiders and outsiders, so that “folk-drama actors...play to two audiences at the same time – insiders and outsiders – which results in their productions being partly folk and partly popular” (1996, 210). Gary Minnett observes: “I’m sure there’s people that go to see Roy’s plays and I’m sure there’s people that go because they know people in the play. And that’s probably true anywhere, I would think. I really don’t know, but I think it probably is” (2004). Indeed, as Linda Hutcheon explains, “there is always a problem of access with irony [amphibology, winks, dialectical tension]: those addressed have to ‘get’ it. The context must signal its presence; a community of belief and understanding must be assumed” (1991, 18). Not everyone gets Jack Grant’s reference to Bambi’s sister. Not everyone knows that Flo Guy is wearing “a pair of Mr. Maclure’s fawn coloured corduroy trousers” (Patenaude 1981, 15), or that Rod Grimm is wearing Debbie Grimm’s granny’s fur coat. Not everyone contrasts the quiet-spoken Pete Drewcock with his very silly, extroverted Tooley role. Not everyone notes that the framed panties on the wall in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* refer to the famous underwear-losing scene from *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two-Step*. But many do. Many see the Boston fern stand belonging to Kathie Ardell Prentice in a play context. Many note the contrast

between the wholesome, church-going homemaker and mother, Bobbi Grant, with her screeching portrayal of Phoebe Hipchek with her skin-tight, leopard-print leggings. Many know that the poet Myron from *An Evening With Myron* is a character from an earlier play, namely, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*. Many recognize the workaday skills that have been utilized in a new, playful way to create that set and those costumes. Many know that Gub, the dog from *Tales From Me and Irmie*, was the name of Roy's own beloved Scottish border terrier and poodle cross, and many will know that he got him from Jack Grant. And all will definitely see the man behind the balloon breasts and pink dress. Indeed, even for outsiders who have no personal connections to the Players, Kersley Player performances, as discussed previously, often have open frame breakages and scripted/performative cross-dressing contrasts which, with their inherent doubleness, continually shatter any dramatic illusion.

Although not versed in Brechtian theory, by any stretch of the imagination, Kersley Player performances are filled with A-effects, with elements that call attention to the very constructedness of the play, whether scripted or improvised. In the pirate plays, *The Incredible Pickled Pirate Chase* and *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, pirates sport peg legs which jut jarringly off knees, as the pirates hobble around with their real lower legs in plain sight. There are no attempts to make a limb disappear. In fact, in what is now considered a classic comic scene in *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, the Players play with this fact when they sit and cross their supposed missing legs over their other legs, leaving the peg legs jutting erectly forward (see fig. 4.11). There is no pretence of illusion here. Also in the 1993 performances of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, there is an exit scene for the pirate Louis, in which the Player, Mike Whalen, hits

the stage wall so hard upon his exit that the entire set shakes. In the 2005 production of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*, Ernie Bunwallop, played by Simon Zeegers, wears a painted-on eye patch (see fig. 4.12). During a performance of *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two-Step*, Lester Pettyjohn, who portrays Buster, jumps offstage to retrieve an errant hat. Wanda Zacharias, during a performance of *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, pauses long and hard, as she tries to contain her laughter at the scene before her of male Players in ladies' underwear. With *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*, earplugs were supplied to the audience-goers with a warning about the play's usage of metered prose. At the end of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee*, a stagehand zips onstage to throw a foam mattress on the stage so Ouch can toss Gerbil on the floor, without Paul Nichols (portraying Gerbil) getting hurt. In *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogri-fier*, the stagehands, who play a rather large role having to change the scene from one mad scientist's lab to the other, have the audience laughing with their antics on the darkened stage. And on it goes. Backstage prompts have been heard by the audience. Awkward performative pauses held. Real beers openly drunk onstage. Breasts put on backwards. Players going in and out of their very roles.

Petr Bogatyrev, in his analysis of the semiotics found in folk drama, asserts straightforwardly that this double vision, this audience-performer intimacy, "[t]his dual perception of the actor by the spectator is of great importance" (1976b, 48). He continues: "This dual perception of the performance affirms that it is impossible to identify the player with the role [s]he plays, that no equation can be made between the actor and the character whom [s]he represents, that the costume and mask and gestures of the actor are only a sign of sign of the character portrayed by him [her]" (1976b, 48). The idea that, in

folk drama or community drama, a player's true identity is always going to trump the play-role, that a scripted character is going to play second fiddle to the actor her- or himself, is salient. Yet, what Bogatyrev neglects here is that, in this winking dual perception which can ultimately dissolve the play-role, Players have the potential to become equated with their roles and what their characters are doing onstage, and this, in turn, can be interpreted as "real," or if not quite "real," at least socially problematic in a small community full of role-transparency. In short, the binocular dipopia, the doubleness and double vision, the oscillating wink and ironic tension, the dialogic discourse and dynamic dialectic, can actually compound into a kind of monologic tunnel vision, especially if the role is dealing with taboo areas of Cariboo society like cross-dressing males and aggressively sexual females.

It is no longer Wayne Wark portraying Lulu, a character from *Lace Drakes*, who wears a pink dress; it is simply Wayne Wark in a pink dress, as Gary Minnett explains: "I don't know how many times I've heard somebody say, 'I just could never imagine Wayne Wark in a pink dress.' And I'm thinking, 'Well, that's probably good'" (2004). Dave Gunn discusses the immediate wariness of his workmates to approach him, following his portrayal of Desdemona, a drag queen also from *Lace Drakes*:

DG: Typically when we come offstage after any production – we might have been playing pirates, private detectives, whatever – you come and meet the audience. And you go and shake hands with all the guys from the mill who saw you. And when I came offstage in my black dress and nice wig and my nice long gloves and my high heels – I walked down to say, "Hey, thanks for coming out to see us" – the guys are backing off. [JGJ: *laughing*] I'm not kidding, Jessie.

JGJ: I believe you.

DG: They were backing off 100 percent. (2004)

Pete Drewcock notes the workplace ribbing and avoidance because of his Kersley Player involvement: “A lot of tickets have been sold to people that I work with and they – they think it’s hilarious to bug the heck out of me at work, you know. You’re putting on a dress or whatever it is, you know. Lots of people give you kind of sideways glances and avoid me too, but that’s what happens” (2004). Indeed, as Gary Minnett quips, “We do shower with forty naked men, so they do like to know what our wardrobe is” (2004). And when gender lines are openly crossed in play – however masculine the fetishized female portrayed – the Players’ millworking workmates are indeed slightly wary, needing to test the possible veracity of the play-role through that favoured shop-floor form of teasing and ribbing. If the Players can take the teasing like men, then their machismo is confirmed.

Although farce, as a genre, is dreamily depersonalized, in its enactment with the Kersley Players, it is highly personalized. Audience members have personal relations with the Players and those relations are brought to the plays and colour their interpretations. Dave Gunn recalls a scene from the 1992 production of *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* where he and Wayne Wark have a violent interchange, so typical of farces, but which does not go over well with the Players’ personalized public:

Wayne, who weighs about 300 pounds, comes along and he’s supposed to smack me, and I’m supposed to go down and take my head into the pie, right. But I know how to do these prat falls like that, when he’s hitting me and I know how to go down and hit my forehead on the table, right. And it’s a paper plate, but it’s got shaving cream in it – I think it had, right. It’s supposed to be a lemon meringue pie, little pie thing. And I did this and we did it in practice and I’d hit my head on the table and it’d go a big SMACK, right, with pie all over the place. And we did it down in Kersley and we got complaints about it. The whole two or three front rows went [*sharp intake of breath*] ’cause they’d thought he’d smashed my head into the table. We did it too good. No, we did. We did it too good. But I was comfortable with this, but it was suggested after that we’re not going to do that. (2004)

While there are perhaps several reasons why this scene did not work, including the fact that in farce the little man is supposed to get the better of the big man, what also made it so shocking and apparently upsetting to audience members was that they were seeing Wayne Wark smack Dave Gunn, not B. Bertram Bighorn Smith smack flippant Ackers. The violence was read as real. Acknowledging this interpretation, the Players cut the scene and such censoring of “Roy” plays, by Players aware of this communal double vision that has the potential to narrow into single-stranded tunnel vision, is not uncommon. Lines are changed. Scenes are cut. Violence is toned down.

Recognizing the communal connections that remain *unsevered* even during the liminal play-time, there is, as Pete Drewcock already expressed, a kind of imposed respect on the Players and on their plays. The play can easily become highly personalized, as previously noted by Roy Teed in the preceding Act, so that audience members “can’t separate the actor from the character” (Teed 2004a). Ironically, the very wink that allows audience members to sport a dual perception, a double vision, to see both Bambi and Becky, can undermine itself, creating a myopic, monologic, tunnel vision. The constant interplay between the Player and the role can actually meld the two together. Indeed, doubleness has its single-stranded dangers, as people “take it [the plays] for real” (Dale 2006) and get possessive, rupturing playgrounds.

Erving Goffman once wrote that “[a]n action staged in a theater is a relatively contrived illusion and an admitted one; unlike ordinary life, nothing real or actual can happen to the performed characters – although at another level of course something real and actual can happen to the reputation of performers” (1959, 254). While play is this bounded, liminal, free state of being and doing that plays with and “denote[s] other

actions of ‘not play’” (Bateson 2000, 181), play always has the potential to cease being play, to suddenly become very real and very actual with concrete, real-life consequences for its players. Indeed, what some view as play, as *bonhomie*, as fun, others cannot, will not and do not. The metanarrative signal that “This is play” can so easily go astray, be ignored and misinterpreted. And play can quickly become very serious, as Johan Huizinga notes: “Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid...Play turns to seriousness and seriousness to play” (1950, 8). Playful doubleness and ironic winks can weave into a serious, single-stranded meaning, taking the play into deeper and darker depths wherein communal standings, status, personal identities, marital relations and reputations are on the line. The play of the Players has often unwittingly gone deeper and darker than the Players ever imagined and the promised transportive roles have unexpectedly turned transformative, especially as Eeyore-like audience members have refused to play along. Truly, the boundary between play and serious, between not real and real, is an ever-shifting, supple front that can divide theatre troupes, destroy marriages, ruin reputations, sunder communities, boost individuals, build self-confidence and alienate and engage audiences.

There is a scene from one of Astrid Lindgren’s many fabulous stories about the generally misunderstood and irrepressibly playful little farm boy from Lönneberga, Emil Svensson,¹⁵⁵ in which Emil and his beloved Alfred, the farmhand, are enjoying a quiet and peaceful evening together out fishing. On the way home, as Emil plays his little flute,

¹⁵⁵ For whatever reason, Emil has not really made his way into the English market, certainly not like Lindgren’s other character, Pippi Longstockings. This is truly unfortunate since Emil surpasses Pippi, by far, in my estimation, and is probably the most beloved Lindgren character in Scandinavia.

he suddenly stops and says, “Do you know what I’m going to do tomorrow?” Alfred responds in the negative, but then quickly adds, “Some fresh bit of mischief?” After a bit of thinking, Emil responds, “I don’t know. I never know till afterwards” (Lindgren 2001, 118-19). Poor little Emil’s ongoing problem is that what he sees as play or as being helpful is often interpreted and experienced by others as being decidedly *unhelpful* with rather serious consequences. The Players are not beyond this Emil-conundrum. What begins as fun can become painfully and disastrously serious. Those watching and interpreting the play can fail to get the message “This is play,” as husbands find themselves cuckolded by their farce-performing wives. Equally, those playing can become so lost in the heady, performatively liminal realm that they transgress the strict play rules and engage in “sexual activity that wasn’t part of the play” (Wark 2004). In any case, carefully constructed playgrounds can and do rupture, with play’s repercussions seriously spilling into *real* life.

Questioning my informants about any personal and/or communal conflicts or problems because of “Roy” play involvement, it was mentioned again and again that women have had more issues than men. Wayne Wark comments:

Well, the women – the women have more problems with the contents of the plays than – than the men, for sure. Like Gary and I, we don’t care what we do, you know. If we can get a laugh, then fine. But women are more reserved and that’s fine. I know over the years there’s been several women, “No, I can’t do that.” So we have to change it a little bit and that’s fair enough. I mean, you got to live in the community and some people worry about what other people say. I’m not one of them. I don’t care what they think. No. (2004)

Given the traditional, patriarchal gender divisions of the Cariboo, it is not terribly surprising that the ever-helpful, subordinate mates of men, who are generally expected to

know their place, are very aware of publicly stepping out of it. The lure of role-playing play, though, has tempted many to join the Players, with the result that many have perhaps unwittingly entered a play-form that has had deeper repercussions than first thought. Deleenia Lovell, the only longstanding female Player, comments on the discomfort of certain female Players with their roles and her own avoidance of sexually aggressive roles:

JGJ: Have you had any problems with any of Roy's material? Like any actual plays?

DL: Well, I have chosen to avoid certain roles that he has – sometimes I find a few of the female roles, I didn't find – I just found that the characters were not something I was comfortable acting, so I have said, "No, I'm not comfortable with that" or whatever. Usually – most of the time he tends to write ones for me, like if he knows I'm going to go in it, then he'll – he knows there's things I don't like to do or say or, especially if a woman looks demeaned or anything like that. I'm not big on that kind of thing. But otherwise, no, I've actually been pretty happy with almost all of his plays and the characters in them.

JGJ: Well, that was something that when I was talking to some of the different men involved and they said that sometimes they had problems with what Roy had written – is it going a little too far? They kept saying, "But I think the women had more problems sometimes." That was their understanding, that some of the women had more problems.

DL: And there could have been. But those were roles that I chose not to try out for or whatever. Most everyone that I've ever done, I have never felt offended by it. I wouldn't have – I just wouldn't have done the role. I wouldn't have been in it. But there has been some that I think, "Oh, I would never have done that one because I'm just not comfortable with that character and the things that she's saying" or whatever. So, you know, but unfortunately those tend to be roles – the women that play those roles, we didn't really see them come back. And I'm wondering if it was because of the role or how they felt about it at the time. I don't really know.

JGJ: I guess Roy has written some very aggressive sexual women roles.

DL: Yes, and those are the ones that I refused to do. So it was – I don't mind it if they are so off-the-wall that, you know, that it's just not real. I

know when we did the one where I was a hunchback, well, I mean, this was off-the-wall, this was totally ludicrous, so it was okay even though this was kind of an over-sexed Igor sort of thing, but she didn't do anything lewd or crude. I wouldn't have been able to do it. And sometimes there were words in there – there's some words that I have a lot of problems with and I just said, "Roy, I won't say that word," you know, so and he knows that. And he might get a little tippy about it or whatever but, you know, I just say, "I won't say that word." And he knows and he respects that for me. (2006)

Sagely aware of the fact that her communal standing is affected by her play, Deleenia demands roles that are comfortable for her as a woman, wife and mother, roles that will in no way be taken for real. Recognizing that sexually aggressive roles could jeopardize her reputation, along with that of her family's, she has simply avoided them and been able to keep playing. Many other female Players, though, have ended up risking way more than they bargained for. While boys will be boys and sow their wild oats, the virtue of a woman is communal property and subject to community sanction, even if in play.

In his analysis of play, Gregory Bateson observes that, however *unreal* play may be, it can produce very *real* emotions:

We face then two peculiarities of play: (a) that the messages of signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and (b) that that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent. These two peculiarities sometimes combine strangely...It was stated that the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite. But there are instances where an opposite phenomenon occurs. A man experiences the full intensity of subjective terror when a spear is flung at him out of the 3D screen or when he falls headlong from some peak created in his own mind in the intensity of nightmare. At the moment of terror there was no questioning of "reality," but still there was no spear in the movie house and no cliff in the bedroom. The images did not denote that which they seemed to denote, but these same images did really evoke that terror which would have been evoked by a real spear or a real precipice. (2000, 183)

Husbands sitting in the audience can feel the anger and humiliation of a real affair and the reality of those emotions make the play not play. It can become a kind of invisible theatre, like that developed by Augusto Boal, in which only the players know they are playing. Problematically, though, the Players have done everything in their power to deliver the message, “This is play,” and still the play is invisible to certain people. Wanda Zacharias discusses the imposed respect of community theatre because of the role-transparency of small towns and how this can muddy the play message:

But a lot of it is – you can take two different ways, so it was up to whoever was hearing it to interpret it whatever way they wanted, right. And that doesn’t mean that that character up on the stage is *you*. You’re *playing* a part, okay. And that, that’s interesting too because when I played the strip-o-gram, okay, I was *playing a character* onstage. That wasn’t Wanda. That was my character up there, right, but I had people approach Dennis, “Oh, is she that crazy in the bedroom?” type thing. He just looked at them like, “For heaven’s sake, it’s just a play!” But, you know what I mean – people can be or think that that’s *you* up there, right, so it’s when you put things into it. I remember though, if I can remember what play it was, where we even said to Roy, “Change that line a little bit, that’s a little bit too harsh, too sexually harsh. Tone it down” or whatever, you know...I didn’t have any really hard lines where it wasn’t comfortable to say the lines, so I was safe...It is a community spirit right. You’re not out in Hollywood somewhere and so there’s got to be that respect too. I think there was one play where I hugged Dave Gunn – oh actually, he bent me over and planted a kiss, right – so Jean [Dave’s wife] didn’t have a problem with it and neither did Dennis so we thought, “Let’s do it!” Because it’s just, you needed it to make the point in the play, right, but it was just a kiss, or you could take the hat and move it over your face, or whatever right. But no, no, and it didn’t, it wasn’t taken farther either, you know. But that was a very good point because in smaller communities people are very possessive of each other and I wondered if that’s why a couple of them didn’t come back was because the spouse wasn’t too crazy about it. (2006)

Despite all the signals declaring, “This is play,” people can still be possessive in their interpretations, equating roles with Players. Understanding the potential for this play-killing possessiveness, Wanda and Dave sought out the permission of their spouses for

their onstage kiss in *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, ensuring the comfortableness of themselves and their spouses before proceeding. For the women playing Roy's sexually aggressive females and having to say *unsafe*, sexually harsh lines, the roles – while perhaps liberatingly fun for a time – are ultimately too deep. Spousal, familial and communal censure is a high price to pay for play. Indeed, as the Players perpetually struggle to find potential Players, they are met with a widespread reluctance since “people are just a little kind of turned off to the idea of performing *that* kind of play” (Drewcock 2004). While enjoying “Roy” plays as spectators, many also know full well that they can be dangerous to perform.

“Roy” play dangers do not all stem from possessive audience interpretations though. In the intensity of liminal *communitas*, Players can forget themselves so completely and become so carried away in the play that they transgress play boundaries. Roger Caillois explains how the very intensity of play can lead to the fatal deviation, to its own undoing:

It is remarkable that in *agôn*, *alea*, and *mimicry*, the intensity of play may be the cause of the fatal deviation. The latter always results from contamination by ordinary life. It is produced when the instinct that rules play spreads beyond the strict limits of time and space, without previously agreed-to rules. It is permissible to play as seriously as desired, to be extremely extravagant, to risk an entire fortune, even life itself, but the game must stop at a preordained time so that the player may resume ordinary responsibilities, where the liberating and isolating rules of play are no longer applicable. (2001, 49-50; emphasis in original)

When the play ceases to stop and moves into reality, the sexual innuendoes and sexual allusions of “Roy” plays darkly turn to actions, as Wayne Wark explains:

Oh, there's been some things happen over the years between different people. Not everybody can separate those things and – and at one point there was a fair amount of alcohol consumed at practices and that's been

ended and at the time I thought, “Oh, that’s a little harsh.” But it causes problems. It causes problems. So it was – that was brought on by sexual activity that wasn’t part of the play. (2004)

The fact is that Players who were merely farcically playing with sexual deviations and infidelities have *actually* deviated and committed infidelities. And seeing as the real world is not full of happy “Roy” play endings, for those few Players participating in “sexual activity that wasn’t part of the play” (Wark 2004), in such dark play, the repercussions have been painfully messy. Such deviations simply confirm the danger of the play, as do the assertions of a Player’s ex-spouse that intense play involvement contributed to the dissolution of the marriage.¹⁵⁶ With jealous husbands, affairs and divorces laid to blame at the feet of the Kersley Players and their risky play of their risqué subjects, the Players and their playground certainly rupture, feeding the very social dramas which have fed them.

¹⁵⁶ Although, one could interpret the intense Player involvement as a way to escape what was not a very happy marriage for various other reasons.



Fig. 4.11. The famous peg-leg scene from *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* (1993), as Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark, left) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett, right) take a breather. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.12. Simon Zeegers preparing for his role as Ernie Bunwallop in the 2005 production of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*. He is aided by Anna Arnett, who paints on his eye patch. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Acting Away: They Took it Further and Got More Serious
In which I investigate the interactions between the Players and Theatre BC audiences and how this has affected the play-form.

When the Kersley Players joined Theatre BC in 1990, taking their grassroots play-form onto a larger, out-of-town stage, they were met by a critical audience of “serious” and “cultured” amateur theatre aficionados, along with trained dramaturgical professionals, who repeatedly pointed out to the Players just how much they apparently lacked, how ill-suited their farcical play-form was to serious theatrical forums and how pedestrian and plebeian their performances. Wanda Zacharias recalls: “What an eye-opener when you get down to these events, because the people were pretty hoity-toity. They’re not, like, as laidback. It’s like, we’re just there to enjoy ourselves and if we made other people laugh, great” (2006). Early interactions with Theatre BC were highly critical affairs, with the Players being lambasted for their performances and Roy Teed being vivisected for his writing. Yet, despite the hoity-toity airs of the competitions and the gross vivisections, the Kersley Players kept coming back, competing with their farces and eventually “earn[ing] that respect over the years” (Drewcock 2004), even as they accrued dozens of awards. Deleenia Lovell notes: “Originally, I think the adjudicators were just not ready for this type of work, you know, but as time went by, it became apparent just by all the awards we were winning that they were liking what we were doing, so just change, right? Nobody likes change – so they just don’t really accept it very well at the beginning. But then they have to” (2006). Changes have certainly occurred in both parties as a result of this interaction between the Kersley Players and Theatre BC, with its “Major” aims. This section is an examination of these interactions, as “Roy” plays have been removed from their winking, doubled, community hall, dinner theatre context, acted away on the

stages of “real” theatres in front of single-minded theatre connoisseurs and what this has meant for the community and the Players.

Given that the Players, initially, had little to no formal training in theatre, they were incredibly naive novices when they travelled to Williams Lake in 1990 with *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two-Step*, ill-prepared for their reception. Wayne Wark discusses the negative reaction to and brutal criticism of Roy’s writing at those early zone competitions:

WW: His writing is totally different and was totally – it was totally criticized the first few times we went. It was just – it was brutal. Like, I – I got mad myself, and I – I – I was – I mean I was just an actor. I didn’t have to answer to any of that but it really frustrated me to think that somebody. Who are they to say whether it’s right or wrong, you know?!

JGJ: Well, what was their issue with his writing? I mean what?

WW: They just – it just was – it – it was just something that wasn’t – that they had – they had never seen it before. They hadn’t experienced it so they didn’t know what to do with it.

JGJ: They didn’t know how to react.

WW: They didn’t know how to react, so let’s react negative. That seems to be the easiest way for people to react, so that’s what they did. (2004)

The Players quickly learned that their very originality did not go over well within a culturally elitist theatrical milieu with “Major” aims, as Dave Gunn comments: “I don’t know why Roy didn’t get any higher recognition in BC. In my opinion, his work’s been as good as anything I’ve ever seen, but then, as I’ve said before, I’m a not a theatre critic. But maybe it’s because he always kept pushing Canadian work and the people want to see bloody redone American work. That was always his problem” (2004). Apparently problematic because of their originality *and* their generic form, “Roy” plays were initially not welcome at the competitions, as Judy Arnoldus recalls:

I remember when we took one of the very first plays we took and it got terrible reviews and they said – and the play that won was just like so bizarre, but it was a really serious one and it was a war one and it was, it took place in one room or something – but they told us that the judges don't like farces and they don't like comedies. I guess they just don't have a sense of humour. I guess they should have told us that. But Roy's idea was, "Too bad, I like farces and I like to make people laugh and that's what the actors like to do." (2004)

Indeed, according to Gary Minnett, the theatre snobs of this world are afraid of farce and its overwhelming popularity and widespread appeal:

I think they're scared of them. Theatre-wise, from anytime we've done Theatre BC competitions and what-have-you, I think people are very afraid of the fact that – just as an example, we went to Prince George to the – can't think of what it's called – the Northern zone competition and we went up as a group – we went up on Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night, and then we were on on Saturday night. Wednesday night, there was about six people there in the audience. Thursday night, there might have been a dozen. Friday night, I think there was something like fourteen or fifteen. We showed up on Saturday with a comedy and a farce and the place was full. And yet, you have these theatre people kind of look down their nose and say, "Well we can't do that because..." We actually had an adjudicator tell us – the very first words out of his mouth were, "Before I say anything, I just want you to know that I don't like farce." That makes it hard on us to – how you break into that. But now, ten years has gone by, and just about every festival we've gone to or if we're in the northern zone, somebody in the southern zone will do one of Roy's plays for a festival play. And I really like to see that. And they all say the same thing. When they do that, they fill the place up. I don't have anything against – I like good theatre. I like any kind of theatre that makes you think, cry or laugh – you've done your job. But if ten people come to this play and 110 people come to this play, there has to be a reason. It's not just because it's Saturday night. You know, we've done plays on Tuesday night and filled the place up. (2004)

The Players learned firsthand that, in the playground of proper, capitalized Theatre, farce is decidedly disreputable, "one of the least respectable members of the family of drama" (Messenger 1980-81, 3). The fact that the farces they performed were not even "classics" of the genre, a Feydeau or an Ionesco, something Old World French or consciously

posited under some grand, theoretical, theatrical movement like Absurdism or Theatre of Cruelty or Epic Theatre, simply made them even less respectable, if that is even possible.

Wrong from the get-go, the Players could not seem to get anything right on this larger stage and in this professional playground. Judy Arnoldus recalls how their very practices of warm-up and cool-down were disapproved of:

Well, I remember the first play, or one of the first ones, we took down to the zones in Williams Lake and I don't think we realized how hoity-toity some of the people were down there. 'Cause I remember we did our play and what-not and then the guy, one of the guys running the play things, "Yeah, and you Kersley Players can just go back in there and take your bottles out of there!" I guess we'd left some beer cans or something in our change room. Oh, they were quite mad about it. You know, it's not like we were fall-down drunk. We were having a few beer while we were getting ready. Oh, but they were quite upset with us, you know. (2004)

Figuring out the new playground's rules, they learned that drinking, whether onstage or backstage, is a decided "no-no" (Drewcock 2004), that playwrights should apparently never direct their own plays, that "real" plays consist of multiple acts and are nearing two hours in length and that sets are to be sandbagged and not immovably screwed down on stages:

DG: And I think Chuck Mobley's still pissed off with me. That was on *Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* because, as you know, everybody who's in the play does all the setting up and what-have-you or assists prior to that. And we had this stage to set up and he's very possessive of his Correlieu theatre and I started screwing everything down into his floor, right. We used to just sandbag it to make sure things don't move, but I thought, well, a better way is going to be to screw it down. So he wasn't too happy about that.

JGJ: That was the millwright in you making it.

DG: Well, make sure it won't move. (Gunn 2004)

Indeed, awed by the literally larger stages, the Players once made the gaff of redesigning their set at the last minute, so that it would “fit” the dimensions of the new stage, a decision which ended up throwing off the entire performance, as Dave Gunn notes:

We did a great show down here [Kersley]. It was good. And then when we went up to Prince George and said, “Christ, look at the size of this.” So, we started building a bigger stage. And then the further away from the tables we were, there wasn’t that intimacy for *Rutabaga Ranger* as when we’re down here. There’s not that closeness and everything was a little bit off because it was different. We’d put a side on... Went up there to a bigger stage and then after that we had a big team meeting and said, “We’re going to make them bring their – or if we have a venue where we have a big stage, we’re going to pull it into *our* stage. We will not use – we’ll not get intimidated to [go big].” (2004)

While no longer intimidated to go big with their sets or to change their farcical format, the Players did go big in their troupe visions, weathering the pointed criticisms, learning the playground’s rules and setting their collective sights on winning the zone competition and making their way to Mainstage, the provincial competition.

Despite the initial headwind, the Players kept playing, kept coming to zone competitions with their original farces and, eventually, they made headway. Players won more and more awards and the adjudicators began to “finally come around and the odd one, you know, they’d say, ‘Oh, that was a fantastic play but we can’t send you down – we can’t let you win, ’cause it’s just too off-the-wall, you know, people won’t know how to react’” (Wark 2004). In 1994, with *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles*, the Kersley Players, while not the zone winner, were sent to Mainstage as a so-called “workshop play.” This was their first introduction to the provincial stage and the provincial stage’s first interaction with a “Roy” play. As a workshop play, the Players were not competing in the provincial competition, but were there to work intensively

under the guidance and direction of theatre professionals “to explore processes that will be useful in rehearsals and in making performances” (Schechner 2002, 198), exploring emotions and training skills. For all the Players involved in that play, this was the first time that they had ever truly “trained” dramatically. With the play’s roaring success, as was discussed previously, the Players were provincially noted for their “cutting edge humour” (Teed 2004a) and brought back to their dinner theatres in Kersley an increased awareness of their theatrical placement in the province, as well as professionally honed skills. Pete Drewcock discusses the dramaturgical development of the Players, as honed by professional audiences, and how that has affected the Kersley dinner-theatre audiences:

I guess when we started we didn’t know – we really didn’t know anything about acting other than what we brought with us from grade school and things like that. Roy was the only who knew anything at all about theatre. So, we were all very, very green at the start and I think that’s one of the things that the audience liked about us was that we were – people felt close to us, even though we were on the stage away from them, the fact that we were very, very green was kind of an endearing quality, I guess. We never put ourselves above our audience type of thing, you know. And I think that’s changed a little bit as we’ve learned more about acting, more about directing, more about stage design, things that – the performances have got a little slicker and cleaner, not cleaner as in the sense of [JGJ: I got you.]. But they’re – we’ve become more mainstream, I guess, in our performances, but definitely not in the content. And I think that the audience – and I think the audience likes that. They’ve grown with us. The audiences have become more sophisticated along with us. And I think it’s been for the better. We are much more comfortable on stage now just because of we more know what we’re doing I guess than we did way back then. It was really kind of nail biter, stuff that we did back then, you know, because for one thing we didn’t know if it was going to be accepted and we didn’t really know how to present it, you know. But I think it’s got a little more comfortable now. We’re more comfortable with each other, know more about what’s involved in rehearsing and presenting everything, so it’s – people have got much more comfortable with it, I guess. (2004)

No longer “very, very green,” the Players understand the performative process much better and are much better at enacting it, at distancing themselves, and the Kersley audiences increasingly understand what to expect. The lines between the two have been more decisively, seriously and sophisticatedly drawn, although not necessarily for the better, according to many, who bemoan the loss of intimacy and closeness and sense of belonging.

“Changes in the audience lead to changes in the performances” (1985, 16), Richard Schechner succinctly states. As the Players began acting away, performing in front of theatrically cultivated and dramatically professional Theatre BC audiences, the performances not only changed, but also the plays and the Players. For many of the original Players, things took a decidedly serious turn and the Players lost their fun. Indeed, “they took it further and they got more serious” (Grimm and Grimm, 2004). Rod and Debbie Grimm discuss the development:

DG: Things got, you know – more experienced actors, the competitions are a little bit more – they took it further and got more serious. I think we were just doing it for entertainment and fun and stuff and it got a little more serious, so we decided to watch.

JGJ: And you’ve been going to a lot of plays, I mean, yeah – I mean, what have you maybe noticed from the beginnings to, you know, more recent? Any like changes?

RG: Well, they’re getting way more professional, if you want to call it that. I mean the props are way better.

DG: The lighting.

RG: The lighting is better. Of course, the acting has got to be better.

DG: Well, ’cause they’ve got more experience and plus they’ve pulled more from out of the community, because I think like Roy said it’s hard to get people to come out.

RG: It's quite a commitment.

DG: And it is a huge commitment and stuff like that. But yeah, I still enjoy going to them and stuff, but no, I think I've did my day of acting. Like I wouldn't mind going down and helping behind-the-scenes and stuff like that, but just not the commitment of going night after night.

RG: Well, we went to practice, but it wasn't work 'cause, I mean, if you forgot your lines or anything, it wasn't a big deal.

DG: No, and I remember your dad there too like: "So what I forgot my lines? Who cares?" We're performing it for everybody, so everybody's laughing at that sort of thing. It was sort of a part of what it was all about at that time.

RG: Dave Gunn always had his flask of scotch there.

DG: Although I know Roy would, even then – 'cause he took it a lot more serious I think than we did.

RG: Well, he wrote it. He wanted it to be.

DG: Yeah, well, he wanted it to be the way he planned it. And he'd be behind the scenes going, "*Come on*, people! People!" And we'd be [muttered whispering of "Fuck off"[]]. And I think that's when your dad went, "Oh, so what? I forgot my lines." And he's telling Roy in the back – this who's yelling, "*Come on*, people!" (2004)

As outsiders began interacting with the plays, the Players and the playwright, bringing their outsider eyes, values, comments and theatrical skills, the Kersley Players became, for many, Kersley in name, venue and fundraising only; some essential kernel of community being irrevocably lost. As Michael Taft notes, "folk drama...dilutes its intimacy when played before outsiders" (1996, 209-10), when grassroots theatre is uprooted from its locale.

For the original Kersley Players, the whole impetus was to have fun. To this end, lines forgotten were laughed off and "raw humour" (Zacharias 2006) – humour that adlibbed and improvised and was generated on the spot during performance – was

encouraged. Indeed, as Wanda Zacharias notes, the flaws, the frame breakages, were heartily appreciated by their audiences: “And so what if there were a few flaws; it made the people laugh more. You didn’t have to be perfect, right” (2006). It truly “was sort of a part of what it was all about at that time” (Grimm and Grimm 2004). The practices were not work and the performances were not perfect and had no intention or pretence of being so. The Players were simply “a group of buffoons doing something and having a great time doing it” (Jack Grant 2002). And then a fateful decision was made to take the show on the road and join Theatre BC. No one really recalls what prompted that decision, other than a sense of curiosity – that it might be fun and they could perhaps learn a thing or two. Yet, in uprooting their grassroots theatre, the Players embarked on a journey that split the troupe itself and distanced themselves from their very roots. Judy Arnoldus discusses the factors that changed the troupe’s dynamics:

Well, I think there was a couple factors and one factor was when it got to be a serious thing and we decided that it was going to go on the road. And they voted on that and I guess the majority must have won. I didn’t really think that many people were serious, that serious about it. But that, and then they started bringing in people from out of Kersley – like it was a pretty cliquey group. It really was. And they even accepted people like Gary Minnett and stuff like that, but then it started getting a few more people, like some Quesnel Little Theatre kind of got involved, a few more. I mean, right now really how many people from Kersley are in the Kersley theatre? There’s none or very few... Yeah, so it went from the kind of improv-type of – I mean, there was quite often – I mean, it was – we’d have a play and somebody’d miss two pages, but like hey, it went on! Or you know, you’d miss a line and somebody would say your line for you or you’d hear somebody from the back shouting out your line, you know. That was before the days of the, you know, the intercom and what-not. You know, I remember one time, Wayne Wark standing there – and he’s so big anyway – and he’s standing there and he goes, “By God, I think I forgot my line.” Well, the whole audience just burst – everybody just started – but only Wayne could get away with that. But now, I mean if you did that now, he[Roy]’d strike you dead. (2004)

Absorbing the critiques of the Theatre BC audiences, Roy Teed and the Players began to understand more fully what is expected of *real* theatre: “When Roy got more mixed up with Theatre BC and the competitions, that’s when it – that’s when it got real serious” (Wark 2004).

Since *real* theatre requires *real* actors and *real* plays, the adlibbing, improv, raw humour became a decided no-no and the practices hard work. That freedom to play with characters, to go in or out, to be dialogic fun, narrowed as the scripted word became alpha and omega, a monologic authority:

WZ: But one thing with Roy, too – like in the early days, he would just let you develop that character, okay. Just take that character and run with it. And he gave you freedom to play a little bit with that player, not be such a rigid character. But I found in later years, a little more stricter, more directed...

JGJ: So that freedom to play a bit with character

WZ: Yeah, that narrowed. It narrowed. (Zacharias 2006)

Roy began running the Players using a “heavy-fisted type of system” (2004), as Wayne Wark calls it. His plays “started to get longer and Roy was writing plays that he wanted, was hoping to go to zones” (Zacharias 2006). Auditions even became customary for a time – one having to be *good* enough to be a Player, since “you need to be able to act to do them [the plays] properly” (Teed 2004a):

Well, there was a couple years – some of us had been in there for years – you had to go to *try-outs*. You had to *try out* for parts. And I just thought, “*Okay*, you know, that’s *fine* [*warily*].” And, well Roy was growing too right, so he had – he was looking at things differently too. But you’ve got a handful of people who will play any part that you ask them to. It doesn’t matter and their hearts are in the right place, right, that it would be pulled off anyway. But when you got to go for try-outs – *whatever*. “Have fun, you guys” [*said in goodbye tones*]. (Zacharias 2006)

Truly, with eyes attuned to the Major aims of *real* theatre, Roy and some of the Players were “looking at things differently” – the Players arguably becoming more of an avenue for feeding individual egos than generating heartfelt community spirit, as Wanda

Zacharias discusses:

I just felt that when the plays started winning awards, okay, then it kind of changed. It became more – okay, which is great for Roy, don’t get me wrong, it was fantastic to see Roy be recognized for his talents. We just did the plays, right. But then it got to be a little more serious and you don’t mind that. You’ve got to grow, but then sometimes when you get outside people in and you get more people involved, heads lock; you lose the true spirit of what you’re doing. And that was one thing I always loved of your mom was she kept that true spirit in mind and she would even lock horns with Roy over a little bit and say, “Hey look, we’re doing this for fun,” you know, and just try to keep it at a true level where it wasn’t this highfalutin. Like when we won our first award for the play to perform out of town, like it was an honour, like us? Us?! But what an eye-opener when you get down to these events, because the people were pretty hoity-toity. They’re not like as laid back. It’s like we were there just to enjoy ourselves and if we made other people laugh, great. But we were also really thrilled that Roy’s – his type of comedy and his angle on things is so different, to be recognized, like for a writer that would be a dream come true, right. I mean this little community – all of sudden, we’re performing in Chilliwack, in Creston and Prince George. It was just great, you know, that sort of stuff. “Let’s just take and see. Have fun with it” – that’s all we kept saying, “Let’s just have fun with it. Don’t get so serious because then it tends to fall apart.” But the real, original, raw group, I thought were just awesome people to be with. And then when some couldn’t ’cause they had other commitments, and then you bring in new people that aren’t quite as – I don’t know – open to the true “Let’s just have fun with it.” They want recognition. They want to shine. They want to be “the star.” Whereas we never felt that way, the original cast. It was like we just got together as community people like putting on a little show. I saw that shift and I talked to a couple of the other Players about it and I thought, “Nah, I don’t like that political end of it.” So I backed away. And fair enough, that was my choice...But it’s interesting who doesn’t want to play what part and who’s trying to fight to be “the lead” and I just thought, “Oh brother”...When it gets to that dog-eat-dog amongst the Players, especially when you bring in new people – one person wants to outshine the other – the heart’s not there. (2006)

Indeed, for many former Players, the roots of the grassroots are no longer there. The communal fun is gone.

As mentioned by Rod and Debbie Grimm, even with the first play, Roy was more serious about the whole production than the others, “want[ing] it to be the way he planned it” (Grimm and Grimm 2004) – his own monologic vision. The Players have been a vital avenue for Roy to express his creativity, develop his writing skills and ultimately be validated for these things. He has been recognized and rewarded. He has carved a niche for himself in the playwriting market and even receives royalties every now and again as other theatre troupes perform his plays. And the community does in no way begrudge him this, despite all the talk of how sophisticated and professional and distant the Players have become:

All Roy’s plays are original, right, and from a small area like this, he got to zones. Like that is really something. That’s an achievement, that’s an accomplishment, that’s hard work... Well, a couple of Roy’s plays were performed by other theatre troupes. That’s a compliment, right. That’s awesome. So, he’s grown. His writing, his – everything about has grown. How could it not? And we’ve often thought we’re really proud of him, that even though the dynamics of the Players themselves have changed, he still grew. And, you know, from a little place like this, way to go, Roy.
(Zacharias 2006)

Yet, the personal renown and growth have come at a communal cost. But, for Roy, all the talk of the Players being too sophisticated, too serious, too professional, is superfluous since growth is inevitable:

But you know this is something I hear from the actors, like Wayne Wark, all the time that we’ve got too professional or too sophisticated, but I think that if you don’t grow then you just – you’re stagnant. And have you seen any Hixon plays? [JGJ: No, I haven’t.] I think they’re a company that are – that is stagnant because they have the same level of incompetence today as they did five or six years ago, you know. And what do you hear from the audience members? “Oh, we go to see, ’cause it’s hilarious when they

screw up.” Well, sure it’s hilarious. It’s not hilarious when you’re onstage and you screw up. But they – they don’t – they don’t seem to grow any. And we – I think we have grown. I mean we won the best production and took a play to Mainstage and competed with all the rest of the province and we didn’t win there but we certainly didn’t embarrass ourselves...So your Dad is right, we have got more sophisticated. Absolutely. We’re light-years beyond what it was like we he was in the plays. Beyond that. I mean, there’s just no comparison. It doesn’t mean that he couldn’t step in to this play that we’re going to try to do here and do it, ’cause he could, ’cause what he would find, I think, is that he wants to be unsophisticated and rely on notes on the ceiling and stuff, which is fine, but there’s going to be a huge pressure to bring his level up from the other actors. (Teed 2004a)

Indeed, a Player admitted to me that when new Players do not rise to that pressure, do not bring their levels up, it can be rather offensive: “Sometimes you get a new person in and maybe they don’t understand the commitment and then they don’t give the 100 percent that we are, so then it does kind of offend you a little bit.” The fact is that many community members now see the Players as having very high standards, which is intimidating and, ultimately, “makes it harder every year to get people” (Teed 2004a) to come out and play.

Richard Schechner once observed that “when theatre, or acting, becomes too serious it destroys its own essential base: play” (1969, 12). The loss of the play, of the fun, as the Players “took it further and got more serious” (Grimm and Grimm 2004), has irrevocably changed the intimacy of the performances. Jack Grant notes:

It was fun. It was all for, you know, virtually for the community. And I think that’s probably where I left off – when it left the community, when the town – when the – I’ve always considered myself from Kersley, never actually from Quesnel. When the town started getting involved, I don’t know, I didn’t feel like entertaining them. Like I had no personal commitment to them or any bond towards them. They weren’t my friends, you know...My kids didn’t go to school with them, you know. So, I didn’t have that feeling any more. (2002)

Judy Arnoldus remembers with passion the feeling of shared fun expressed through laughter and more laughter:

But back then, it was more of a – like when they did the first plays, it was more of a relaxed atmosphere, it was more casual, like, it was just a bunch of us getting together to have fun and we did. I – like looking back at it, those were the most fun days of my life. You know, we laughed and laughed and laughed. We'd laugh at each other. We'd laugh at ourselves, you know, and it was – they were more of fun thing back then. Nobody took it seriously. (2004)

Wanda Zacharias discusses the bond developed through honest fun:

I approached Roy – this was a few years ago – and said “Roy, can you write a fun community play? Let's get Jack back, Rod and Deb, see if Lanny and Becky will come. Let's just get some of the old Players back and just have a fun night. Let's not worry about zones.” I miss that core that we had. There was something special. There was a bond with those people. There was something so real and so honest. It was an honest fun, you know. I would love to be a part of that again, but it hasn't developed. (2006)

Because of their increased theatrical self-awareness, the Kersley Players cannot truly return to those green, naïve beginnings. They have learned new things. They have grown. And as Pete Drewcock discussed previously, the community audience has grown as well. They no longer wait for the miscue and the improvisation. They no longer necessarily have a dual perception of actor and character, since many Players are now non-Kersleyites. Indeed, most audience members are not even from Kersley. It has inevitably and irrevocably progressed from a kind of open dialogic form to a closed monologic system.

As the Kersley Players have embraced the monologic, Major aims of Theatre BC, they have earned an expanded reputation. Their plays are now generally well-received at zone competitions. Roy Teed is good friends with the current president of Theatre BC,

John Stuart – a man who has taken and performed “Roy” plays in the Lower Mainland.

“Roy” plays and the Kersley Players now are not only welcomed at the competitions, but they actually have groupies, as Deleenia Lovell observes:

Well, we were always – it’s what everybody was looking for, was “When’s Kersley coming up and doing their play?” you know. I believe they take us seriously. Most of the time the plays that we were in competition with were very serious plays as opposed to what we were doing, or whatever. And we always won lots of awards but they were usually with costumes and, you know, we’d get a best actor award or actress award, but our plays wouldn’t always win. We won a couple times and taken it and it’s been very well-received whether it’s been Vancouver or Cranbrook or wherever we happened to go to. But I think that, I know that actors are actors everywhere, you know, and so when you’re doing somebody’s work, when you’re doing an original piece, they have nothing to compare it to, which is something I think they probably have a hard time in judging because, of course, there’s nothing to compare these plays that Roy’s done, right. But anyway, I’ve always felt really well-received and welcomed, you know, when we go to the competitions... And there’s certain ones – there’s little groupies that we have when we go to these things. There’s like three or four of these from Prince or from William’s Lake and they’re just, like, “Oh, you’re here! This is great!” and stuff. (2006)

Finally deemed good enough to actually represent the zone at the provincial competition, the Players went to Mainstage in 2000 with *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch*, *Whee-hee* and again in 2008 with *The Good Game*. Indeed, at the 2008 Central Interior zone competition, held at the Kersley Hall, three of the five plays performed were “Roy” plays – a decided display of respect for the playwright, his plays and the Players and truly significant considering their initially rocky relations with the Major’s provincial theatre organization. Roy maintains a membership in the Playwrights Guild of Canada and fields regularly enquiring phone calls from theatre troupes province-wide for rights to use his work, especially *The Good Game*, which was critically well-received and enjoyed at Mainstage. So Roy Teed, the Players and their audiences are now truly “light years

beyond” (Teed 2004a) their theatrically clueless, just-for-the-fun-of-it, communally close-knit origins and that seriously distancing growth is felt by many in the community, even as they continue to attend every Player performance.

The Big But: The Christmas Play Exception

In which the playful dynamics of a “Roy” Christmas play are explored, as performed annually at the Kersley Christmas party.

For all their sophistication and professionalization, their seriousness and their distancing growth, the Kersley Players still maintain something of their original, grassroots, just-for-the-fun-of-it impetus, which manifests itself every December at the community’s annual Christmas party and potluck. Jack Grant discusses this exception in contrast to the *real* Players:

I mean, there’s some sort of status thing with being in the Kersley Players. It’s no longer just a group of buffoons doing something and having a great time doing it. Yet, we have maintained that – I mean, I still do the Christmas play and that sort of thing. You know, my character as a mad scientist has been perpetrated through the years. I mean, I think all kids – I think kids that are adults now still are kind of scared of me because of my mad scientist role or that I was a – we used to do Halloween plays or skits as well. If we could get kids crying [*laughing*]. It’s still there, you know, we still do that. But the actual Kersley Players has become almost a status symbol. (2002)

As the *actual* Kersley Players have become status symbols – a description which puts them far beyond their grassroots audience – the Players performing “Roy” Christmas plays are indeed clowning buffoons, whose sole purpose is to have fun while performing in front of a truly grassroots audience of Kersleyites. To this end, all the rules of *real* theatre to remember lines and stick to the script and *not* come out of character simply do not function in this play-form. The Christmas plays are characterized by outright reading of lines, adlibbing, frame breakages, careless abandon. Even the strict writing rule which

Roy employs to never script lines that play off of a character's real-life role are scratched. The Players are typically Kersleyites and their kids. The audience is Kersleyites. This is a play-form done by community members for other community members. In the grand spectrum of the folk-popular drama continuum (Taft 1996, 210), this is about as *pure* "folk" as one is going to get.

The Christmas parties have been a Kersley community tradition for countless decades. Kersleyites bundle up every December and head on down to the Kersley Community Hall with a potluck dish in hand for an evening of eating, socializing, carol singing, sitting on Santa Claus's lap and watching a "Roy" Christmas play. Those same women who cater the dinner theatres hive in the kitchen, organizing the plethora of arriving foil-covered casseroles, bags of buns, trays of squares, bowls of salads, jars of pickles, and on it goes. The long, rectangular tables sprout off the sides of the hall's walls like ribs, while a long row of tables extends like a sternum up the center of the hall, ready to receive the potluck spread. A large Christmas tree typically stands in the southwest corner of the hall and the halls have been decked with tinsel garlands and all sorts of Christmassy images – bells, stars, gifts, snowmen, Santa and so on. After a welcome typically by the KCA president, a blessing is offered on the food and the table order for potluck participation is given. Although, the Players, who are performing right after the dinner, are exempt from this order and have the communal consent to eat first wherever they are seated – a special, status-granting exception. Following dinner, tables are cleared and chairs are moved into rows in front of the stage for the play performance. After the play, old Christmas carol inserts from newspapers past are passed around and the hall piano gets warmed up as songs are sung in anticipation of Santa's arrival. With Santa's

coming, the evening is wearing down. Each child (and there are usually enough for youthful adults as well) receives a brown paper bag containing a mandarin orange, a candy cane and other little sugary sweets, while the ladies in the kitchen busy themselves with clean-up. Framed in this context, the Christmas plays are definitely housed under a customary calendrical auspice, which for many definitions of folk drama (Abrahams 1972; Pettitt 1997; T.A. Green 2009) is an integral component, as explored in Act I, and as such are complements to the custom, since Christmas parties will be had with or without them.

Thematically, the plays are structured around the never-ending threat of Christmas' ruination by mishaps and evil-doings. Yet, like a good "Roy" play, all ends well, with a "Merry Christmas" wished to one and all. Since 1986, many of the same characters have been reappearing annually, making the Christmas plays something of a long-running serial, following their exploits. Naturally, the plays always have Santa, a jolly, nice, plump, seeing-good-in-everyone-and-everything, somewhat naive saint. He is aided in his goodness by his nice, yet critically savvy, wife, Mrs. C. Mogg, the knavish, mischievous, straight-talking elf, heads Santa's Workshop. And Birdwing W. Bliffen, mad scientist and bah-humbugging grinch, does everything he can to thwart the work of the elves, the niceness of the Clauses and the general goodness of Christmas. In recent years, he has been aided in his Christmas-destroying schemes by the mad genius, Phillipa MeanBean Gorgonburper, and the evil genius assistant, P. Pogo. Over the years, various Claus family members and Bliffen kin have made appearances, along with a variety of elves, reindeer, carollers, hermits, hockey players, bunnies, tooth fairies and CBC-radio listeners, but the core characters remain the same, despite taking hiatuses every now and

again. So, these mini “Roy” plays continue with their contrasts and nonsensical realms, although the shock factors and the cross-dressing are definitely subdued. “Big” words still make an appearance, but only in relation to the mad devices developed by Bliffen and Gorgonburper – devices such as, Universal Bi-Polar Dysfunctional Reality Perverters, Trans-Dimensional Niceness Negators, Reverse Polarity Elf Disruption Devices, Resonating Fields of Negating Enzymes, Hyper-Baric Nano-Nudgers, Extreme Entropic Quantum Decalibrators and Reverse Polarity Quantum Mechanical Pi-Negative Meson Defenestrators, to list but a few.

The plays remain parochial and patriotic and are often punctuated with references to Kersley, BC politics, CBC and hockey. They even play with standard “Roy” plays and fictive characters’ real-life identities. For example, in the second play with PMB Gorgonburper, *The Nice Hat*, she and Bliffen have an argument over how to ruin Christmas, which ends in the delineation between “Roy” Christmas plays and regular “Roy” plays getting crossed:

GORGONBURPER

Christmas will happen again if we don’t get our act together.

BLIFFEN

My act is together, you’re the one whose act is untogether.

GORGONBURPER

My act is more together than your act.

BLIFFEN

My act is a thing of beauty, while your act has warts.

GORGONBURPER

My act is perfection personified while your act wears women’s underwear.

BLIFFEN

Whoops.

GORGONBURPER

Wrong act.

BLIFFEN

Wrong play.

In one of the Christmas plays, *Rusty Claus*, where Bliffen's plan to ruin Christmas includes posing as Santa Claus's long lost brother, Rusty, in order to take over operations at the North Pole, comedic tension is created as Bliffen discusses unions in such a way as to openly play with Bliffen's portrayer's, Jack Grant's, communally known role as a stalwart union man:

BLIFFEN

So what are these things? (*points at elves*)

SANTA

These are my faithful elves. They build toys in my workshop.

BLIFFEN

You guys got a union?

HEADBONE

No, sir.

BLIFFEN

Great. First thing we do, Santa, is dump the elves and automate. That ought to up the profit margin by 50%, at least.

Having Bliffen query as to membership in a union is a question many have certainly heard from Jack Grant in real life, whose union involvement at Cariboo Pulp & Paper has included stints as president, vice-president, chief shop steward and contract negotiator. The fact that Bliffen then thinks the lack of a union great and begins discussing downsizing and such is the ultimate ironic turn-around. Indeed, this kind of doubleness is scripted, played with and encouraged in the Christmas plays.

After a few weeks of relaxed rehearsals, the twenty- to thirty-minute Christmas skits are performed with a kind of Brechtian, A-effect abandon. While initially there were attempts to learn lines, when the longest running Christmas Player is Jack Grant, a perennial *mismanager* of lines, there came a point where it just seemed easiest to let the actors take scripts onstage. Now, there is no pretence to dramatic illusion. Players stand onstage with pulpmill-issue clipboards and read their scripts (see fig. 4.13). When a page is finished, it is merely torn off, often with attempts to do so in unison, and cast on the floor. By the end of the play, the stage and the hall floor are littered with manuscript remains. Many of the elves are played by adults who shuffle around on their knees – their lower legs always conspicuously present (see fig. 4.14). For years now, the tallest man there, Gary Minnett, has played the head elf, Mogg, sporting CPP-gumboots sliced up the back and duck-taped to his knees and thighs and wearing his work overalls. All sorts of mad scientist laboratory accoutrements like lab coats and beakers and containers have been “borrowed” from the mill and are glaringly present onstage. The Kersley Player and Kersleyite, Paul Nichols, continues his penchant for performative cross-dressing and consistently performs P.M.B. Gorgonburper. Although initial Christmas Players were all community members, even local politicians (the KCA presidency) on occasion, as the Kersley Players have increasingly recruited Players from the outside, some of those outside Players have also found their way into the Christmas plays as well. Yet, through their performative blending of *real* Kersley Players (outsiders or not), regular Kersleyites and their kids, for many community members, the Christmas plays remain true to the playfully fun spirit and the communally grounded grassroots of the original Kersley Players.



Fig. 4.13. A Christmas play classic – the entire cast of *A Quiet Christmas* (2005) stand onstage reading their scripts. In the middle of the mayhem is, as always, Dr. Birdwing W. Bliffen, Mad Scientist (Jack Grant, centre), in his Cariboo Pulp & Paper lab coat and old toque. Gary Minnett kneels to the right, in his work overalls and duck-taped gumboots. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. 4.14. The elves and Birdwing playing cards in *A Quiet Christmas* (2005). Notice the boots jutting off the knees – another Christmas play classic. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

End Act IV, Scene 3.

*In which “Roy” plays have been analyzed in the context of their performance, thus revealing the communal framing device of the plays, namely, the fundraising dinner theatre, a form that celebrates commensality, its buffet buffering the violent disorder of farce. Not considered a stand-alone form, “Roy” plays, in Kersley, are always performed under the auspice of a “night out,” being a part of a larger social process of largesse and foodways fun. Thus communally contained, it is expected of the plays to be fun themselves, to be farces, and if that is transgressed, if the farces are not served, the Cariboo community protests. Indeed, within the communal context, these performances are read and interpreted and avoided and hated and enjoyed by an intimate double-visioned audience, leading to much para-performative contrast and pleasure as fictive and mundane roles collide onstage. Not **not** themselves, the Players’ real-life identities can be affected by this play, going deeper and darker than ever intended in some cases. Truly, the playful, winking, doubled, dialogic irony – a form encouraged by all the Brechtian-type “bad” acting with its plethora of A-effects – can collapse into a monologic tunnel vision, in which liminal play realm actions are read as and/or become all too real. Sexually aggressive female roles openly cuckold real-life husbands and mark the women playing these roles to such an extent that they tend not to come out and play again. And real-life cuckolding has indeed occurred as Players, in the liminal play realm, have played out the farcical sexual aggression in real life to very communally destructive ends. Wanting his plays to move beyond this constraining communal context and just stand alone, an apparent trait of “real” theatre, Roy and his Players have uprooted their performances from the communal context and brought them to a “real” theatrical context, as created by their involvement with Theatre BC. While initially very theatrically naïve, the Players have become increasingly savvy and trained, aware and sophisticated, as theatre professionals and drama aficionados have cast their critical gazes upon the Kersley Players, who have absorbed them. In this absorption, the Players and their playwright have become “serious,” distancing and uprooting them from their grassroots community audience, who note and bemoan this separation. Yet, despite all their growth, an offshoot of the Players continue to perform a Roy Teed original skit for the community’s annual Christmas party, thus ensuring a very close, intimate and fun performance characterized by a Brechtian A-effect abandon.*

Act V

Lights Down: Dissertational Conclusions and Directions

Scene 1 – Tooling Around the Toolies: A Summation of the Journey to Somewhere

In which I conclude, after much existential angst, that it cannot get any better than this.

Lights up on a forest scene. ALICE, a prim and proper little girl in her dress and pinafore, enters stage right and is obviously in a bit of a muddle. She wanders about confusedly, talking to herself, until she spots a large CHESHIRE CAT sitting on a branch in a large oak tree and sporting a rather smug grin. She stops at the foot of the tree and, biting her lip, decides to ask a polite question.

ALICE

(Timidly) Cheshire-Puss, would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?

CAT

That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

ALICE

I don't much care where...

CAT

Then it doesn't matter which way you go.

ALICE

So long as I get *somewhere*.

CAT

Oh, you're sure to do that, if you only walk long enough.¹⁵⁷

ALICE shakes her head, sighs, shrugs and exits stage left. The CHESHIRE CAT smirks mischievously as the lights go down.

¹⁵⁷ Dialogue from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1955, 29-31).

“What is the point?” I have existentially asked myself again and again during this long process of dissertation production.¹⁵⁸ Truly, when one finally does reach the apparent end, one is supposed to come to and make a conclusive point, ultimately assessing whether one has gone far enough and ended up somewhere, pointedly reaching those aims set forth in introductions and speculating on the courses for other potential journeys. My own quest with this dissertation began with the assertion that, through play and, especially, dramatic play, one can gain great insight into the workings of a community. “By their performances shall ye know them” (qtd. in Schechner and Appel 1990, 1), Victor Turner once succinctly and insightfully said. On this axiomatic foundation, I set out to contextualize – as fully as possible and constantly shifting from local to larger-than-local contexts – the plays of the Kersley Players and, through that in-depth analysis and contextual spectrum, come to a fuller understanding of the dialectic between a community and its play. In short, followers of this dissertational path are supposed to, at this point, have come to know Kersley and its Players, and this knowledge is supposed to be significant and meaningful in some scholarly way. So, this last little Act is a dissertational declaration of significance, assessing the meaningful point of it all.

Where is Here Now?: Imaginative, Folkloristic and Theatrical Significance
In which the imaginative, folkloristic and theatrical significance of this doctoral dissertation is assessed, outlining its scholarly contributions.

There is a scene in Carol Bolt’s play, *Buffalo Jump*, a dramatization of the On-to-Ottawa workers’ protest march of the 1930’s, in which a southern Albertan teacher insists

¹⁵⁸ I admit that I have been sorely tempted to pull a Porky Pig with this conclusion and just stutter, “Bedeep, bedeeep, bedeeep, that’s all folks!” and tap-dancingly yank myself off the stage with the veritable cane around my neck, silenced by self-strangulation. It has become tear-jerkingly ridiculous to me, at times, that I am the world’s leading academic expert (whatever that may mean) on the Kersley Players of Kersley, British Columbia, Canada. The whole PhD process has felt like an Absurdist piece of theatre too many times to count.

upon the study of Old World monarchic systems, having the class list the six wives of Henry VIII, even as Canadian protestors traipse past the classroom window (Bolt 1976, 63-65). For the renowned Canadian *auteur* Margaret Atwood, this scene

just about sums up the approach to Canadian history and culture [and folklore] that prevailed for many decades: history and culture were things that took place elsewhere, and if you saw them just outside the window you weren't supposed to look. The wives of Henry the Eighth may be taken as standing for the deluge of values and artefacts flowing in from outside, from "there;" America, England or France. The values and artefacts...imply that "there" is always more important than "here" or that "here" is just another, inferior, version of "there;" they render invisible the values and artefacts that actually exist "here," so that people can look at a thing without seeing it, or look at it and mistake it for something else. (1972, 18)

Commenting on the state of Canada, Northrop Frye maintains that Canada "is practically the only country in the world which is a pure colony, colonial in psychology as well as in mercantile economics" (1971, xxiii). A colony turned constitution-carting country, Canada remains haunted by a colonial mentality, which ultimately "sets the great good place not in its present, nor its past nor in its future, but somewhere outside its own borders, somewhere beyond its own possibilities" (Brown 1971, 38). The standards espoused and models utilized are often "imported, and therefore artificial and distorting" (Brown 1971, 38), reflecting a chronic Canadian, existential crisis of identity. Insecurities reign and Canadians are hypochondriacs, obsessed with "taking the national pulse like doctors at a sickbed: the aim is not to see whether the patient will live well but simply whether [s]he will live at all" (Atwood 1972, 33). Hero and wonder lists¹⁵⁹ are drawn up,

¹⁵⁹ In 2004, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) held a competition for Canadians to elect "the Greatest Canadian" ever, which the "Father of Medicare," the stalwart socialist, Tommy Douglas, won. In 2007, the CBC launched a campaign to list the seven wonders of Canada, resulting in the following seven

People's Histories¹⁶⁰ and Heritage Minutes¹⁶¹ aired, American-bashing and Anglophilia participated in and Roy Teed farces written, performed and studied. Indeed, though perhaps a banal statement, it is significant that this dissertation is rooted in and on *here* – Canada, a western Canadian community, a Canadian playwright, original Canadian plays, the culture of Canada's frontier hinterlands. As *here* has perennially struggled for significance, for identity, the larger-than-local squabbles, biases and histories of academic disciplines, national psychological underpinnings and dramaturgical directions have affected the very local community's understanding of itself; the ethereal, academic, macrocosmic ideas and ideals being concretely and personally played out in a microcosmic context.

My queries as to the existence of a Cariboo culture were generally met with silence initially, before jokes were typically made about how outsiders must view the toolies and its dwellers. Indeed, over the years, as I have informed people what it is that I study and out of which university I am housed, the responses have been telling, reflecting the generally held Canadian understanding as to who has folklore and/or culture in this country and who does not. In Newfoundland, I have been repeatedly informed that I have *come* to the right place to study folklore. This has been seconded by many BCers, who have told me that I have *gone* to the right place. Those goofy Newfies on their rocky

wonders: the canoe, Niagara Falls, Halifax's Pier 21, the Rockies, the igloo, Old Quebec City and last, but by no means least, prairie skies. None of these made the world's wonder list.

¹⁶⁰ The immensely popular CBC mini-series from 2001, chronicling Canada's development. (See <<http://history.cbc.ca/>>).

¹⁶¹ Sixty-second short films, often glorifying some obscure Canadian historical "fact" (like how the real-life bear who inspired A.A. Milne to create Winnie-the-Pooh was a Canadian bear named Winnipeg, a regimental mascot left at the London Zoo by a Canadian lieutenant during his WWI service in France) and used as TV filler. They've been in circulation now since the early 1990's and have certainly become "a part of our heritage" (See <<http://www.histori.ca/minutes/>>). They are regularly spoofed by Canadian satire shows, namely, *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* and *The Royal Canadian Air Farce*.

outpost, way out there in the firstly settled, firmly established East – they have folk traditions; whereas run-of-the-mill, blah, Anglo-Canadian westerners are too mainstream North American, too new, too modern, too lacking in a cohesive identity, too hegemonic, to have folklore. For the ethnic minorities and regional oddities, their folk traditions are an integral part of maintaining their identifiably distinct piece of the overwhelming, multicultural, Canadian mosaic. As descendents of one of the charter groups of Canada, Anglo Canadians are the powerful, privileged, alabaster grout in this mosaic, allowing for variations, but holding firm all the while. Cultural evolutionists, Anglo Canadians tend to view folklore as the quaint and curious stuff, the “unimportant possessions of the strange, foreign or ‘backward’ people in their midst” (Henderson 1975, 8). Carole Henderson Carpenter explains:

Anglo Canadians have been able to harbour such ideas because of their dominant majority-group position throughout most of the country. The majority of Anglo Canadians have not consciously felt culturally, economically, politically or socially oppressed or inferior. They have not, therefore, been motivated to seek means to express themselves in the nation through their unique traditions as have some peoples, both in Canada and abroad, as a result of positions of inferiority. Regional Anglo-Canadian sub-groups, ethnic minority groups (particularly French and more recently others), and the Native Peoples have been prompted to attempt such cultural articulation through which they have achieved various degrees of general recognition in the larger society. (Henderson 1975, 8)

Thus, regional, ethnic and aboriginal groups have cornered the Canadian market on folklore, or ethnology, as it is called when dealing with First Nations and the French.¹⁶² Prompted in their desire to differentiate by “a sense of political, economic, and social inferiority” (Henderson 1973, 104), these groups are supported in their quest for

¹⁶² See Carroll (2004) for an in-depth investigation of the usage of the two terms in Canada.

acknowledged uniqueness and significance by federal and provincial policies, as well as the application of folklore studies in Canada.

According to Gerald Pocius, a three-fold manifest has defined Canadian folklore and folkloristics, a manifest which defines folklore along the lines of language, region and ethnicity (2000). Indeed, “the concept that marginality equals folklore” (Kuly 2000, 80) is so seemingly central to the definition of folklore that, in looking specifically at the actual academic schools in Canada with graduate folklore programmes, it is “only in regions or amongst people particularly threatened by the socio-political milieu” (Henderson 1973, 104) – illustratively, Newfoundland and Quebec – that one is apt to see folklore legitimized in academe; a legitimization often grounded in romantic nationalism.¹⁶³ Thus focused on the marginalized, it should not be surprising that folklore, as an academic discipline, is itself a marginal field in Canada, as Gerald Pocius notes: “The academic basis of Canadian folklore is problematic; in English-speaking Canada, it has made no inroads in twenty-five years” (2001, 310). This trail-blazing lack has, according to one passionate Anglo-Canadian folklorist, been thanks in large part to the continued adherence to out-dated theories and methodologies, with their romantic and “authentic” ur-form pursuits and longing looks across the Atlantic to *there*, the m-wording Old World with its many monarchic wives, along with the ongoing colonial occupation of foreign academics with their imposed, come-from-away models and their

¹⁶³ Founded in 1968, the Folklore Department at MUN was initially armed with the mandate to instil Newfoundland cultural awareness and pride in the young (Halpert and Rosenberg 1978). Because of this Newfoundland-centrism, despite being the largest Folklore Department in Canada and the only place for Anglo Canadians to do folklore graduate work in English, “it is not possible to identify it [the Department] as a source of a Canadian folklore movement” (Kuly 2000, 80). Indeed, as Pocius states, “the Department has never had a national focus; its teaching and research interests rest primarily on Newfoundland – with a fair number of research projects outside of Canada” (2000, 261).

general ignorance of *here*, Canada and Canadianness (Doucette 1993, 1997).¹⁶⁴

Furthermore, as Carole Carpenter repeatedly notes, Anglo-Canadian “traditions of the mainstream have not been collected systemically because it was never politically necessary or, more recently, politically correct to do so” (1996a, 121). Folklore, as often defined, understood and studied in Canada, is that of “the heritage of ‘the other’” (Pocius 2001, 303). And so, here I am with an apparently decidedly politically *incorrect* and *unnecessary* dissertation on mainstream Anglo Canadians. But, as with Gerald Pocius, I assert that “folklore is a part of every group’s heritage, no matter what its background” (2001, 292), including the British pulpmill workers and the American homemakers, the Cariboo-born salesmen and the Albertan secretaries, of Kersley, British Columbia. Truly, I have always *been* in the right place for folklore, been *somewhere*, and, through my transcontinental journeys and studies, I now bring a small piece of mainstream, Anglo-Canadian BC folklore to the academic auspices of Newfoundland.

I was once asked by a folklorist whether these Kersley Player plays would continue after Roy. It was an age-old folkloristic attempt to authenticate this play-form by ascertaining whether or not these texts would “enter” tradition. And I can unreservedly answer in the negative, although the Canadian academic in me quaffs and insists that I should perhaps show a bit more modality and say that it is quite unlikely that “Roy” plays will survive Roy Teed. Their limited lifespan, though, does in no way detract from their folkloristic significance or their ethnographic insight. Quite the opposite, really, since I

¹⁶⁴ Laurel Doucette’s articles (1993; 1997), as well-articulated diatribes against the Folklore Department of Memorial University, are a fantastic, cathartic read for any grad student feeling particularly frustrated with the entire system. I recall the subversive pleasure of discovering the articles and how they made their way, steadily and stealthily, into many a comrade’s mailbox. We discussed them with such hushed glee. I hope it’s still being done.

would argue that this transient, ephemeral nature fits the boom ‘n’ bust, frontier mentality of the Cariboo and the Canadian west. Lacking the relative homogeneity of eastern Canadian communities with their shared community-oriented and based traditions, the mishmash west has always been rich with individualized traditions (Henderson 1976, 261). Like the frontier itself that perennially sets up camp around resource after resource, frontier traditions cluster around “star” individuals and/or causes and, when that star burns out or goes super nova, the clusters disperse until a new star appears. That traditions of folk drama in the west should follow this boom ‘n’ bust pattern is not terribly surprising.

As highlighted throughout the theatrical history of the local region, dramatic troupes have clustered around such stars as Jo Guy, Charlie Edkins, Mary Robins, Janice Butler, Roy Teed, and new stars and new clusters will continue to appear as long as there are people living and interacting in the toolies. Although sporting no traditional vestigial texts, in the m-word sense with their tangible ties to *there*, the folk drama of Kersley and area does possess a thematic tradition for hyperbolic excessiveness, be it the flamboyant spectacle of musical theatre, the self-pitying melancholy of melodrama or the aggressive mechanization of farce. Such exaggeration is apparently inherent to the frontier and I have argued throughout this work that the farce of the Kersley Players generically fits its place. Jennifer Milner Davis contends that “[i]n the face of irresistible forces – the mechanical demands of the body, the mechanical patterns of habit, the universal laws of mechanics themselves, and beyond all these, the mechanical manipulations of the plot – farce acknowledges our common helplessness” (1978, 87-88). With this acknowledgement of helplessness, farce symbolically reflects the vastation and alienation

so pervasive in the working class of the Cariboo and on the western Canadian front and, through the laughter it generates, toolie-dwellers have found a coping mechanism, a tool to survival.

In her analysis of Canadian literature, Margaret Atwood argues persuasively for the centrality of this survival symbol to Canadianness. Symbolizing the United States as The Frontier, with its ever conquering of the new and its unending dreams for the fabled promised land, and England as The Island, with its self-contained Body Politic (Atwood 1972, 31-33), Atwood explains the “hanging on, staying alive” (1972, 33) preoccupation so integral to Canadianness:

Our central idea is one which generates, not the excitement and sense of adventure or danger which The Frontier holds out, not the smugness and/or sense of security, of everything in its place, which The Island can offer, but an almost intolerable anxiety. Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back, from the awful experience – the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship – that killed everyone else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his [her] survival; [s]he has little after his [her] ordeal that [s]he did not have before, except gratitude for having escaped with his [her] life. (1972, 33)

She continues: “Bare Survival isn’t a central theme by accident, and neither is the victim motif; the land *was* hard, and we have been (and are) an exploited colony; our literature is rooted in those facts” (1972, 41; emphasis in original); facts, which, by extension, ground the Canadian imagination and its sensibilities. To quote again Molly from *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*: “Earlier today Ezekial told me this was a hard country. He was right, it is a hard country and it makes the people who live here hard as well” (2003). While Caribooites and Kersleyites may indeed be hard, the hardness bred into them through the hard, vastating and alienating conditions, what greatly contributes to their hardiness, their ability to survive, is their hearty pleasures in play, in having fun, being

excessive, enjoying farces and laughing. As Vine Deloria contends: “When a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others and hold all aspects of life together without letting anybody drive them to extremes, then it seems to me that that people can survive” (1969, 167).

In seeking to survive, Canadians are “as Canadian as possible under the circumstances,” as a Canadian woman once ironically quipped in her attempt to find some unifying simile to sum up Canadianness. Commenting on this quip, Linda Hutcheon observes, “The self-deprecating irony that underlies such a response has been considered typical of the inhabitants of Canada, a strange country that, according to one historian [W.L. Morton, *The Canadian Identity*], rests ‘on paradoxes and anomalies, governed only by compromise and kept strong only by moderation’” (1991, 1). And so, Canadians, including Caribooites and Kersleyites, continue to accommodate and compromise, to jest and see double, in this slightly schizophrenic, betwixt-and-between nation; in short, they continue to be as Canadian as possible under the circumstances. And in my own quest for dissertational survival, this work has been imbued with such a bi-focal, double-think, schizophrenic, existential irony (see fig. 5.1), which I consider necessary given the subject matter and the nature of the assignment.

On a final note, given the Canadian fascination and preoccupation, academically and imaginatively, with *thereness* as opposed to *hereness*, it is not terribly surprising that, “[t]heatrically speaking, Canada [has been] an occupied country” (Benson and Conolly 1987, 32) for much of its history, dominated by foreign professionals and foreign plays. The factors aiding and abetting this occupation have been many and varied. One critic suggests that the occupation was simply a matter of course since

[t]he very situation of Canada was inimical to drama. The country was too big and too sparsely populated for a medium that is essentially an art of developed cities.¹⁶⁵ It lacked any truly metropolitan centers until after World War II. Its early settlers were puritans who distrusted the theater, and from the first its culture was split into warring traditions – French, English, and, very soon, American too. Canada has been a nation for only 110 years [over 140 years now], scarcely more than a single lifetime, and it has always tended to define itself in relation to its parent countries. It lacks an imaginative myth of itself...Or at least it has never had a myth around which dramatic work could cluster. (Parker 1977, 153)

Too big, too few, too zealous, too young, too lacking in cohesion – Canada was apparently demographically, geographically and imaginatively unable to generate its own dramatic forms, relying instead on imports from America and Britain. Given such a history, it is insightful to examine a home-grown, vernacular Canadian playwright and see what the Canadian imagination generates. It is insightful to examine a *non*-mumming folk dramatic form and see its localization, how it controversially “fits” its place even as it moves beyond its origins, as well as its universality, how its themes and concerns and humour can stretch across continents and genres and languages. Truly, as cited at the beginning of this dissertation, “Anglo Canada is the locus of a great deal of vernacular symbolic expression [folklore], and much of it takes place in folk dramatic form” (Greenhill 1988, 197), whether as Christmas follies, mock weddings, campfire skits, school plays, community musicals, m-word outings or “Roy” plays. As one of my informants comments:

But the very nice thing about Kersley was no royalties, because Roy did everything, no wages for anything – we all kicked in – and the people benefited were the school kids, the Girl Guides, the Kersley fire department, everybody else. It was total community. You could not get any better little theatre than Kersley little theatre with a writer like Roy

¹⁶⁵ I know, I know – it stinks of elitism and “high” culture and is problematic at best, but the points are salient nonetheless.

who puts very entertaining stuff on the go for a lot people and it's the highlight of the year for everybody. And not just Kersley. People come from all over. It's a sell-out every time. And you can't get better than that. (Gunn 2004)

Indeed, for a folklorist, it cannot get any better than this: community theatre, traditional theatre, vernacular theatre, grassroots theatre, little theatre, folk drama, customary drama, whatever one wants to call it, is a veritable goldmine of insight into the function and dysfunction of communities, into the *communitas* and schisms so apparent in human relations, into personal and collective symbolic expressions and progressions, into players and non-players. It can't get any better than this.



Fig. 5.1. When the one being watched throws the gaze back on the ever-watching, clipboard-toting ethnographer and decides to document her instead. Roy Teed turns his lens on me, as I observe the hall rehearsals for the 2005 Christmas play, *A Quiet Christmas*. The mad doctor, my father, sits beside me. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Lights up on the well-worn interior of a hunting lodge. A city boy, HERSCHEL, and his friend, SYDNEY, are dressed in very clean and new hunting garb, drinking beer and trying to impress the kilt-wearing, surly and burly, Scottish caretaker and man-of-the-woods, CABOT McDINGUS. It's not working.

HERSCHEL

You hate everybody, McDingus.

McDINGUS

Piss off. I'm a great fan of the Tooth Fairy.

HERSCHEL

The Tooth Fairy isn't real.

McDINGUS

That depends on what version of reality you subscribes to, Herpes.

SYDNEY

That's very metaphysical, McDingus.

McDINGUS

I guess all the post-graduate work paid off then.¹⁶⁶

Lights down.

End Act V, Scene 1.

¹⁶⁶ Dialogue from *Lace Drakes* by Roy Teed (1996).

References

- Abrahams, Roger D. 1969. The complex relations of simple forms. *Genre* 2: 104-28.
- . 1970. British West Indian folk drama and the 'life cycle' problem. *Folklore* 81: 241-57.
- . 1972. Folk drama. In *Folklore and folklife: An introduction*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, 351-62. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1983. *The man of words in the West Indies: Performance and the emergence of Creole culture*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- . 1989. Bakhtin, the critics, and folklore. *Journal of American Folklore* 102: 202-06.
- . 1992. The past in the presence: An overview of folkloristics in the late 20th century. In *Folklore processed in honour of Lauri Honko on his 60th birthday, 6th March 1992*, ed. Reimund Kvidelund, 32-51. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Abrahams, Roger D., and Richard Bauman. 1978. Ranges of festival behavior. In *The reversible world: Symbolic inversion in art and society*, ed. Barbara A. Babcock, 193-208. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Achard, Marcel. 1958. Georges Feydeau. Trans. Mary Douglas Birks. In *Let's Get a Divorce! and other plays*, ed. Eric Bentley, 350-64. New York: Hill and Wang.
- All aboard the marriage-go-round*. n.d. Personal VHS/DVD. The Central Interior Zone Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Armour, Leslie. 1997. Canadian ways of thinking: Logic, society, and Canadian philosophy. In *Alternative frontiers: Voices from the Mountain West Canadian Studies Conference*, ed. Allen Seager, Leonard Evenden, Rowland Lorimer and Robin Mathews, 11-34. Montréal: Association for Canadian Studies.
- Arnoldus, Judy. 2004. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. April 7.
- Artaud, Antonin. 1958. *The theatre and its double*. 1938. Trans. Mary Caroline Richards. New York: Grove.
- Atwood, Margaret. 1972. *Survival: A thematic guide to Canadian literature*. Toronto: Anansi.

- . 1995. *Strange things: The malevolent north of Canadian literature*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Babcock, Barbara A. 1984. Arrange me into disorder: Fragments and reflections on ritual clowning. In *Rite, drama, festival, spectacle: Rehearsals toward a theory of cultural performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon, 102-28. Philadelphia: ISHI.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. 1984. *Rabelais and his world*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Banton, Michael. 1973. Urbanization and role analysis. In *Urban anthropology: Cross-cultural studies of urbanization*, ed. Aidan Southall, 43-70. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Barrie, J.M. 1957. *Peter Pan*, ed. Josette Frank. New York: Random House.
- Barthes, Roland. 1977. *Roland Barthes*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bateson, Gregory. 2000. *Steps to an ecology of mind*. 1972. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. *Simulacra and simulation*. Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Baughman, Ernest W. 1980. Growing up in a folklore-deprived community. In *Folklore studies in honour of Herbert Halpert: A festschrift*, ed. Kenneth S. Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg, 65-73. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Bauman, Richard. 1971. Differential identity and the social base of folklore. *Journal of American Folklore* 84, no. 331: 31-41.
- . 1975. Verbal art as performance. *American Anthropologist* 77, no. 2: 290-311.
- . 1983. The field study of folklore in context. In *Handbook of American folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, 362-68. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 1996. Transformations of the word in the production of Mexican festival drama. In *Natural histories of discourse*, ed. Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, 301-27. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bauman, Richard, and Américo Paredes, ed. 1972. *Toward new perspectives in folklore*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

- The Beatles' yellow submarine*. 1968. Screenplay by Al Brodax, Lee Minoff, Jack Mendelsohn, and Erich Segal. Dir. George Dunning. Designer Heinz Edelmann. Perf. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.
- BC Stats. Fall 2003. 2001 Census Profile: British Columbia. <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/profiles/59000000.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2008).
- BC Stats. Summer 2004. 2001 Census Profile of British Columbia's Regions: Cariboo Regional District. <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/cen01/profiles/59041000.pdf> (accessed January 9, 2008).
- Beeman, William O. 1981. Why do they laugh? An interactional approach to humor and traditional Iranian improvisatory theater. *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 506-26.
- Being John Malkovich*. 1999. Screenplay by Charlie Kaufman. Dir. Spike Jonze. Perf. John Cusack, Cameron Diaz, and Catherine Keener. Universal/USA.
- Ben-Amos, Dan. 1971. Toward a definition of folklore in context. *Journal of American Folklore* 84, no. 331: 3-15.
- Bendix, Regina. 1997. *In search of authenticity: The formation of folklore studies*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Beningfield, Mary. 2004. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. April 13.
- Benson, Eugene, and L.W. Conolly. 1987. *English-Canadian theatre*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- Bentham, Jeremy. 1975. *The theory of legislation*. Trans. Richard Hildreth. Bombay: N.M. Tripathi.
- Bentley, Eric. 1957. *The playwright as thinker: A study of drama in modern times*. 1946. New York: Meridian Books.
- . 1958. The psychology of farce. In *Let's Get a Divorce! and other plays*, ed. Eric Bentley, vii-xx. New York: Hill and Wang.
- . 1965. *The life of the drama*. New York: Atheneum.
- Bergson, Henri. 1956. Le rire/Laughter. In *Comedy*, ed. Wylie Sypher, 61-190. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Birney, Earle. 1977. *Ghost in the wheels: Selected poems*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.

- Boatwright, Mody C. 1949. *Folk laughter on the American frontier*. New York: The Macmillan Company.
- Bodner, John. 2003. 'Bless that good good woman who hung the crucifix around my neck:' The curious link between thesis writing and the undead. *Transmission* 5, no. 3: 6. <http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~culture/trans5-3.pdf> (accessed September 20, 2009).
- Bogatyrev, Petr. 1976a. Forms and functions of folk theatre. In *Semiotics of art*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, 51-6. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- . 1976b. Semiotics in the folk theatre. In *Semiotics of art*, ed. Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik, 33-49. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Bolt, Carol. 1976. *Buffalo Jump*. In *Playwrights in profile: Carol Bolt*, 19-79. Toronto: Playwrights Co-op.
- Booth, Wayne C. 1974. *A rhetoric of irony*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boyes, Georgina. 1982. An institutional basis of performance: A socio-economic analysis of contemporary folk plays. *Roomer* 2, no. 6: 41-44.
- Brecht, Bertolt. 1992. *Brecht on theatre: The development of an aesthetic*. Ed. and trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Briggs, Charles L., and Richard Bauman. 1992. Genre, intertextuality, and social power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2: 131-72.
- Bronner, Simon J. 1990. *Piled higher and deeper: The folklore of campus life*. Little Rock, AR: August House.
- Brookes, Chris. 1988. *A public nuisance: A history of the Mummers Troupe*. St. John's: ISER.
- Brown, E.K. 1971. Canadian poetry. In *Contexts of Canadian criticism*, ed. Eli Mandel, 29-47. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brunvand, Jan Harold. 1986. *The study of American folklore: An introduction*. 1968. 3rd ed. New York: Norton.
- Buchan, David et al. 1983. Folk drama. In *Folk literature: Voices through time*, ed. Bill Butt and Larry Small. St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books.
- Burns, Elizabeth. 1972. *Theatricality: A study of conventionality in the theatre and in social life*. London: Longman Group Ltd.

- Burson, Anne C. 1980. Model and text in folk drama. *Journal of American Folklore* 93: 305-16.
- . 1982. Pomp and circumcision: A parodic skit in a medical community. *Keystone Folklore N.S.* 1, no. 1: 28-40.
- Buster Hipchek's matrimonial two-step*. 1990. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Byrne, Pat. 1991. 'Tall are the tales that fishermen tell': Manifestations of the tall tale impulse in selected examples of contemporary Newfoundland writing. In *Studies in Newfoundland folklore: Community and process*, ed. Gerald Thomas and J.D.A. Widdowson, 309-28. St. John's: Breakwater.
- Caillois, Roger. 2001. *Man, play and games*. 1958. Trans. Meyer Barash. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Canada: A people's history*. <http://history.cbc.ca/history/> (accessed January 9, 2008).
- Carpenter, Carole Henderson. 1979. *Many voices: A study of folklore activities in Canada and their role in Canadian culture*. Ottawa: National Museum.
- . 1991a. Introduction to "Boundaries," ed. Carole Henderson Carpenter. Special issue, *Canadian Folklore canadien* 13, no. 1: 3-6. <http://www.celat.ulaval.ca/acef/131a.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).
- . 1991b. Politics and pragmatism in early North American folklore scholarship. In "Boundaries," ed. Carole Henderson Carpenter. Special issue, *Canadian Folklore canadien* 13, no. 1: 11-21.
- . 1996a. Canadian folklore scholarship. In *American folklore: An encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, 120-22. New York: Garland Publishing.
- . 1996b. Canadian studies and folklore. In *American folklore: An encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, 122-24. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Carr, Joe, and Alan Munde. 1991. The community musical. *Journal of American Culture* 14, no. 2: 29-31.
- Carroll, Lewis. 1955. *Alice in wonderland*, ed. Josette Frank. New York: Random House.
- Carroll, Patrick. 2004. Folklore and ethnology: A Canadian context. *Culture & Tradition* 24-25: n.p. Sent as word document to author.

- Cass, Eddie, Michael J. Preston and Paul Smith. 2000. *The English mumming play: An introductory bibliography*. London: Folklore Society Books.
- Central Statistics Bureau. 1988. British Columbia: Regional district and municipal census populations, from 1941 to 1986. http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/data/dd/handout/hist_cen.pdf (accessed January 9, 2008).
- Chambers, Edmund. 1933. *The English folk-play*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Charles connection*. 1989. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Coffin, Tristram P. 1968. *Our living traditions*. New York: Basic.
- Cohen, Anthony P. 1985. *The symbolic construction of community*. Key Ideas Ser. London: Routledge.
- Colleran, Jeanne, and Jenny S. Spencer. 1998. Introduction to *Staging resistance: Essays on political theatre*, ed. Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer, 1-12. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Connolly, Cyril. 1949. *Enemies of promise*. 1938. Rev. ed. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Crawford, Robert. 1984. A cultural account of 'health': Control, release, and the social body. In *Issues in the political economy of health care*, ed. John B. McKinlay, 60-103. New York: Tavistock.
- Crocker-Teed, Pam and Jessica Grant, ed. 2003. *Kersley: The growth of a community, 1860-1950*. Quesnel, BC: Kersley Community Association.
- Dale, Becky. 2006. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. January 6.
- 'Dandy Dick'. 1915. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], February 6: 1.
- Davis, Jennifer Milner. 1978. *Farce*. London: Methuen.
- Dégh, Linda. 1989. *Folktales and society: Story-telling in a Hungarian peasant community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Deloria, Jr., Vine. 1969. *Custer died for your sins: An Indian manifesto*. New York: Macmillan.

- The dinner party*. 1987. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall. <http://www.youtube.com/user/kersleyplayers#g/u> (accessed October 27, 2010).
- Doucette, Laurel. 1993. Voices not our own. *Canadian Folklore canadien* 15, no. 2: 119-37.
- . 1997. Reclaiming the study of our cultural lives. In *Undisciplined women: Tradition and culture in Canada*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye, 20-27. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Dr. Broom and the atomic transmogrifier*. 2004. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Dramatic club scores another success. 1916. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], March 4: 1.
- Drewcock, Pete. 2004. Interview by author. Dog Prairie, BC. March 29.
- Dundes, Alan. 1975. The devolutionary premise in folklore theory. In *Analytic essays in folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes, 17-27. The Hague: Mouton.
- Dunk, Thomas W. 1991. *It's a working man's town: Male working-class culture*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Eagleton, Terry. 1981. *Walter Benjamin or towards a revolutionary criticism*. London: Verso.
- Elam, Keir. 1980. *The semiotics of theatre and drama*. London: Routledge.
- Elliot, Gordon R. 1958. *Quesnel: Commercial centre of the Cariboo Gold Rush*. Quesnel, BC: Cariboo Historical Society.
- Elliot, Shanti. 1999. Carnival and dialogue in Bakhtin's poetics of folklore. *Folklore Forum* 30, no. 1-2: 129-39.
- Ellis, Bill. 1981. The camp mock-ordeal: Theater as life. *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 486-505.
- Erikson, Kai T. 1964. Notes on the sociology of deviance. In *The other side*, ed. Howard S. Becker, 9-21. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Esslin, Martin. 2001. *The theatre of the absurd*. 1961. 3rd ed. London: Methuen.

- Evans, Chad. 1983. *Frontier theatre: A history of nineteenth-century theatrical entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska*. Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press.
- Fawcett, Brian. 2003. *Virtual clearcut, or, the way things are in my hometown*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers.
- Fees, Craig. 1984. Towards establishing the study of folk drama as a science. *Roomer* 4, no. 5: 41-51.
- . 1985. Cawte, E.C. 'Folk drama as science.' Craig Fees replies. *Roomer* 5, no. 3: 28-29.
- Festival notes. 1940. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], April 13: 1.
- Feydeau, Georges. 2004. *Three farces*. Trans. Peter Meyer. London: Oberon.
- Firestone, Melvin. 1978. Christmas mumming and symbolic interactionism. *Ethos: Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 6, no. 2: 92-113.
- Four one-act plays to be presented here. 1940. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], March 2: 1.
- Fowke, Edith. 1976. *Folklore of Canada*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- . 1988. *Canadian folklore*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- . 1996. Canadian folklore (Anglophone). In *American folklore: An encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, 115-20. New York: Garland Publishing.
- . 1997. A personal odyssey and personal prejudices. In *Undisciplined women: Tradition and culture in Canada*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye, 39-48. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Frazer, Sir James George. 1911. *The golden bough*. 12 vols. London: Macmillan.
- Freedman, Jim. 1983. "Will the Sheik use his blinding fireball? The ideology of professional wrestling. In *The celebration of society: Perspectives on contemporary cultural performance*, ed. Frank E. Manning, 67-79. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1976. *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. 1905. Trans. James Strachey. London: Penguin Books.
- Fromm, Eric. 1961. *Marx's concept of man*. New York: Frederick Ungar.

- Frye, Northrop. 1971. *The bush garden: Essays on the Canadian imagination*. Toronto: Anansi.
- . 1977. Haunted by lack of ghosts: Some patterns in the imagery of Canadian poetry. In *The Canadian imagination: Dimensions of a literary culture*, ed. David Staines, 22-45. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Garber, Marjorie. 1992. *Vested interests: Cross-dressing and cultural anxiety*. New York: Routledge.
- Gard, Robert E. 1955. *Grassroots theater: A search for regional arts in America*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Gard, Robert E., and Gertrude S. Burley. 1975. *Community theatre: Idea and achievement*. 1959. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1972. Deep play: Notes on a Balinese cockfight. *Dædalus* 101: 1-38.
- Georges, Robert A. 1969. Toward an understanding of storytelling events. *Journal of American Folklore* 82, no. 326: 313-28.
- The ghost of Donegal Hetch, whee-hee*. 2000. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall. <http://www.youtube.com/user/kersleyplayers#g/u> (accessed October 27, 2010).
- Glassie, Henry. 1970. 'Take that night train to Selma': An excursion to the outskirts of scholarship. In *Folksongs and their makers*, ed. Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives and John F. Szwed, 1-68. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- . 1975. *All silver and no brass: An Irish Christmas mumming*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- . 1974. *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goodwin, Joseph P. 1995. If Ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise: What we don't know can hurt us. *Journal of Folklore Research* 32, no. 2: 155-64.
- Grant, Jack. 2002. Telephone interview by author. Kersley, BC and St. John's, NL. March 31.

- Grant, Jessica. 2002. 'Be as stupid as you can and still exist:' Resisting, fighting and coping with the alienating effects of the rationalized work process at Cariboo Pulp and Paper. Unpublished term paper for Folklore 6510: Occupational Folklife, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Grant, Jules. 2002. Email to author. March 21.
- . 2007. Telephone interview by author. Vancouver, BC and Nykøbing Sjælland, Denmark. September 11.
- Green, A.E. 1980. Popular drama and the mummers' play. In *Performance and politics in popular drama: Aspects of popular entertainment in theatre, film and television 1800-1976*, ed. David Bradby, Louis James and Bernard Sharratt, 139-66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Green, Archie. 1983. Interpreting folklore ideologically. In *Handbook of American folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson, 351-58. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Green, Thomas A. 1978. Toward a definition of folk drama. *Journal of American Folklore* 91, no. 361: 843-50.
- . 1981. Introduction to "Folk Drama," ed. Thomas A. Green. Special issue, *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 421-32.
- . 2009. Folk drama. In *Encyclopedia of women's folklore and folklife*, ed. Liz Locke, Theresa A. Vaughan and Pauline Greenhill, 215-19. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- The green-eyed monster: A study of jealousy*. 2005. That Theatre Company. March 9.
- Greenhill, Pauline. 1988. Folk drama in Anglo-Canada and the mock wedding: Transaction, performance, and meaning. *Canadian Drama/L'art dramatique canadien* 14: 169-205.
- . 1989. *True poetry: Traditional and popular verse in Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- . 1994. *Ethnicity in the mainstream: Three studies of English Canadian culture in Ontario*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Grimm, Debbie, and Rod Grimm. 2004. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. April 15.
- Gruber, William E. 1985. The actor in the script: Affective strategies in Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*. *Comparative Drama* 19, no. 1: 30-48.

- . 1987. 'Non-Aristotelian' theater: Brecht's and Plato's theories of artistic imitation. *Comparative Drama* 21, no. 3: 199-213.
- Gunn, Dave. 2004. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. April 7.
- Halpert, Herbert, and George M. Story, ed. 1969. *Christmas mumming in Newfoundland*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Handelman, Don. 1990. *Models and mirrors: Towards an anthropology of public events*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harrop, Peter. 1985. An approach to the performance of English folk drama. *Traditional Drama Studies* 1: 31-42.
- . 1986. Towards a morphology of the English folk play. *Lore and Language* 5, no. 2: 63-99.
- Hectic schedule at Kersley Hall. 1984. *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, September 19.
- Henderson, Carole. 1973. Folklore scholarship and the sociopolitical milieu in Canada. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 10: 97-108.
- . 1975. The ethnicity factor in Anglo-Canadian folkloristics. *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Études ethniques du Canada* 7, no. 2: 7-18.
- Henderson, M. Carole. 1976. Monsters of the west: The Sasquatch and the Ogopogo. In *Folklore of Canada*, ed. Edith Fowke, 251-62. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Heywood, Vern. 1987. Kersley play warms audience. *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, April 1.
- . 1993. Take a bow Kersley & QLT! *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, May.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, ed. 1984. *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoffman, James. 1987. L. Bullock-Webster and the B.C. Dramatic School, 1921-1932. *Theatre Research in Canada/Recherches théâtrales du Canada* 8.2: n.p.
http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/TRIC/bin/get.cgi?directory=vol8_2/&filename=Hoffman.htm (accessed January 9, 2008).
- The honcho rubber hot pants murder girdles*. 1994. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall. <http://www.youtube.com/user/kersleyplayers#g/u> (accessed October 27, 2010).

- Hotel hysterium*. 1998. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Huizinga, Johan. 1950. *Homo ludens: A study of the play-element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hutcheon, Linda. 1991. *Splitting images: Contemporary Canadian ironies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.
- The incredible pickled pigeon pirate chase*. 1993. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Ionesco, Eugène. 1958. Foreword. *Plays*. Vol. 1. Trans. Donald Watson, vii-ix. London: Calder.
- Ives, Edward D. 1964. *Larry Gorman: The man who made the songs*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- . 1971. *Lawrence Doyle: The farmer-poet of Prince Edward Island: A study in local songmaking*. Orono: University of Maine Press.
- Jamison, Carol. 1998. Fabliau. In *Encyclopedia of folklore and literature*, ed. Mary Ellen Brown and Bruce A. Rosenberg, 199-201. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- Jansen, William Hugh. 1965. The esoteric-exoteric factor in folklore. In *The study of folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes, 43-51. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Jones, Suzi. 1976. Regionalization: A rhetorical strategy. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 13: 105-20.
- Kallmann, Helmut and Edward B. Moogk. The dumbbells. In *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada*. n.p., n.d. <http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0001052> (accessed September 20, 2009).
- Kershaw, Baz. 1992. *The politics of performance: Radical theatre as cultural intervention*. London: Routledge.
- Kersley, Roy. n.d. Kersley unincorporated. Photocopy of article from unknown source.
- Kirby, Michael. 1983. Grassroots theatre: An introduction. In "Grassroots Theatre," ed. Michael Kirby. Special issue, *The Drama Review* 27, no. 2: 2.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1999. Playing to the senses: Food as a performance medium. *Performance Research* 4, no. 1: 1-30.

- Klein, A.M. 1967. Portrait of the poet as landscape. In *Poets between the wars*, ed. Milton Wilson, 190-94. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Koning, Bert. 2004. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. April 12.
- Kuftinec, Sonja. 1996. A cornerstone for rethinking community theatre. *Theatre Topics* 6, no. 1: 91-104.
- Kuly, Marc. 2000. Ideology, history, and the discipline of folklore: Reading *Media Sense* fifteen years later. *Culture & Tradition* 22: 79-90.
- Leacock, Stephen. 1912. *Sunshine sketches of a little town*. New York: John Lane.
- . 1935. *Humour: Its theory & technique with examples and samples; A book of discovery*. London: John Lane.
- . 1948. *Nonsense novels*. 1911. London: John Lane.
- . 1981. *The Penguin Stephen Leacock: A compendium of comic gems*. Markham, ON: Penguin.
- Lee, Harper. 1962 [?]. *To kill a mockingbird*. n.p.: Popular Library.
- Lewis, Chris. 1996. C. Marius Barbeau and the establishment of the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. *Culture & Tradition* 18: 48-60.
- Lichman, Simon. 1982. The gardener's story: The metafolklore of a mumming tradition. *Folklore* 93, no. 1: 105-111.
- Lillard, Charles and Terry Glavin. 1998. *A voice great within us*. Transmontanus Ser. 7. Vancouver, BC: New Star Books.
- Lindahl, Carl. 1996. Bakhtin's carnival laughter and the Cajun Country Mardi Gras. *Folklore* 107: 57-70.
- Lindgren, Astrid. 2001. *Emil in Lönneberga: Emil's pranks*. Trans. Ed Holmes. Stockholm: Kvints.
- Little Theatre Players here receive honor. 1946. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], May 18: 1.
- Lovelace, Martin J. 1980. Christmas mumming in England: The house-visit. In *Folklore studies in honour of Herbert Halpert: A festschrift*, ed. Kenneth S. Goldstein and Neil V. Rosenberg, 271-81. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Lovell, Deleenia. 2006. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. January 3.

- Lutz, John. 2005. The war that nobody won. *British Columbia Magazine*, Winter: 42-48.
- Luxton, Meg. 1980. *More than a labour of love: Three generations of women's work in the home*. Toronto: Women's Educational Press.
- Mackenzie, Alexander. 1931. *Alexander Mackenzie's voyage to the Pacific Ocean in 1793*. Chicago: Lakeside.
- McConachie, Bruce. 1998. Approaching the "structure of feeling" in grassroots theatre. *Theatre Topics* 8, no. 1: 33-53.
- McLuhan, Marshall. 1977. Canada: The borderline case. In *The Canadian imagination: Dimensions of a literary culture*, ed. David Staines, 226-48. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- McNeil, Holly, and Bjorn Stavum. 1977. Rex Theatre bids goodbye to many fond memories. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], August 31: 20.
- Mechling, Jay. 1980. The magic of the Boy Scout campfire. *Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 367: 35-56.
- Messenger, Ann P. 1980-81. When is a farce not a farce? *Thalia: Studies in Literary Humor* 3, no. 2: 3-8.
- Milne, A.A. 1963. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. London: Methuen and Company.
- Miner, Horace. 1939. *St. Denis: A French Canadian parish*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Minnett, Gary. 2004. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. April 13.
- Minutes of the Kersley Athletic Club, Kersley Recreation Commission, and Kersley Community Association. 1954-2003.
- Muecke, D.C. 1969. *The compass of irony*. London: Methuen.
- Narváez, Peter. 1992. Folkloristics, cultural studies and popular culture. *Canadian Folklore canadien* 14, no. 1: 15-30.
- Narváez, Peter, and Martin Laba, ed. 1986. *Media sense: Folklore popular culture continuum*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
- Neville, Grace. 1989. Medieval French fabliaux and modern urban legends: The attraction of opposites. *Béaloideas* 57: 133-49.

- Nilsen, Don L.F. 1993. Canadian humor. In *Humor scholarship: A research bibliography*, 171-75. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Noonan, Gerald. 1980-81. Voices in Canadian humour: The significance of being earnest. *Thalia: Studies in Literary Humour* 3, no. 2: 38-43.
- . 1988. Canadian duality and the colonization of humour. *College English* 50, no. 8: 912-19.
- O'Connor, Bonnie Blair. 1995. *Healing traditions: Alternative medicine and the health professions*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Pacey, Desmond. 1974. General introduction to *Selections from major Canadian writers: Poetry and creative prose in English*, ed. Desmond Pacey, xv-xviii. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited.
- Paine, Albert Bigelow. 1912. *Mark Twain: A biography; the personal and literary life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. Vol. 1. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishing.
- Palmer, Craig T. 2005. Mummers and moshers: Two rituals of trust in changing social environments. *Ethnology* 44, no. 2: 147-66.
- Parker, Brian. 1977. Is there a Canadian drama? In *The Canadian imagination: Dimensions of a literary culture*, ed. David Staines, 152-87. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Patenaude, Branwen C. 1981. *Because of gold*. Quesnel, BC: Branwen C. Patenaude.
- . 1996. *Trails to gold: Roadhouses of the Cariboo*. Vol. 2. Surrey, BC: Heritage House.
- . 2004. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. April 3.
- . n.d. Some early history of live entertainment in Quesnel – local and otherwise. Unpublished article.
- Pattison, Susan. 1977. The antrobus soulcaking play: An alternative approach to the mummers' play. *Folk Life: A Journal of Ethnological Studies* 15: 5-11.
- Pettitt, Thomas. 1990. Customary drama: Towards a contextual typology. *Roomer* 7, no. 4: 49-56.
- . 1995. Customary drama: Social and spatial patterning in traditional encounters. *Folk Music Journal* 7, no. 1: 27-42.

- . 1997. Drama, folk. In *Folklore: An encyclopedia of beliefs, customs, tales, music, and art*, ed. Thomas A. Green, 205-12. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.
- . 2000. 'This man is Pyramus': A pre-history of the English mummers' play. *Medieval English Theatre* 22: 70-99.
- . 2005. When the golden bough breaks: Folk drama and the theatre historian. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 4, no. 2: 1-40. <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/230> (accessed January 14, 2008).
- Phelan, Peggy. 1996. Feminist theory, poststructuralism, and performance. In *A sourcebook of feminist theatre and performance: On and beyond the stage*, ed. Carol Martin, 157-82. Worlds of Performance Ser. London: Routledge.
- Pocius, Gerald. 1991. *A place to belong: Community order and everyday space in Calvert, Newfoundland*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- . 1996. Folklore and the creation of national identities: A North American perspective. *Journal of the Baltic Institute of Folklore* 1. <http://www.folklore.ee/rl/pubte/ee/bif/bif1/sisu.html> (accessed January 14, 2008).
- . 2000. Academic folklore research in Canada: Trends and prospects (Part 1). *Ethnologies* 22, no.2: 255-80.
- . 2001. Academic folklore research in Canada: Trends and prospects (Part 2). *Ethnologies* 23, no.1: 289-317.
- Porter, John. 1965. *The vertical mosaic: An analysis of social class and power in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Prentice, Kathie Ardell. 2006. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. January 3.
- Proschan, Frank. 1981. Puppet voices and interlocutors: Language in folk puppetry. *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 527-55.
- Quesnel Amateur Dramatic Society. 1931. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], September 5: 1.
- Raban, Jonathan. 2008. Second nature: The de-landscaping of the American west. *Granta* 102. <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/102/Second-Nature> (accessed August 29, 2008).
- Reinelt, Janelle. 1998. Notes for a radical democratic theater: Productive crises and the challenge of indeterminacy. In *Staging resistance: Essays on political theatre*, ed. Jeanne Colleran and Jenny S. Spencer, 283-300. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Renwick, Roger deV. 1981. The mummers' play and *The Old Wives Tale*. *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 433-55.
- Rex Theatre has long history. 1953. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], September 10: 21.
- Rinehart, James W. 2001. *The tyranny of work: Alienation and the labour process*. 4th ed. Toronto: Harcourt Canada.
- Robinson, Marilynne. 2006. *Gilead*. London: Virago.
- Ross, Malcolm. 1954. Introduction to *Our sense of identity: A book of Canadian essays*, ed. Malcolm Ross, vii-xii. Toronto: Ryerson Press.
- Rourke, Constance. 1931. *American humor: A study of the national character*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.
- A rousing tale: The true story of Kersley*. 2003. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players with the Kersley Musical Theatre performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Rushdie, Salman. 2002. *Step across this line: Collected nonfiction, 1992-2002*. New York: Random House.
- Russell, Ian. 1981. In comes I, Brut King: Tradition and modernity in the drama of the Jackdale Bullguisers. *Journal of American Folklore* 94, no. 374: 456-85.
- Santino, Jack. 1994. *All around the year: Holidays and celebrations in American life*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Schechner, Richard. 1969. *Public domain: Essays on the theatre*. New York: Bobb-Merrill.
- . 1973. *Environmental theater*. New York: Hawthorn.
- . 1985. *Between theater & anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 2002. *Performance studies: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.
- Schechner, Richard and Willa Appel. 1990. Introduction to *By means of performance: Intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, 1-7. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schlegel, Friedrich. 1991. *Philosophical fragments*. Trans. Peter Firchow. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- School of Graduate Studies. 2001. *Thesis guide*. St. John's: Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Sewell, Elizabeth. 1952. *The field of nonsense*. London: Chatto.
- Shoot out at the Kersley saloon*. 1972[?]. Personal VHS/DVD.
- Shuman, Amy. 1993. Dismantling local culture. *Western Folklore* 52, no. 2-4: 345-64.
- Sinclair, Lister. 1954. The Canadian idiom. In *Our sense of identity: A book of Canadian essays*, ed. Malcolm Ross, 234-40. Toronto: Ryerson Press.
- Skinner, Chesley John. 1984. Drama in Newfoundland society: The community concert. PhD diss., Michigan State University.
- Smith, Georgina. 1981. The social bases of tradition: The limitations and implications of 'The Search for Origins.' In *Language, culture and tradition*, ed. A.E. Green and J.D.A. Widdowson, 77-87. CECTAL Conference Paper Ser. 2. Leeds: n.p.
- Spradley, James P., and Brenda J. Mann. 1975. *The cocktail waitress: Women's work in a man's world*. New York: John Wiley.
- Statistics Canada. 2002. 2001 Community Profiles: Quesnel, BC (City & Census Agglomeration). <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 14, 2008).
- Stewart, Susan. 1978. *Nonsense: Aspects of intertextuality in folklore and literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Stoeltje, Beverly J. 1985. The rodeo clown and the semiotics of metaphor. *Journal of Folklore Research* 22: 155-77.
- Stowell, Bonnie. 1970. Folk drama scholarship in the United States: A selective survey. *Folklore Annual of the University Folklore Association* 2: 51-66.
- Strangers on a glade*. 1994. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Styan, J.L. 1975. *Drama, stage and audience*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Sutton-Smith, Brian. 1997. *The ambiguity of play*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Swabey, Marie Collins. 1961. *Comic laughter: A philosophical essay*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Szwed, John F. 1970. Paul E. Hall: A Newfoundland song-maker and his community of song. In *Folksongs and their makers*, ed. Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives and John F. Szwed, 149-69. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- Taft, Michael. 1983a. *Discovering Saskatchewan folklore: Three case studies*. Edmonton, AB: NeWest.
- . 1983b. *Tall tales of British Columbia*. Sound Heritage Ser. No. 39. Victoria: Provincial Archives of BC.
- . 1989a. Folk drama on the Great Plain states: The mock wedding in Canada and the United States. *North Dakota History* 56, no. 4: 16-23.
- . 1989b. The mock wedding: Folk drama in Saskatchewan and the Plain states. *Folklife Center News* 11, no. 3: 6-9.
- . 1995. The role of hero-making in Canadian identity: The case of Terry Fox. *Artes Populares* 16-17: 761-66.
- . 1996. Drama, folk. In *American folklore: An encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, 208-10. New York: Garland Publishing.
- . 1997. Men in women's clothes: Theatrical transvestites on the Canadian Prairie. In *Undisciplined women: Tradition and culture in Canada*, ed. Pauline Greenhill and Diane Tye, 131-38. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Tait, Michael. 1965. Drama and theatre. In *Literary history of Canada: Canadian literature in English*, ed. Carl F. Klinck et al, 633-57. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Teed, Roy. 1987. *The dinner party*. Play manuscript.
- . 1989. *The Charles connection*. Play manuscript.
- . 1990. *Buster Hipchek's matrimonial two-step*. Play manuscript.
- . 1991. *All aboard the marriage-go-round*. Play manuscript.
- . 1992. *The rutabaga ranger rides again*. Play manuscript.
- . 1993. *The incredible pickled pigeon pirate chase*. Play manuscript.
- . 1994a. *The honcho rubber hot pants murder girdles*. Play manuscript.
- . 1994b. *Strangers on a glade*. Play manuscript.

- . 1995. *The hocus pocus goodtime motel blues*. Play manuscript.
- . 1996. *Har! (the pirate play)*. Play manuscript.
- . 1997. *Lace drakes*. Play manuscript.
- . 1998. *Hotel hysterium*. Play manuscript.
- . 2000. *The ghost of Donegal Hetch, whee-hee*. Play manuscript.
- . 2001. *Shadows from a low stone wall*. Play manuscript.
- . 2002a. *An evening with Myron*. Play manuscript.
- . 2002b. *Tales from me and Irmie*. Play manuscript.
- . 2003. *The unlikely rapture of Bannock Muldoon*. Play manuscript.
- . 2004a. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. March 1.
- . 2004b. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. March 10.
- . 2004c. The mysteries of comedy (On the stage and otherwise). Notes for a playwriting workshop, Maple Ridge, BC. April.
- . n.d. *The Christmas joy ride (a Christmas play redone)*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *The Christmas line*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *A cockle doodle do Christmas*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *The nasty play*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *The nice hat: Yet one more Christmas play*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *The reindeer play*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *Rusty Claus: A Bliffen play*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *Shooting star: A Christmas play*. Play manuscript.
- . n.d. *Two for one: Yet one Christmas play*. Play manuscript.

Theatre BC. A brief history of Theatre BC: For the love of theatre. <http://www.theatrebc.org/bckgrndr/history.php> (accessed January 9, 2008).

- Thomas, Gerald. 1996. French Canadians. In *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Jan Harold Brunvand, 305-09. New York: Garland Publishing.
- Tiddy, R.J.E. 1923. *The mummers' play*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Tillis, Steve. 1999. *Rethinking folk drama*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Tippett, Maria. 1990. *Making culture: English-Canadian institutions and the arts before the Massey Commission*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Toelken, Barry. 1987. Folklore in the American West. In *A literary history of the American West*, ed. J. Golden Taylor and Thomas J. Lyon, 29-67. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press.
- A tribute to the past: Quesnel & area, 1806-1928*. 1985. Quesnel, BC: Old Age Pensioners' Organization Branch #77.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1974. *Topophilia: A study of environment perception, attitudes and values*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Tuleja, Tad, ed. 1997. *Usable pasts: Traditions and group expressions in North America*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1966. *The significance of the frontier in American history*. March of North America Facsimile Ser. No. 100. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter.
- . 1974. *Dramas, fields, and metaphors: Symbolic action in human society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 1982. *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal.
- . 1983. *Carnaval in Rio: Dionysian drama in an industrializing society*. In *The celebration of society: Perspectives on contemporary cultural performance*, ed. Frank E. Manning, 103-24. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press.
- . 1984. Liminality and the performative genres. In *Rite, drama, festival, spectacle: Rehearsals toward a theory of cultural performance*, ed. John J. MacAloon, 19-41. Philadelphia: ISHI.

- . 1987. *The anthropology of performance*. New York: PAJ Publications.
- . 1990. Are there universals of performance in myth, ritual, and drama? In *By means of performance: Intercultural studies of theatre and ritual*, ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, 8-18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. 1982. Performing ethnography. *The Drama Review* 26, no. 2: 33-50.
- Twelve plays entered in 2nd drama festival. 1940. *Cariboo Observer* [Quesnel], March 30: 1.
- Tye, Diane. 1987. Aspects of the local character phenomenon in a Nova Scotian community. *Canadian Folklore canadien* 9, no. 1-2: 99-111.
- The unlikely rapture of Bannock Muldoon*. 2003. Personal VHS/DVD. The Kersley Players performing at the Kersley Hall.
- Usmiani, Renate. 1983. *Second stage: The alternative theatre movement in Canada*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Van Erven, Eugene. 2001. *Community theatre: Global perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Wallace, Robert. 1999. Theatre and transformation in contemporary Canada. Thirteenth Annual Robarts Lecture. Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies. York University, Toronto. March 15.
- Wark, Wayne. 2004. Interview by author. Kersley, BC. March 3.
- Watters, R.E. 1966. Stephen Leacock's Canadian humour. In *Canadian anthology*, rev. ed., ed. Carl F. Klinck and Reginald E. Watters, 540-47. Toronto: Gage.
- Weinberg, Mark S. 2000. Community-based theatre: A participatory model for social transformation. *Theatre Symposium: A Journal of the Southeastern Theatre Conference* 8: 22-33.
- Welsford, Enid. 1968. *The fool: His social and literary history*. 1935. London: Faber and Faber.
- Wharton, Edith. 1934. *A backward glance*. New York: Appleton.
- Willis, Paul. 1979. Shop floor culture, masculinity and the wage form. In *Working-class culture: Studies in history and theory*, ed. John Clarke, Chas Critcher and Richard Johnson, 185-98. London: Hutchinson.

Yorston, Carrile, Katherine Yorston, Donna Koning, and Pat Hernstedt, comps. 2000.
Kersley Women's Institute history, 1950-2000, ed. Betty Edwards. Kersley, BC:
Kersley Women's Institute.

Zacharias, Wanda. 2006. Interview by author. Quesnel, BC. January 4.

Appendix I

Play Synopses, Casts, Excerpts & Pics

1987¹⁶⁷-2008

All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round [Spring 1991]	461
Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step [Spring 1990]	452
The Charles Connection [Spring 1989]	446
The Dinner Party [Spring 1987]	435
Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier [Fall 2004].....	579
An Evening With Myron [Spring 2002]	548
Funny Bunny [Christmas 2006/Spring 2007]	588
The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee [Spring 2000].....	529
The Good Game [Spring 2008].....	589
Har! (The Pirate Play) [Spring 1996].....	509
The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues [Spring 1995].....	502
The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles [Spring 1994]	485
Hotel Hysterium [Spring 1998]	523
The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase [Spring 1993].....	477
The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase [Fall 2005]	585
The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader [Spring 2001]	536
Lace Drakes [Fall 1996 & Spring 1997].....	516

¹⁶⁷ Including the 1972 (approximate date) silent movie, written and directed by Roy Teed and considered by many original Players to be the first incarnation of what would turn out to be the Kersley Players, some fifteen years later.

A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley [Summer 2003].....	569
The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again [Spring 1992].....	468
The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again [Fall 2006]	587
Shadows From a Low Stone Wall [Fall 2001].....	538
Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon [Winter 1972]	434
Strangers on a Glade [Spring 1994].....	496
Tales From Me & Irmie [Spring 2002].....	557
The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon [Spring 2003]	560

Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon [Winter 1972]¹⁶⁸

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed

Filmed by Lanny Dale

CAST:

Earl Glint – Rod Grimm

Lily – Debbie Lund Grimm

Bart Snarwell – Jim Alexander

The Sheriff – Johnny Grimm

Bad Guy – Jack Grant

Bad Guy – Alex Lee

Bad Guy – Ken Alexander

Child informant – Mike Parr

The Bartender – John Grimm

Saloon girl – Collette Meagher Grimm

Saloon girl – Bobbi Grimm Grant

SYNOPSIS: A classic tale of good and evil. Our true blue hero, Earl Glint, strikes pay dirt and, seeing his future secured, declares his love for Lily, the beautiful saloon girl. Generally up to no good and after easy diggings, the dastardly, cigar-smoking, eyebrow-wiggling fiend, Bart Snarwell, and his posse shoot the sheriff and kidnap Lily, hoping to force Earl into coughing up his lode. Pursuits on snowmobile steeds and gunfights ensue, with the ultimate triumph of good over evil naturally. All that in five minutes of grainy, action-packed silence. Filmed at the Kersley Hall and in the snowscape of the Lease Land.

¹⁶⁸ Again, approximate date.

The Dinner Party [Spring 1987]

Directed by Bobbi Grant
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.1. Cast of *The Dinner Party*. Back row, standing (left to right): Rod Grimm, Derek Charlton, Jack Grant, Kathie Ardell Prentice, Brenda Wenzel, Roy Teed, David Harndon and Dave Gunn; front row, sitting (left to right): Debbie Grimm, Sherryl Martens Latimer, Bill Atkinson and Becky Dale. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Felicity Rothbottom – Sherryl Martens Latimer
Reginald Rothbottom – Bill Atkinson
Charles – Dave Gunn
Dr. Hector Dexter – Rod Grimm
Vic ‘The Stick’ Stewert – Jack Grant
Bambi – Becky Dale
Cecilia – Debbie Grimm
Bernard – Derek Charlton
Herman – David Harnden
Penelope – Kathie Ardell Prentice
Gertrude Faughshaw – Brenda Wenzel
Admiral Horatio Faughshaw ret. – Roy Teed

SYNOPSIS: The upper middleclass Rothbottoms are holding a dinner party, which is, needless to say, an inopportune time for pretentious Felicity's past indiscretions to come to the fore. Quite literally, skeletons jump out of her closet, as her obsessed ex-lover Dr. Hector Dextor, professor of English Literature, lurks around the house with his amorous intentions (including minks and bare skin) and her long-lost ex-boyfriend, Vic "The Stick" Stewert, and his current bimbo, Bambi, unexpectedly show up, a reminder of her embarrassing past as a can-can dancer at Bonzai Bert's Used Car Emporium and Chicken Hatchery. She has married well, finding a wealthy, indecisive, besotted jellyfish of a man in Reginald Rothbottom, and does everything she can to save her position. The sarcastic, long-suffering, flask-sipping Rothbottom butler, Charles, barely tolerates her, while remaining fiercely loyal to his master, Reginald, who remains cluelessly meandering around looking for his other shoe. His one-shoedness is interpreted by the dinner guests as a symbolic gesture in support of nuclear disarmament and, to show their solidarity for the cause, they all remove a shoe. Mishaps and misrepresentations follow, including a mink-clad flashing by Dr. Dextor and a sexualized discussion of nuclear disarmament by the supposed nuclear expert, Vic "The Stick." The truth eventually comes out as Felicity's ghosts are revealed, which emboldens Reginald, with his newly grown backbone, to chase away the good doctor and to lead his wife, in the final scene, into the closet for a little tumble in the fur coats and a can-can demonstration.

EXCERPT:

FELICITY

Vic, I'm having the worst night of my life.

VIC

So it's gonna get better. Vic the Stick is back.

FELICITY

Yes, you're back. And I have a house full of guests expecting Dr Hector Dexter and who do I have instead? Vic the Stick Stewert.

VIC

Who's Hector Dexter?

FELICITY

My fling. But they don't know that.

VIC

What do they know?

FELICITY

They think he's here because of this. (*points to bare foot*)

VIC

He's a foot doctor?

FELICITY

He's a professor at the university.

VIC

He's a foot professor?

FELICITY

No, nuclear weapons.

VIC

Your foot's a nuclear weapon?

FELICITY

Vic, do I have to paint you a picture?

VIC

Not if you paint like you explain.

FELICITY

They think he's a professor.

VIC

Is he?

FELICITY

Yes.

CHARLES *enters from stage left bearing a bottle of beer on a silver tray. He disappears into the cloakroom.*

VIC

Great. That's solved then. I think.

FELICITY

No it isn't. They'll think you're him.

VIC

So I'll fake it.

FELICITY

How? What do you know about this? *(points to bare foot)*

VIC

What's to know? It's a bare foot.

FELICITY

Vic, it's about nuclear weapons.

VIC

Okay, this doctor's a foot and nuke specialist. Right?

FELICITY

He's a doctor of Medieval Literature.

VIC

What the hell has that got to do with nuclear weapons?

FELICITY

Nothing. That's what I've been trying to tell you.

VIC

Felicity, I'm confused.

CHARLES *emerges from the cloak room with the silver tray, now empty and exits stage left.*

FELICITY

Open your eyes, Vic, it's obvious. They'll think you're him, but you're not, and neither is he, and he's not even here

and you are, but they don't know that; they don't know that he and I or you and me know each other; if they knew that we knew, oh, I don't know. What else can go wrong?

REGINALD *enters from stage left.*

REGINALD
Dr Dexter, how nice of you to come.

VIC
(to FELICITY) Is that me? *(she buries head in hands)*

REGINALD
I'm Reginald Rothbottom, Felicity's husband. Are you ready for us now? *(offers hand)*

VIC
Whoa! Reggie! Great to see you. So, what's up?

REGINALD
Surely Felicity explained.

VIC
I'm sure she did. Or tried to.

REGINALD
It's obvious, isn't it? *(holds up foot)*

The other guests enter from stage left. BAMBI is on the arm of the ADMIRAL. CHARLES enters last with a sandwich on the silver tray. He disappears into the cloakroom.

VIC
It's contagious, but it ain't obvious. Nice sock, Reggie.

REGINALD
Thank you. But that isn't the point, is it?

VIC
Nuclear weapons?

REGINALD
Exactly! We're very interested in your views, Dr Dexter.

VIC

Reggie, it's all a mistake.

REGINALD

Yes! I know.

VIC

You do?

REGINALD

The proliferation of nuclear arms is the most terrible mistake in mankind's history.

VIC

Whoa! I'm preaching to the converted.

CECILIA

Dr Dexter, don't you think it important that people of like mind gather and present a united front?

CHARLES *enters from the cloakroom and moves unobtrusively toward FELICITY.*

VIC

Like I always say: if you got it, flaunt it.

PENELOPE

What about unilateral disarmament as opposed to the reactionary argument for bilateral agreements?

VIC

It takes two to tango, honey.

CECILIA

Will you join us, Doctor, in our small protest?

VIC

What protest is that?

CHARLES *whispers into FELICITY'S ear.*

CECILIA

We've removed our shoes in support of a non-nuclear world to symbolize our willingness to endure discomfort and vulnerability for what we believe in.

FELICITY *grabs CHARLES by the lapels and shakes him.*

VIC
Wow, that sounds kinky.

REGINALD
Just a small gesture, Doctor. It was my idea apparently.

VIC
I'll try anything kinky at least once.

VIC *pulls his boot off and gives it to REGINALD.*

REGINALD
I'll put this away.

FELICITY
I'll take that. *(she grabs the boot)*

REGINALD
(not letting go) What are you doing?

FELICITY
(tugging) It's not really necessary for the Doctor to take his boot off.

REGINALD
(tugging) Yes it is.

FELICITY
(tugging) No it isn't.

REGINALD
(tugging) You're making a scene.

FELICITY
(tugging) No I'm not. Give the boot to Charles.

VIC
Whoa! Take it easy, folks. That's twenty bucks worth of replica Bolivian lizard hide you're stretching.

FELICITY
Shut up, Vic.

REGINALD
What did you call him?

FELICITY
(*tugging*) Never mind. Give me the boot.

REGINALD
(*tugging*) No. I thought his name was Hector Dexter.

FELICITY
(*tugging*) It is.

REGINALD
(*tugging*) Then why did you call him Vic?

FELICITY
(*tugging*) I was thinking of you.

REGINALD
(*tugging*) But my name is Reginald.

CECILIA
Felicity, Reginald, isn't this rather childish, fighting over a boot?

REGINALD
Cecilia, this fight is over! (*titanic heave capturing the boot*)

FELICITY
Ow!

REGINALD
It's all mine now.

VIC
Uh... Reggie, that's my boot.

REGINALD
Yes, of course it is, Dr Dexter. Or is it Vic?

VIC
I thought you knew.

FELICITY

This is Dr Dexter, I can vouch for him.

REGINALD

Then why did you call him Vic?

FELICITY

I didn't. You misheard.

REGINALD

Aha! You can't fool me this time. I heard you, they heard you, we all heard you call this man Vic. So if he isn't Hector Dexter, just who is?

HECTOR DEXTER *bursts from the cloak room wearing only a long fur coat. He points at VIC. He is a wee bit inebriated.*

HECTOR

I am! You, sir, are an impostor. I'm the real Hector Dexter.

REGINALD

What were you doing in my cloak room?

HECTOR

Getting ready for my big moment.

CECILIA

Excuse me, are you the Dr Dexter Felicity asked to speak on nuclear arms?

HECTOR

Indeed I am and I've brought along for your viewing pleasure my own personal nuclear device - Hector Dexter's monogrammed monster missile!

HECTOR *throws open his coat to the guests. General consternation. Cries of "Bravo! Bravo!" from CECILIA until dragged off by BERNARD. Other cries of DISGUSTING, OUTRAGEOUS, APPALLING, CUT IT OFF, LIBERTINE, ARREST HIM as the guests flee stage left leaving BAMBI to walk over and take his arm. FELICITY sneaks away to hide behind a drape. REGINALD and VIC remain.*

BAMBI

Hi, I'm Bambi.

HECTOR *closes his coat.*

HECTOR
Hi, Bambi, wanna play in the woods?

REGINALD
You lewd, disgusting, lascivious snake. Get your hands off that sweet, innocent child.

VIC
Whoa, Reggie, that's my date you're talking to.

REGINALD
Did you see what he did?

VIC
Yup, he's just done more for nuclear disarmament than forty years worth of politicians.

BAMBI *has talked* HECTOR *into another peek under the coat.*

BAMBI
Oh Hector, it's a multiple target, independent re-entry warhead.

REGINALD
Stop it!

VIC
Bambi, better say hi to Reggie.

BAMBI
Okay. (*joins REGINALD*) Hi, Reggie.

REGINALD
You're safe with me, Bambi. (*pats hand*) Now, the both of you have some explaining to do. (*to HECTOR*) I want to know who you are. And keep your coat closed.

HECTOR
I'm your wife's lover.

REGINALD
My God. (*to VIC*) And you?

VIC

I'm your wife's old boyfriend.

REGINALD

Bloody hell. Charles.

CHARLES

No, sir, I don't even like her.

The Charles Connection

[Spring 1989]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.2. Felicity Rothbottom (Bobbi Grant, center) confronting Millicent Primrose (Debbie Grimm, left), while Reginald Rothbottom (Pete Drewcock, right) attempts to intervene. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Felicity Rothbottom – Bobbi Grant
Reginald Rothbottom – Pete Drewcock
Charles – Dave Gunn
Millicent Primrose – Debbie Grimm
Vic ‘The Stick’ Stewert – Wayne Wark
Thor – Lester Pettyjohn
A ski bunny – Becky Dale
A ski bunny – Wanda Zacharias
A ski bunny – Wanda Wallace
A ski bum – Mark Coumont
A ski bum – Lance Parr
A ski bum – Jim Swaan

SYNOPSIS: Meeting up with the Rothbottoms once again – this time on a skiing vacation – Charles is doing everything in his power to break up the marriage and save a reluctant Reginald from actually hitting the slopes. This includes burying the car, hiding skis, sending wrong messages, while ignoring others, talking endlessly about divorce and encouraging an old flame, the ski lodge heiress, Millicent Primrose, to set her hooks into the apparently soon-to-be-divorced Reginald.

EXCERPT:

REGINALD

There is one bright side to losing my skis, Felicity. We can wait till tomorrow and get an early start.

FELICITY

Tomorrow? Reginald, dear, they have lights on the hill. We can ski tonight.

REGINALD

Skiing in the dark. How... interesting. I can hardly wait.

FELICITY

Patience, dear. I'll get us organized.

FELICITY *gives REGINALD a cursory hug and peck and exits through door three.*
CHARLES *enters from door four.*

CHARLES

A momentary respite only, I'm afraid, sir.

REGINALD

You tried, Charles. Thank you for that.

CHARLES

Not at all, sir.

REGINALD

It seems I'm destined to learn how to ski this weekend, Charles. And you know what that means: hours and hours in the cold, frostbite, snowblindness, broken bones, hospitals.

CHARLES

There are worse things than that, sir.

REGINALD

What could be worse than that?

CHARLES

You may like the bloody sport.

REGINALD

Now that's a terrifying thought.

CHARLES

Indeed, sir. (*two beats*) If I may be so bold, sir, I believe the situation calls for a scheme.

REGINALD

A scheme? Something clever, I imagine. Any ideas, Charles?

CHARLES

Yes, several things come to mind, sir.

REGINALD

Let's hear them.

CHARLES

I believe your dilemma requires bold, decisive action, sir.

REGINALD

Such as?

CHARLES

Divorce the impudent wench, sir, while you have the chance.

REGINALD

Isn't divorce somewhat drastic, Charles?

CHARLES

Not at all, sir. I would prefer to describe it as the civilized solution to your problem.

REGINALD

Divorce is out, Charles, I'm sorry.

CHARLES

Very well, sir. You're quite certain, are you?

REGINALD

Yes, totally.

CHARLES

Then we have only one option left, sir.

REGINALD

What's that?

CHARLES

We'll murder her, sir. With a blunt instrument preferably.

REGINALD

Charles, we're not murderers.

CHARLES

Murder does have its advantages, sir. No alimony payments for one thing.

REGINALD

Charles, no.

CHARLES

If you insist, sir.

REGINALD

Yes, I'll have to be quite firm on this matter, Charles. Murder is definitely out.

CHARLES

Oh, very well, sir. Though even the prospect has quite cheered me up.

REGINALD

Charles, I dread the thought of learning to ski. What am I going to do?

CHARLES

I am presently at a loss, sir. However, I am sure something will come up.

Two knocks on door three.



Fig. A1.3. Millicent Primrose (Debbie Grimm) attempting to seduce Reginald Rothbottom (Pete Drewcock). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.4. Charles, the Rothbottom butler (Dave Gunn), arriving with the luggage. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.5. Vic “The Stick” Stewart (Wayne Wark) with his ski buddies (Becky Dale, left, and Wanda Zacharias, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.6. Charles (Dave Gunn) and Felicity Rothbottom (Bobbi Grant) share a pointed moment. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step [Spring 1990]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.7. Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn) as Doc Spiggot examining Buster Hipchek (Lester Pettyjohn).
Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Buster Hipchek – Lester Pettyjohn
Phoebe Hipchek – Bobbi Grant
Miles Myers – Pete Drewcock
Fiona Haversham – Diane Crain
Algernon Buggers – Dave Gunn
Fanny – Wanda Zacharias
Alfred (a.k.a. Big Al) – Wayne Wark

SYNOPSIS: An eccentric philanderer, Buster Hipchek, becomes concerned when he discovers that his equally eccentric, harpy of a wife, Phoebe, has hired a private investigator, Algernon Buggers, to dig into his extramarital activities. Buster forces his presence upon his mild-mannered neighbour, Miles Myers, confiding his concerns, and is

shocked to discover that Miles is planning to enter into marriage himself with a proposal that very evening to his girlfriend, Fiona. This prompts Buster to phone Big Al's Exotic Message Service in hopes of thwarting Miles's plans with a little temptation. Buster also tries repeatedly and unsuccessfully to contact his own former mistress. And once again, mishaps, misrepresentations and misunderstandings follow. Buggers shows up with a different story for every person he meets. Fanny, the exotic dancer hired by Buster, is rudely dismissed by a proper Miles. Big Al storms in, mad about Fanny's treatment, and it is discovered that he is an old flame of Phoebe's. Fiona is convinced that Miles is not the man she thought as he cruelly mistreats his butler/slave, a.k.a. Buggers. As it turns out though, Fiona is the non-responsive ex-mistress of Buster. Despite the madness, Buggers ensures that all ends well.

EXCERPT:

BUSTER

Wait! Everyone loves somebody, who loves the Buster?

BUGGERS *enters from the closet, notebook in hand. All stare.*

BUGGERS

Don't look at me, I'm not bloody interested.

AL

It's the cops!

BUSTER

It's Doc Spiggot!

MILES

It's Percieval Pendragon!

FIONA

It's Jeffries!

PHOEBE

It's bloody Buggers.

BUGGERS

Algernon Buggers, actually, of Buggers & Buggers Investigations. Evening all.

BUSTER

I recognize that name. You're the slimy low-life Phoebe hired to spy on me.

BUGGERS

Indeed sir, though I do regret the use of slimy and low-life in your description.

PHOEBE

What are you doing here, Buggers?

BUGGERS

As little as bloody possible, madam, and that very reluctantly.

PHOEBE

That's typical, all you've done so far is take my money.

BUGGERS

(an appraising look) Oh, I am sorry, madam, I didn't realize you had anything else of value.

PHOEBE

Buggers, you're fired.

BUGGERS

Oh, shut up, madam, and let me finish my job.

MILES

Will this take long, Mr, uh, Buggers?

BUGGERS

Not at all, sir, providing you lot stop asking silly bloody questions. *(belligerent pause as BUGGERS waits for a response)* Right. During the course of my investigation I have employed certain highly advanced technological tools to assist me in gathering information. *(BUGGERS, at the telephone, is unscrewing the receiver)* One such item is this ultra-miniaturized, sound-activated electronic listening device, commonly called a bug.

PHOEBE

That's not bug, that's a life saver.

BUGGERS

Madam, this is a highly advanced device cleverly disguised as a life saver.

PHOEBE

Oh. Had me fooled.

BUGGERS

Indeed, technology's crowning achievement, wasn't it? Right then, if I may continue; I point out the presence of these devices only to forewarn you that any statements I make are fully substantiated by documented evidence.

BUSTER

So what you're saying is you have proof for everything you say.

BUGGERS

Oh, so eloquently put, sir. Perhaps you should consider a career in poetry, writing graffiti on lavatory walls for instance.

BUSTER

I did but my crayons broke.

PHOEBE

Shut up, Buster, you know damn well you ate them.

BUGGERS

Ah yes, the Hipcheks. The quintessential troubled marriage, not a word exchanged nor act performed without acrimony. Yet I find it very interesting indeed that earlier this evening Mr Hipchek appealed to his good friend Mr Myers to help save his marriage; to intercede on his behalf, with messages of love and perpetual fidelity to his beloved wife Phoebe.

MILES

Uh, Mr Buggers.

BUGGERS

Not now, sir. Shut up. Furthermore, Mrs Hipchek, desperate to forgive Buster but unable to tell him, turned also to Mr Myers, begging him to explain to her dear husband that all was well, her love as eternal and that his place was with her.

MILES

Uh, Mr Buggers.

BUGGERS

Yes, Mr Myers, you should be ashamed. These two lovely people turned to you for help and you let them down. Bloody disgraceful, sir. Now stand there and be humiliated.

PHOEBE

Buggers, that's a load of horse pucky and you know it.

BUGGERS

Indeed, madam. You are something of an expert on horse pucky, are you? Pardon my impertinence you stupid bloody cow, but I just told you I have the documented evidence, if you will recall. (*shows life saver*)

PHOEBE

Buggers, you are a rude, foul-mouthed toad.

BUGGERS

Thank you very much indeed for noticing, madam.

PHOEBE

Buster, is this true? Did you really say those things?

BUSTER

Ah, sounds good to me. How about you?

PHOEBE

I might remember saying something along those lines.

BUSTER

Hell, Phoebe, I married you, you married me – there was something there once. Maybe we owe it to ourselves to find it again.

PHOEBE

I must be crazy.

BUSTER

Great, that's two of us. We got it made.

PHOEBE

Let's go home, Buster.

BUSTER

And?

PHOEBE

And something.

BUSTER

Right on, a body search.

BUSTER *and* PHOEBE *exit the apartment door.*

FANNY

What about us, Mr Buggers? What about Alfred and me?

BUGGERS

You two are a match made in heaven, aren't you? You're lucky I came along when I did.

FANNY

Why?

BUGGERS

Your main man Alfred was about to hire Mrs Hipchek for the message business and the bloody woman can't dance a step. I soon straightened him out.

FANNY

Is that true, Alfred?

AL

Absolutely, Fanny. She's a lousy dancer.

FANNY

Thank you, Mr Buggers.

BUGGERS

My pleasure.

FANNY *and* AL *exit the apartment door.*

MILES

You amaze me, Mr Buggers. What exactly are you anyway?

BUGGERS

What am I? I suppose I'm a romantic sir. Frightful bloody habit, isn't it?

MILES

Do you honestly think you did Buster and Phoebe any good?

BUGGERS

Well, sir, I always say it's not who you tango with, it's who you take home when the dance is over that's important.

MILES

You might be right. So, what do you have to say about us?

BUGGERS

Nothing at all, sir. Your reputation speaks for itself. Good evening.

BUGGERS *pops the life saver into his mouth and exits.*



Fig. A1.8. An exchange between Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn, right) and Miles Myers (Pete Drewcock, left). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig.A1.9. Phoebe Hipchek (Bobbi Grant) reuniting with her old flame, Big Al (Wayne Wark). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.10. The Hipcheks (Bobbi Grant and Lester Pettyjohn) having a dispute. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.11. The famous panty-losing scene, where an unseen Buggers does his business under the table, while a clueless Miles (Pete Drewcock) pours the wine and a shocked Fiona (Diane Crain) is upset, to say the least. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round¹⁶⁹ **[Spring 1991]**

Directed by Pete Drewcock
Written by Roy Teed

CAST:

Agnes Hurliburton – Maz Holbrook
Humphrey Hurliburton – Roy Teed
Kimberley Hurliburton – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf
Tiffany – Bobbi Grant
Algernon Buggers – Dave Gunn
Basil Calhoun – Wayne Wark
Myron – Pete Drewcock
Daisy – Lori Arnoldus
Harry – Dennis Holbrook

SYNOPSIS: Rich girl, Kimberley Hurliburton, is apparently pregnant with her sixth (or is it eighth?) illegitimate child, much to the chagrin of her snooty parents, Agnes and Humphrey Hurliburton, who have never actually seen or heard these grandchildren, but are distressed by the situation nonetheless. Agnes decides to hire a private detective, Algernon Buggers, to track down the fathers of all these bastards, while Humphrey has found a suitable husband for Kimberley, one Basil Calhoun, who is not put off by a pregnant woman with a slew of children. Before long, Hurliburton mansion is overrun with mistaken identities and mishaps. Basil Calhoun is a sexual pervert, a flasher extraordinaire, which Humphrey does everything in his power to conceal from his wife. Tiffany, Kimberley's best friend and confidant, not to mention man-eater, ropes in the drunken bum, Harry, to play the part of Kimberley's fiancé, thus foiling the marriage to Basil. Basil is not only a sexual pervert, but also an intimate photographer, and has a large crate delivered to the mansion containing the big-busted, blonde model and grammarian,

¹⁶⁹ This is often emically referred to as "the flashing play."

Daisy. Tiffany's meek brother, the writer of poor poetry, Myron, follows Tiffany to the mansion, trying to build up the nerve to declare his love and adoration for Kimberley. And Buggers is on the case, posing as a literary critic, a talent agent, a psychic medium, Basil Calhoun, not to mention the Hurliburton butler, Buller, who has not been seen in two years after having been sent to fetch tea. Buggers ends up convincing Humphrey that he is going blind and serves up Scottish tea (a.k.a. whisky) liberally to an increasingly inebriated and poetry-babbling Myron. By the climatic end, Harry is wandering around without pants, Basil is flashing a shocked Agnes, Myron is flashing and declaring his love to Kimberley, Humphrey is flashing Agnes as well, hoping she can tell him if his underwear is on correctly, and Buggers ends up flashing them all, shocking the group into order. Basil ends up with Tiffany, Myron with Kimberley, Harry with a beloved bottle of scotch. Agnes and Humphrey renew old intimacies and Buggers walks off with a busty, blonde grammarian.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Best Supporting Actor Male – Pete Drewcock

EXCERPT:

MYRON

Good evening, sir. I'm a poet.

BUGGERS

Oh, bloody hell, not another one.

MYRON

Poetry is my life, sir.

BUGGERS

It must be bloody awkward finding a proper job then.

MYRON

It is, sir. There's a rare dearth of Poet Wanted classifieds these days. It seems we poets are a dying breed.

BUGGERS

Yes, poetic justice, isn't it?

MYRON

Would you like me to recite some of my poetry for you, sir?

BUGGERS

Is it filthy?

MYRON

No sir. My poetry is uplifting.

BUGGERS

How can it be uplifting if it's not filthy?

MYRON

It just is, sir. Perhaps you'd like to hear a stanza or two if you have the time.

BUGGERS

What? You want me to listen to poetry just for the sake of listening to poetry? Do you know who I am?

MYRON

No sir, I don't.

BUGGERS

Charles Philistine, literary critic.

MYRON

Oh my, this is a rare privilege, sir, I'm very happy to meet you. (*offers hand*)

BUGGERS

Put that thing away. I don't touch poets. I'd soon be flat on my back with raging iambic pentameter if I went around hobnobbing with bloody poets, wouldn't I?

MYRON

Yes, sir. I'm very sorry, sir. I didn't mean to compromise your integrity.

BUGGERS

Oh, quite. You poets are always sucking up, aren't you? It's worse than being a doctor this literary criticism, poets always asking for free reviews, never a moment's rest.

MYRON

I beg your pardon, sir, if you thought me presumptuous. I believe it was simple over-exuberance at meeting a genuine critic.

BUGGERS

I thought it might be that. The sight of you doing handsprings gave it away.

MYRON

We poets are passionate, sir.

BUGGERS

Right, I can tell.

MYRON

I would be very gratified if you would favour me with your opinion of one of my poems, sir. It would mean a great deal to be judged by a real literary critic.

BUGGERS

Critics do not judge, we merely point out the obvious. Right, get on with it then, tell me your poem.

MYRON

Thank you very much, Mr Philistine, for this opportunity. The title of this piece is "What Cats Like".

BUGGERS

Stop! I've heard enough. What cats like? Who bloody cares what cats like? How many cats in this bloody poem anyway?

MYRON

It's not a cat or cats per se, sir, but rather the cat body politic.

BUGGERS

The cat body politic? Well, that's too stupid for bloody words, isn't it? You've got potential here but you're off to a rotten start. I think you should rename your poem "What

Cathouses I've Liked" and take it from there.

MYRON

But, sir, ladies of loose moral character work at cathouses.

BUGGERS

That's how you get the filthy bits in, isn't it?

MYRON

Yes sir. Thank you for your advice, Mr Philistine. I must say it has been a revelation being scrutinized by a genuine literary critic.

BUGGERS

We do have our moments, we critics.



Fig. A1.12. Humphrey Hurliburton's (Roy Teed, right) first meeting with Daisy (Lori Arnoldus), Basil Calhoun's (Wayne Wark, centre) model. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.13. The poet, Myron (Pete Drewcock, right), meeting the literary critic, Mr. Philistine, a.k.a. Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.14. Basil Calhoun (Wayne Wark) saying hello to Harry (Dennis Holbrook). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.15. Buggers (Dave Gunn) making the acquaintance of Daisy (Lori Arnoldus), while Myron (Pete Drewcock) sips his Scottish tea. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again

[Spring 1992]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.16. Mona (Deleenia Lovell) heading off with her match, the bartender (Dennis Holbrook). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Ackers – Dave Gunn
Blanche – Maz Holbrook
Miss Birdie – Wanda Zacharias
Tooley – Pete Drewcock
Peaches – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf
Mona – Deleenia Lovell
The Bartender – Dennis Holbrook
B. Bertram Bighorn Smith – Wayne Wark

SYNOPSIS: Miss Birdie, saloon proprietor in the Canadian west, is lonely and decides that she needs a paramour – a fact that is inadvertently mentioned to the villainous B.

Bertram Bighorn Smith, owner of everything else in town, who has long had his sights on

acquiring Miss Birdie's establishment as well and now figures he can woo it out of her. Frightened by Smith's intentions – which include casting them out on the street – the hurdy gurdy girls, quick-witted Blanche, lush Mona and air-headed Peaches, along with the local Northwest Mounted Police constable, Ackers, set out to find Miss Birdie a suitable suitor. After a brief and unsuccessful attempt to groom Ackers into a potential paramour for Miss Birdie, the group decides to create the perfect man using the sloshed miner, Tooley, who's been in a drunken stupor since striking it rich months ago. While Smith comes a-courting, declaring his love and taking a suspicious Miss Birdie out for moonlit hayrides and such, the girls and Ackers begin the transformation of Tooley into an English gentleman, namely, Lord TooleyWood, the 17th Earl of TooleyWood on Avon. Unfortunately, as an avid reader of American wild-west stories of desperados, Peaches would prefer Tooley to become a gunslinger, namely, the Chicken Merango Kid. And so, Tooley becomes a schizophrenic creation, mincing around as the effeminate, elitist milord one moment and then swaggering around as the Kid, hunting down Smith and threatening to plug everyone, the next. All the while, Smith finds himself *really* loving Miss Birdie and she him, to which she finally admits as they all stand in the sights of the Kid's shooting iron. Tooley, as the Kid, rides off into the sunset with Peaches, Miss Birdie and Smith set off to find a preacher so Birdie can learn the meaning of "Bighorn," Blanche and Ackers, who have been bickering throughout the play and "making up" through forced kisses, take off for some private, unforced communication and Mona heads off with the pantless Bartender and a flask of whiskey.

EXCERPT:

BLANCHE

Ackers, this is your fault. You know what Smith's like. He didn't come to own every other saloon in town from bashfulness. If he sets his mind on courting Miss Birdie we'll need a miracle to stop him.

PEACHES

(*shyly*) I know what we can do.

BLANCHE

What?

PEACHES

Well, just like I read every day in my true-accounts-of-the-frontier books, all we need to do is find a stalwart desperado hero like the Durango Kid and ask him to meet Mr Smith on mainstreet and blow him to smithereens with his shooting irons. Wouldn't that be exciting?

BLANCHE

Blow Smith to smithereens? (*primly superior*) That's not the way we do it here.

ACKERS

Indeed not. We take pride in the art of compromise.

BLANCHE

That's right. Let's form a committee.

ACKERS

Splendid. I'll be chairman.

BLANCHE

What makes you think you're qualified to be chairman?

ACKERS

My qualifications are too numerous to list, not to mention so vastly superior to your meagre capabilities that I blush to compare them.

PEACHES

I'll be the chairman.

BLANCHE
Shut up, Peaches.

ACKERS
Curb your tongue, madam. Peaches' aspirations to chairmanship are as legitimate as your own.

BLANCHE
Peaches is dumber 'n a fence post.

ACKERS
That hasn't disqualified you.

BLANCHE
If I wasn't such a gentle-souled, woman of peace, Ackers, I'd break that table over your thick skull.

ACKERS
Is that so? Well, madam, if I wasn't possessed of such intellectual luminosity I'd be tempted to let you try, after which I would take great pleasure in trepanning you with a whisky bottle.

BLANCHE
(*bristling*) Oh yeah?

ACKERS
Yeah.

MONA
(*forcing her way between BLANCHE and ACKERS*) That's a criminal misuse of whisky and I won't stand for it. I'll be the chairman.

ACKERS
A non-partisan, third party chairman? (*to BLANCHE*) Is that acceptable to you?

BLANCHE
Yes.

MONA
Okay. I hereby call this meeting to order. (*bangs table*) Sit down and shut up. (*All sit*) The first order of business is naming this committee. I propose we call it after the

chairman.

PEACHES

Gosh, that's a good idea. Who's the chairman?

ACKERS

Oh, Peaches. Madam Chairman, may I respectfully submit that it would be more appropriate to title the committee after its purpose: namely the Committee to Stop Smith from Courting Birdie; C.S.S.C.B. for short.

BLANCHE

Madam Chairman, I bow to my learned colleague's command of the Queen's English. C.S.S.C.B. does, however, bear the stamp of pomposity.

ACKERS

Madam Chairman, I can see my honourable colleague needs no lessons in pomposity. I would ask though, she balance her petty criticisms of C.S.S.C.B. with some constructive proposals of her own.

BLANCHE

Madam Chairman, I would be delighted to share any number of alternate titles for this committee, any of which, I submit, would be immeasurably superior to the feeble, uninspired attempts of my honourable colleague. It is with great pleasure I propose the name: Committee for the Prevention of the Smith/Birdie Liaison; C.P.S.B.L. for short.

ACKERS

Madam Chairman, I gag. If that is the best my honourable colleague can do I must seriously reconsider my estimates of her mental prowess. C.P.S.B.L. is the work of an intellectual dwarf, Madam Chairman.

BLANCHE

Madam Chairman, I must take exception to my honourable colleague's slur on short people. Further, Madam Chairman, may I draw your attention to the palpable superiority of C.P.S.B.L. over C.S.S.C.B.. My suggestion, C.P.S.B.L., uses five letters of the alphabet as opposed to the anaemic and half-hearted use of only three by C.S.S.C.B.. Five letters to three, Madam Chairman, the arithmetic is undeniable.

ACKERS

Madam Chairman, one can count letters or one can count the worth of letters—

MONA

—Would you two shut up! My God I'm glad I'm drunk or I'd die from boredom. I say we call this committee The Committee and leave it at that. Any objections? *(none)* Good. Now, second order of business: any suggestions on how to stop Smith from courting Miss Birdie?

ACKERS

That, I believe, is obvious. We must eclipse Smith with an alternate paramour of sterling quality.

BLANCHE

And where do you propose we find sterling quality in this town?

ACKERS

There is that difficulty. But I'm sure once we discover Miss Birdie's preferences in a man a solution will present itself.

BLANCHE

It's not much of a plan, Ackers, but it's all we have. Madam Chairman, I vote we put his plan into action.

MONA

Sounds good to me. All in favour? *(all raise hands)* All opposed? *(all drop hands but PEACHES)*

ACKERS

Peaches, you cannot vote both for and against something.

PEACHES

Who's voting? I want to go pee.

PEACHES races toward stage left, stops, runs back to a table and rips a long strip of newspaper off, then exits at a run stage left.



Fig. A1.17. Tooley's (Pete Drewcock) transformation is about to begin. Ackers (Dave Gunn) manhandles him, while Blanche (Maz Holbrook) deals with B. Bertram Bighorn Smith (Wayne Wark, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.18. Tooley (Pete Drewcock) begins the process of cleaning up to be a proper paramour, with help from Mona (Deleenia Lovell). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.19. Tooley (Pete Drewcock), as the ever-plugging Chicken Merango Kid, is assaulted by Blanche (Maz Holbrook) while Peaches (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), whose creation this is, tries to pull her off. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.20. Tooley (Pete Drewcock) as milord, the 17th Earl of Tooleywood on Avon, no doubt being saucy to Mona (Deleenia Lovell). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.21. Blanche (Maz Holbrook), Miss Birdie (Wanda Zacharias) and Ackers (Dave Gunn) hiding behind B. Bertram Bighorn Smith (Wayne Wark) as the Chicken Merango Kid threatens to do some plugging. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase [Spring 1993]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.22. Cast of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*. Back row (left to right): Dave Gunn, Kathie Ardell Prentice, Pete Drewcock, Gary Minnett, Mike Whalen, Wayne Wark, Patti Whitford Reinsdorf; front (left to right): Wanda Zacharias, Jarret Hannas and Deleenia Lovell. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Algernon Buggers – Dave Gunn
Bonecrusher Wickham – Pete Drewcock
Mrs. Grimes – Kathie Ardell Prentice
Ms. McBurgo – Wanda Zacharias
Angie Bunwallop – Deleenia Lovell
Ernie Bunwallop – Jarret Hannas
Jack Strathbungo – Wayne Wark
Clyde – Gary Minnett
Louis – Mike Whalen
Harmony – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf

SYNOPSIS: A worried Angie Bunwallop visits the office of P.I. Algernon Buggers with concerns for her brother, Ernie, who has joined a pirate cult. Buggers has had a bit of a busy morning, trying to evade his soon-to-be apprentice, the sensitive Bonecrusher Wickham, the nephew of his insistent and efficient secretary, Mrs. Grimes. Having vaguely promised Mrs. Grimes to take on her nephew, he is now trapped in the deal, much to his annoyance. Angie and Boney, as Bonecrusher calls himself, immediately hit it off, but the blossoming attraction is nipped in the bud when the pirate, Cuticle Clyde, bursts into the office, brandishing a sword and then a cannon, with intentions to kidnap Angie. There is, apparently, a general want of wenches onboard *The Pickled Pigeon* and Captain Jack has his sights set on the lovely Angie. Clyde takes the fair Angie and, grudgingly, Ms. McBurgo, a no-nonsense feminist who insists upon inclusion. Once onboard, the filthy and foul-talking pirate wench, Harmony, who is not considered fit for man or beast, is encountered, along with Louis, the incoherent French-Canadian pirate, Ernie, the eager pirate trainee, and Captain Jack Strathbungo, an archetypal pirate complete with Captain Hook hair, an eye patch, a peg leg and a stuffed parrot on the shoulder. Coming to the rescue of the kidnapped women, Buggers and Wickham disguise themselves as the pirates, Smilin' Bill Coyle and No-Tongue Ned, respectively, and infiltrate *The Pickled Pigeon*. Buggers uses his blank card trick to sow confusion, convincing Captain Jack that he is having a naked dream, leaving Jack to wander around trying to cover himself while he tries to wake himself. Spurned as a potential wench because of her demands for access to full piracy training, Ms. McBurgo returns to the pirate lair to confront Jack and take over the running of the operation. Wickham disguises himself as Babette, a balloon-breasted pirate wench, much to the delight of Louis. It all

ends with Jack and McBurgo running off together, a cleaned up Harmony hooking up with a parrot-costumed Ernie, a Babette-clad Boney finding his Angie, Clyde and Louis heading off to drink grog and sing dirty pirate ditties, like “What do you do with a horny pirate?”, and a frustrated Buggers, thwarted from making sense of the insensible and explaining this mystery, since everyone is too busy with other plans.

EXCERPT:

BUGGERS

Excuse me. Excuse me. Are you gentlemen at all interested in wenches, or not? Remember me? Smilin' Bill Coyle, purveyor of fine wenches?

CLYDE

Wenches? Har! What about 'em?

BUGGERS

What about them? I thought there was a wench shortage around here.

CLYDE

Har, we be having too many bloody wenches, matey. What thinks ye did all this? Aye, 'twas wenches, a plague of 'em.

BUGGERS

Good Lord, that's all I need, a misogynic pirate. Are you sure you aren't interested in wenches?

CLYDE

Har! Scupper the lot!

LOUIS

Une moment, mon ami, les wenches ain't all bad.

BUGGERS

Well said, sir; I couldn't have put it better myself.

LOUIS

Merci. Je suis be le wench expert here at the Pickled Pigeon.

BUGGERS

Excellent. Then you're just the man I want to see.

LOUIS

This be tres exciting, Clyde, nest pas? (*CLYDE snarls*) He be having le bad day today. Les wenches now; je suis prefer right true pirate wenches. Havez-vous any of them?

BUGGERS

My good man, rather than waste time explaining let us leap straight to the subject itself. (*BUGGERS moves to entrance one*) Oh Babette, Babette, come hither my dear.

BONECRUSHER enters as a right true pirate wench. He is very busty. LOUIS is in awe.

BUGGERS

Allow me to introduce Babette the pirate wench. Babette, the pirates. (*BONECRUSHER waves*) What do you think boys?

CLYDE

(*jowlly*) Haaar! Shiver me swizzle stick.

BONECRUSHER

I'd love to, sailor.

CLYDE

Husky little thing, ain't she?

BUGGERS

Indeed. She has all those attributes most valued by pirates.

LOUIS

Regardez les bazongas! Formy-dabble!

CLYDE

Louis, she be the homeliest wench I ever clapped eyes aboard.

LOUIS

No, no, mon ami, she be perfect, I swear. Je suis be shivers from stem to stern. Clyde old mon ami, what say ye—can we take her aboard?

CLYDE

And what of Cap'n Jack's fine wench-wooning dinner what we be working so hard to make perfect? Is that to be cast adrift while we breaks in a new pirate wench?

LOUIS

But Clyde, mon ami, le Capitanny's brains be addled.

CLYDE

Aye, yer tune changes quick enough when yer gonads be in an uproar, don't it? What of young Ernie preparing himself for that most arduous of pirate duties? Do we abandon him as well?

LOUIS

Oh, les whimper and les whine. Clyde, ye be too hard on moi.

BUGGERS

If I may interject here, I'd like to point out that I have any number of clients absolutely clamouring for the services of this delightful young pirate wench.

CLYDE

Aye, and they be right welcome to her too; we already be having our share of ugly aboard the Pickled Pigeon, we don't need no more. Louis, see to yer pirate duty, we be needing to check on Ernie.

BUGGERS

Excuse me, am I to understand you're deserting this damsel in distress?

CLYDE

Aye, and the more distress she suffers the better it be. Come along, Louis, there be work to do.

LOUIS *and CLYDE exit stage left.*

BONECRUSHER

Well, it looks like the wench ploy is a bust, boss. I thought you said this was a sure thing.

BUGGERS

It was. I've never met a more obdurate collection of uncooperative, thick-headed, surly, crinkum-crankum,

scrofulous, rascallions in my entire life. It's bloody off-putting, it is.

BONECRUSHER

I guess we should have brought the flaming great cannon.

BUGGERS

I'm not out of ideas yet, Mr Wickham. Not even close. You wait here.

BONECRUSHER

For how long?

BUGGERS

For as long as bloody necessary, that's how long; until your bloody bosom deflates.

BUGGERS *exits entrance one.*



Fig. A1.23. Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett, right) storming the office of Algernon Buggers (Dave Gunn, left), as Angie Bunwallop (Deleenia Lovell) and Bonecrusher Wickham (Pete Drewcock) look on. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.24. The pirate lair with Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark, centre) and his jolly pirates, Ernie Bunwallop (Jarret Hannas, left) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.25. The pirate wench, Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf), greets Bonecrusher Wickham (Pete Drewcock, left) and Buggers (Dave Gunn, far right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.26. Buggers (Dave Gunn, right) trying to maintain his pirate cover, as Louis (Mike Whalen, left) and Cuticle Clyde (Gary Minnett, centre) question him. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles

[Spring 1994]

Directed by Steve Koning
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.27. Cast of *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* at Mainstage in Cranbrook, BC. Back row, standing (left to right): Sean Morin, Roy Teed, Jim Swaan; front row, sitting (left to right): Steve Koning, Gary Minnett, Marty Duffy, Dave Gunn, Wanda Zacharias. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Pericles Mavenbrook – Dave Gunn
Hortensia & Barbara Fussel – Wanda Zacharias
Will-Bill Bonnigan – Gary Minnett
Skiddy Padopolis – Sean Morin
Joe – Jarrett Hannas/Steve Koning¹⁷⁰
Whiply Dervish – Laureen Livingstone/Marty Duffy¹⁷¹
Oscar – Wayne Wark/Roy Teed¹⁷²
Merv – Jim Swaan

¹⁷⁰ The director, Steve Koning, performed the pizza delivery man role at Mainstage

¹⁷¹ Due to family issues, Laureen Livingstone was unable to travel to Mainstage, so Marty Duffy stepped in as Whiply Dervish.

¹⁷² Unable to travel to Cranbrook to Mainstage, Wayne Wark was replaced with Roy Teed.

SYNOPSIS: (As related by Roy Teed) It's about – there's twins – there's twin ladies and the only way they're distinguished on stage is one wears an eye patch in this way on this eye and then an eye patch on this eye for the other one [*indicating different eyes*] and she's a Fussel, and they're related to what's his name, the guy that Dave Gunn played. I can't even remember his name [Pericles Mavenbrook]. But he's having an affair with one of the twins [Barbara] and he hates the other one [Hortensia], but the twins are actually the same woman, which you find out at the end of the play. And they've concocted – he's concocted a plan to murder one of the twins [Hortensia] so they [Pericles and Barbara] can live happily ever after and collect a fortune when they get the – it's very complicated. Their great uncle or something left them money and they get a stipend every month and they have to sign a form and they had to countersign the person they hate before anybody gets the money. So if I hate to sign your form and you had to sign my form and we just loathed each other, and they're all living together and – 'cause their great uncle decided that we're going to resolve this, 'cause they're two sides of the family, we're going to resolve this dispute come what may. And so, they hire an assassin [Skiddy Padoplis] to kill the other sister, except the assassin is very specialized. He uses explosive lingerie to kill people. So, by the end of the play, you've got everybody wandering around in lingerie on the outside of their clothes. Now, is this not strange? But it was hilarious. It was my favourite play. Not my favourite, but one of my favourites.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Workshop Play

Mainstage – Provincial Community Theatre Festival:

- The Darrell Phillips Memorial Award (for Workshop Play, individual or group which made most significant contribution to workshop process) – Roy Teed

EXCERPT:

WILL-BILL BONNIGAN *enters from door two.*

WILL-BILL

Horty baby! I'm a bowlegged fool in love – come to papa!

PERICLES

Good God, who the devil are you?

WILL-BILL

Will-Bill Bonnigan, live and in person. Hey, wait a minute, you must be Perkles, Horty's dipstick cousin.

PERICLES

It's Pericles.

WILL-BILL

Whatever. Glad to meet you.

PERICLES

How did you get in?

WILL-BILL

I let myself in. Horty give me the keys to her boudoir! Aroooo! (*howls*)

PERICLES

Are you and my cousin engaged in some sordid carnal relationship?

WILL-BILL

No way, we don't do kinky.

PERICLES

Thank you for that small blessing. You and she kinky is enough to sour one permanently on the act.

WILL-BILL

Let's cut to the good stuff. Small talk puts me to sleep.

PERICLES

What good stuff?

WILL-BILL

If you don't know yet, pal, you'll never know. Horty baby, it's huggy-snuggy time!

PERICLES

Huggy – bloody – snuggy? You bulbous cretin, that's not Hortensia.

WILL-BILL

What?

PERICLES

Look at her.

WILL-BILL

(staring intently) Howdy doody, you're patched backwards!

BARBARA

I'm Barbara, Hortensia's twin sister.

WILL-BILL

Twins! I just won the lottery!

BARBARA

You surprise me, Mr Bonnigan. Hortensia's said nothing about a new gentleman friend.

WILL-BILL

I'll bet she was keeping me secret cause she didn't want to share. I got enough for anything, though, even twins. *(nudges PERICLES)* I'm a lewd, rude, crude dude, Perkles, and hot on the trail of true love.

PERICLES

It's Pericles.

WILL-BILL

Whatever. Now where's my Horthy baby? Grab me, point me and slap my haunch, I'm ready to rip, roar and do the waterbed rodeo. Aroo! *(paws ground)*

BARBARA

I'll bring her, Mr Bonnigan.

WILL-BILL

You will? Well, thank you very much, you're a sweetheart. *(BARBARA exits door one.)* So how's tricks, Perkles?

PERICLES

It's Pericles.

WILL-BILL

What is?

PERICLES

My name.

WILL-BILL

No wonder you're so puckered, Perkles.

PERICLES

Pericles.

WILL-BILL

Whatever. So are you kissing cousins or what?

PERICLES

No.

WILL-BILL

Strictly grope and lope, eh?

PERICLES

For your information, though we are cousins, we are in fact, rather distant cousins which does not preclude, of course, such acts as kissing or any other adult activity in which we may find ourselves involved.

WILL-BILL

That sounds like highfalutin convolution, Perkles.

PERICLES

It's Pericles.

WILL-BILL

Pair a what?

PERICLES

Per. Re. Cles.

WILL-BILL

Is that like a pair of soccer shoes, or what?

PERICLES

Never mind, Mr Bumfritter.

WILL-BILL

That's Bonnigan.

PERICLES

Whatever.

WILL-BILL

So now that we got the names straight, Perkles, how about some country and western music?

PERICLES

Some what?

WILL-BILL

Some country; some hurtin' music.

PERICLES

Do you actually believe I might listen to lovesick cowboys serenading their horse-faced cow maidens?

WILL-BILL

I sure do.

PERICLES

You're misinformed.

WILL-BILL

Perkles, country music is about life; these songs are universal.

PERICLES

Universally deplored by the culturally sophisticated.

WILL-BILL

That's because the culturally sophisticated got their heads so far up their ass they don't know good music when they hear it.

PERICLES

I do not appreciate your crudeness, Mr Buttmeister.

WILL-BILL

Call me Will-Bill.

PERICLES

Why?

WILL-BILL

It's friendlier.

PERICLES

I'd rather not encourage you.

WILL-BILL

Too late, Perkles. You're one of them homely little creatures a fella can't help but like. You may have a future in the business.

PERICLES

What business?

WILL-BILL

The country music business. You may have heard of me – Will-Bill Bonnigan, used-tractor salesman and up-and-coming country singer.

PERICLES

You sell used tractors to country singers?

WILL-BILL

Sure do. Can you play a guitar?

PERICLES

No.

WILL-BILL

Fiddle?

PERICLES

No.

WILL-BILL

Harmonica?

PERICLES

No.

WILL-BILL

Oh well, with my talent and your money we'll go far. (*HORTENSIA enters from door one*) Horty baby!

HORTENSIA

William.

WILL-BILL

You're pumping new life into tired loins, sweetheart. Three weeks on the road and I'm horny enough to chew tractor tires and spit condoms.

PERICLES

Good Lord, the mating ritual of a country and western fan.

WILL-BILL

Perkles, don't you got someplace to go?

PERICLES

Not really. Horthy baby, what a pleasure it is to meet your new romantic interest.

HORTENSIA

What I do in private is none of your affair, Pericles.

PERICLES

Perhaps not, but when you distribute the keys to our home it becomes my affair.

WILL-BILL

The keys to her boudoir! Aroo! (*howls*)

HORTENSIA

(*uncomfortable*) Remember what I told you about howling in public, William?

WILL-BILL

Yeah, something about knees turning to water and panties at half-mast.

PERICLES

Good lord, they discuss lingerie together.

HORTENSIA

We have more in common than you might think.

WILL-BILL

We sure do, let's show him.

PERICLES

No!

HORTENSIA

Really, Pericles, what are you thinking?

WILL-BILL

Yeah, we are artistes.

HORTENSIA

We are bound mind, spirit and body by the profound love we share for country music.

PERICLES

You're what?! Country music – are you mad?!

HORTENSIA

I've never been more sane in my life.

PERICLES

This is appalling. Someone of your alleged good breeding a crypto-country music fan?

WILL-BILL

She's more than a fan, Perkles. Her and me's gonna be the next country music sensation – the down home country duo of Bonnigan and Fussel.

PERICLES

You not only listen to it, you want to sing it? My God, you think you know someone and all the while they harbour secret perversions.



Fig. A1.28. Gary Minnett (right) stuffs himself into those pants as he gets ready to portray Will-Bill Bonnigan. He gets a little assistance from Wayne Wark (left). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.29. Will-Bill (Gary Minnett) with his brassiere and his guitar, as the director, Steve Koning (left), smilingly looks on. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.30. The meeting of Hortensia Fussell (Wanda Zacharias) with her Will-Bill (Gary Minnett). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.31. Pericles “Perkles” Mavenbrook (Dave Gunn) is less than pleased with the camaraderie of Will-Bill Bonnigan (Gary Minnett). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Strangers on a Glade [Spring 1994]

Directed by Pete Drewcock
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.32. Cast and director of *Strangers on a Glade*: (left to right) Deleenia Lovell, Pete Drewcock and Patti Whitford Reinsdorf. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Marnie – Deleenia Lovell
Gloria – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf

SYNOPSIS: Seeking to reconnect with her estranged, older sister, outdoorsy Gloria ropes her urbanite sister, Marnie, into a little wilderness outing into Sasquatch country. Over recipes for pemmican, tales of horny Sasquatches, philosophizing on the catharsis of camping and discussions of tree psychology, the two sisters eventually slow down enough to really talk to one another, voicing the concerns in their everyday lives. And, instead of

insisting on heading home, as she has been doing through the entire play, Marnie decides, at the end, to give a night in a tent a try.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Honourable Mention for Best Actress – Deleenia Lovell and Patty Whitford

EXCERPT:

MARNIE

Okay, you want me to change? I'll change. Maybe if I change now, you'll see why I didn't want to do it in the first place.

GLORIA

Use the tent, that way you won't arouse any passing Sasquatches.

MARNIE

I wouldn't touch that line with a ten foot pole.

GLORIA

That's what the Sasquatch said.

MARNIE

I'm out of here.

MARNIE takes her pack into the tent.

GLORIA

Does Bigfoot make you nervous, Marnie?

MARNIE

(inside tent) It's not the big feet I'm worried about.

GLORIA

Here's an interesting statistic: it's been clinically proven that fresh air is nature's most effective aphrodisiac.

MARNIE

I don't want to hear this, Gloria.

GLORIA

I just thought that if you ever made a list of reasons to continue camping you could put that on the pro side.

MARNIE

Gloria, I'll never do this again.

GLORIA

A week from now you'll look back and realize how wonderful it all was.

MARNIE

A week from now this will be nothing but a bad memory.

GLORIA

This may be as close to idyllic as you ever get, you know. Listen to those songbirds.

They listen.

MARNIE

They're all dead.

GLORIA

They're on their lunch break.

MARNIE

If they're smart they quit and moved to the city.

GLORIA

If it wasn't for these camping trips I don't know how I'd survive. Everyone needs a getaway place, somewhere to hide from reality for a while.

MARNIE

That's why they gave us shopping malls, Gloria.

GLORIA

Everything is so simple out here. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to live a hundred years ago when everything was simple? That's what we miss most, I think, living simply but well. We confuse business and fuss and busywork for the good life, but it's more than that. That's another thing camping does for you, it lets you philosophize. You can't philosophize with conviction in a city supermarket, but you can while

you're camping. We'd have a lot more peace in the world if all the leaders spent more time camping. Philosophy comes naturally out here. I bet that between the two of us we could solve half the world's problems on a single camping trip. Right, Marnie?

MARNIE

Did you say something?

GLORIA

I was talking about the world's problems.

MARNIE

Who cares? Out here if the world ended ten minutes ago we wouldn't know till tomorrow.

GLORIA

We're in touch with a more vital existence out here, we don't need civilization.

MARNIE

I need civilization, that's where the men hang out.

GLORIA

Real men go camping and if we're lucky we may see one.

MARNIE

It sounds like it's a toss-up on what we'll see first—a real man or a Sasquatch.

GLORIA

Will we be able to tell the difference?

MARNIE

Sure. Sasquatches have better table manners.



Fig. A1.33. Marnie (Deleenia Lovell, left) complaining about the great outdoors to her sister, Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

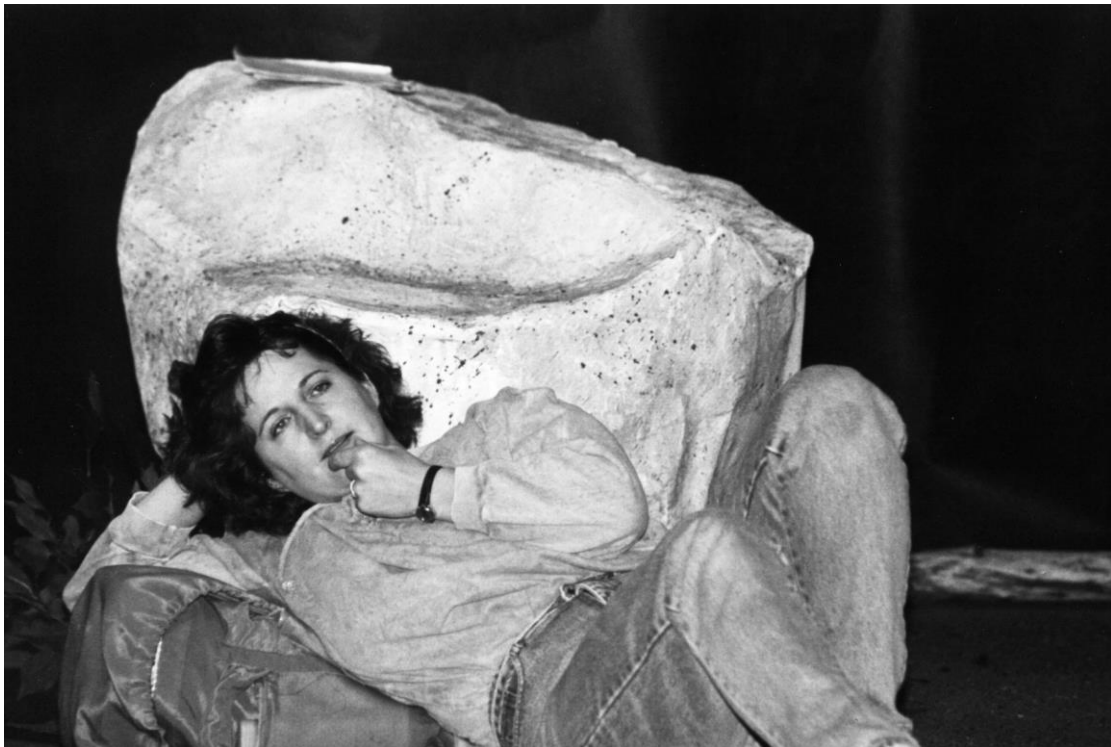


Fig. A1.34. Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf) having a reflective moment. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.35. Gloria (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, left) erecting the tent, as Marnie (Deleenia Lovell, right) insists on leaving. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues [Spring 1995]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.36. The Schickerbickers (Pete Drewcock and Kat Popein) checking into their room. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Phil Schickerbicker – Pete Drewcock
Helen Schickerbicker – Kat Popein
Daphne – Kathie Ardell Prentice
Hugo – Roy Teed
Constance Crutchley – Maureen Mitchell
Craddock – Mike Webb

SYNOPSIS: Spending the first night of their vacation in a grungy motel, complete with dust bunnies and no running water, certainly does nothing to stop the perpetual squabbling of Helen and Phil Schickerbicker. As they attempt to get the dust bunnies cleaned up, the water working and order some dinner, the wacky workings of the Goodtime Motel reveal themselves. Hugo, from room service, bursts in the room without

knocking and deluxe burgers with mustard, ketchup *and* buns are ordered, although forks cost extra. Hugo, the manager, arrives, having heard of the water and dust bunny complaints from room-service Hugo. Constance Crutchley, rabid environmentalist with GARBAGE (Generic Animal Rights Brigade Allied with Generic Environmentalists), shows up, frothing about the plight of the endangered dust bunny. Hugo, the short-order cook, knocks, demanding twenty bucks to fulfill the order, and he and Phil enter into a bet about the existence or non-existence of left-handed hamburger buns. Hugo, the escort, enters the room and launches himself on Helen. Daphne, the motel's nymphomaniac, hides in the bed and launches herself on Phil. And on it goes. Craddock, the male maid, with a baseball-bat feather duster enters. Hugo, the plumber, shows up. And by the end, Phil is in one of Helen's dresses with Daphne taped to him and Constance choking him, while Helen has Hugo, the escort, smothering her in kisses. Craddock breaks up the madness with a well-placed bucket of water and Phil and Helen embrace each other, kick everyone out, declare their love for one another and fall on the bed for a frolic, only to be disturbed by Hugo, from room service, bursting in and asking them to repeat their order.

EXCERPT:

HELEN

I thought you were told to send the manager.

HUGO

I did. You're looking at him, sweetie.

HELEN

Don't push your luck, mister, I'm not your sweetie.

HUGO

Yes, ma'am, I knew I had reason to be thankful today. So what's the problem?

HELEN

I told you what the problem was the last time you were here.

HUGO

No you didn't. You told Hugo from room service. You're talking to Hugo the manager right now.

HELEN

Hugo the manager. All right Hugo the manager, there are dust bunnies under this bed.

HUGO

Naw, You're shitting me. Dust bunnies?

HELEN

Yes, dust bunnies.

HUGO

And to think I made a point of putting dust bunny-free in our brochure this year. Christ, the place could lose its one star rating if this gets out. How do these things happen?

HELEN

Try a slothful, inefficient staff combined with a criminally incompetent management. I want those dust bunnies cleaned up.

HUGO

Say, what month is this?

HELEN

Why?

HUGO

We only hunt dust bunnies in March and November. They're in season then, you know.

HELEN

They're in season tonight.

HUGO

I'll send the maid.

HELEN

And there's no water in the bathroom.

HUGO

You want water too?

HELEN

Is that so unusual?

HUGO

It is at the Goodtime Motel.

HELEN

I want that water working tonight, mister.

HUGO

I'll send the plumber.

PHIL

Would you look at this, Helen? Can you believe this service?
And you thought staying here was a mistake.

HELEN

Phil, bite your tongue before I extract it by the roots.

PHIL

Okay, let's change the subject. So how about that room
service order? Is it ready yet?

HUGO

I don't know. What'd you order?

PHIL

You were right here when I ordered it.

HUGO

I keep telling you folks I'm Hugo the manager, not Hugo from
room service. So what'd you order?

PHIL

Deluxe burgers.

HUGO

Buns or forks.

PHIL

Buns and forks.

HUGO
Hey, big spender.

HELEN
What are you two talking about?

HUGO
Damned if I know.

HUGO *exits.*



Fig. A1.37. The motel nymphomaniac, Daphne (Kathie Ardell Prentice), forcing herself upon Phil Schickerbicker (Pete Drewcock). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.38. Roy Teed as Hugo, the short-order cook. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.39. Helen Schickerbicker (Kat Popein) pleading with Hugo, the escort (Roy Teed), to vacate the premises. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.40. Craddock, the maid (Mike Webb), preparing to take out dust bunnies and environmentalists. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Har! (The Pirate Play) [Spring 1996]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.41. Cast of *Har! (The Pirate Play)*. Back row, standing (left to right): Mike Webb, Deleenia Lovell, Paul Nichols, Wayne Wark, Steve Koning, Sean Morin, Dave Gunn, Penny Krebs and Pete Drewcock; front, by barrel (left to right): Patti Whitford Reinsdorf and Kat Popein. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Captain John Jacob Pierpont de Chauncey Packard – Pete Drewcock

Blodger – Dave Gunn

Louis – Paul Nichols

Dusty Fairweather – Penny Krebs

Ludmilla Oyster – Deleenia Lovell

Jergens – Mike Webb

Martha Speckledeck – Kat Popein

Harvey Speckledeck – Sean Morin

Captain Jack Strathbungo – Wayne Wark

Clyde – Steve Koning

Harmony – Patti Whitford Reinsdorf

SYNOPSIS: A rundown steamer turned cruise ship, the SS Royal Gorge is preparing for its maiden voyage with tourists onboard. Captain John Jacob Pierpont de Chauncey Packard is at the helm, joined by the sailor, Blodger, the hospitality hostess, the busty Dusty, and the French chef, Louis. Out to thwart the cruise-liner plans is the terrible woman, Ludmilla Oyster, and her fearful, faithful and bloodthirsty assistant, Jergens. Ludmilla is furious that the corporate owners of the Royal Gorge ignored her plan to scrap the ship and instead embraced Captain Packard's tourist dream. Unfortunately, with only five registered guests onboard, Captain Packard is rather desperate to prove the viability of his cruise ship to the corporate representative, the vicious Ludmilla, which results in a stream of "passengers" (Blodger, Dusty and Louis in various disguises, from nuns and cowgirls to gay men and celebrities to ballerinas and newlyweds) parading in front of a suspicious Ludmilla. The only *real* passengers onboard are the bickering Speckledecks, Martha and Harvey, who may or may not have brought along their son, Basher (they cannot find him and cannot remember what they did with him), and the Smiths, Harmony, Clyde and their son, Jack. The Smiths, as it turns out, along with Louis, are members of the Pickled Pigeon Pirate Brigade, who have infiltrated the SS Royal Gorge with plans to take control. Unfortunately, they had not reckoned with a Ludmilla Oyster, who usurps command of the ship, decimating all in her wake with her verbal abuse and reducing the great pirate captain, Captain Jack Strathbungo, to a shell of a man in a catatonic state, all his piracy dreams having been crushed. Hoping to wake up Jack and stop the evil Ludmilla, Harvey Speckledeck disrobes, revealing his superhero attire, complete with cape. Yet, even he is laid low before the sardonic wit of Ludmilla. In a grand soliloquy on the leadership capacity of captains, Captain Packard succeeds in

snapping Captain Jack out of his stupor and all unite in mutinous hatred of Ludmilla, including her assistant, Jergens, who has fallen in love with the pirate wench, Harmony. Thus abandoned, Ludmilla puts up a brave fight, but then admits to her apparently unrequited love for Captain Packard, love which he then reciprocates. The Speckledecks head off for some “high-seas hammock horseplay” and Blodger, who wants to apply for pirate training, produces an old, family treasure map, much to the ‘Har’-ing delight of the pirates.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Best Costumes

EXCERPT:

JACK

Har!

HARMONY

Har!

CLYDE

Har!

ALL

Har!

(to the tune of I's the boy)
We's the pirates what does the stuff,
We's the pirates so lazy.
We's the pirates that wrack and ruin,
And sails the seven say-zees!

We're all aboard the Royal Gorge,
Pumped and primed and horny,
Now we sails the seven seas,
Like real pirates afore we!
Har! Har!

CLYDE

Cap'n, this talking landlubber be uncommon difficult for a pirate.

JACK

Aye, it be unnatural for a right true pirate tongue to be saying things like 'sorry Dad.'

HARMONY

It be friggin' unnatural for a pirate tongue to do any sort of work at all, Jack.

JACK

Harmony, have we told ye how sweet ye looks all got up like that?

HARMONY

Yeah? Well, if I don't get this friggin' bra off soon I'm gonna friggin' scream.

CLYDE

Don't ye be baring yer particulars in public, Harmony, else ye'll be a-killing innocent tourists a port 'n starboard, ye will.

HARMONY

It ain't right for me boobs to be so perky. They ought to be pointing at me knees for proper pirate appreciation.

JACK

Har! Harmony's boobs not be fit for discussion, shipmates.

HARMONY

Who says, ye friggin' chauvinist jerk!

JACK

It be degrading, Harmony, to be speaking of yer boobs with disrespect.

HARMONY

Me boobs don't deserve no friggin' respect, ye friggin' pansy pirate.

JACK

Har, she be a right true pirate wench, Clyde, meaner 'n shark spit and twice as toothy.

CLYDE

(alarmed) Cap'n!

JACK

What?

CLYDE

Where be Louis?

JACK

Aye, where be Louis? Skulking below preparing the way for the Pickled Pigeon Pirate Brigade, that's where.

CLYDE

Discovering yer doubloons fat and heavy and numbering the wenches one through twenty.

HARMONY

Swillin' grog and goblin' pastries, pruning his toenails to impress his mateys.

CLYDE

Har, Cap'n Jack, we be poetical pirates, we be.

JACK

Aye, fierce sea dogs with a bit of whimsy in our hearts.

HARMONY

And an even littler bit in yer cod pieces. (cackle)

JACK

I told ye not to let her do the laundry, Clyde.



Fig. A1.42. Pirates Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, left), Cuticle Clyde (Steve Koning, centre) and Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark, right) posing as the family Smith in order to infiltrate the SS Royal Gorge. Captain Jack is naturally disguised as the Smiths' son, Jackie. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.43. The pirates, Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, left), Cuticle Clyde (Steve Koning, centre) and Captain Jack Strathbungo (Wayne Wark), in their full piracy garb. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.44. Dusty Fairweather (Penny Krebs) attempts to seductively snap Captain Jack (Wayne Wark) out of his catatonic state, as Captain Packard (Pete Drewcock) and Harmony (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf) offer suggestions. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Lace Drakes

[Fall 1996/Spring 1997]

Directed by Pete Drewcock
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.45. Sydney (Sean Morin, left), Frank (Dave Gunn, centre) and Herschel (Wayne Wark, right) transforming themselves for the Happy Hunting Lodge Maid of the Hunt Miss Buckshot Beauty Contest. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Cabot McDingus – Gary Minnett
Herschel/Lulu – Wayne Wark
Sydney/Annabelle – Sean Morin
Frank/Desdemona – Dave Gunn
Marie/Stan – Kathie Ardell Prentice
Sharon/Charlie – Deborah Armstrong-Borisenkoff

SYNOPSIS: Three buddies, Herschel, Sydney and Frank, show up at their hunting lodge for their annual hunting trip. They are met by the surly Scot caretaker, McDingus, and are stalked by Frank's suspicious wife, Marie, and her friend, Sharon, who have clad

themselves as fellow male hunters. As it turns out, Marie does have a right to be somewhat concerned, but not so much of her husband's supposed extramarital infidelities as of his actual cross-dressing tendencies. Bert Koning explains the gist of the plot:

I mean, you look at *Lace Drakes* – I mean the whole procedure was just about not having to clean the ducks. It was all done just because they love to shoot the ducks, but nobody wanted to clean them, right. So, they went to this horrid detail of getting dressed in women's clothes and all this other stuff, just so they wouldn't have to clean the dumb ducks, you know. And then, of course, the women found out about the fact that there was something going on in this cabin that wasn't supposed to be going on and so they got carried away, you know. (2004)

The "something going on" is the annual drag queen beauty contest – the Happy Hunting Lodge Maid of the Hunt Miss Buckshot Beauty Contest – with McDingus as the reluctant judge, the loser having to clean the blasted ducks. Naturally, it is a fierce competition, complete with sabotage, bribery, hissy fits, femininity testing and the like, in which a woman clad as a man clad as a woman eventually wins.

EXCERPT:

STAN/MARIE

Hey! Anybody home? (*silence*) Gee-zus, humpin' horny toads; I tell you, Charlie, these friggin' duck hunters are a bunch of gadabout dickheads, ain't they?

SHARON

(*her normal voice*) Do we have to be so crude all the time?

STAN/MARIE

What's the problem, Charlie? Them nasty words givin' you a limp dick, or what?

SHARON

(*pleading*) Marie.

STAN/MARIE

You want crude? How about I take a dump on your shoe; now that's crude.

SHARON
Stop it!

Silence.

MARIE
Sorry. I don't know what's happening to me, Sharon. There's something about this place. I can actually feel the difference.

SHARON
I do not want to be here anymore.

MARIE
It's like I have these... these waves of testosterone boiling through my body.

SHARON
Oh God, I hate hormones.

MARIE
I need to reach out... and kill something.

SHARON
I want to go home.

MARIE
Do you feel it too? You put on these ugly clothes, you isolate yourself in the wild, you gather together a group of primitives, you tell lies, you exaggerate, you huff, you puff and all of a sudden – you're a predator.

SHARON
Ducks?

MARIE
Men.

SHARON
I really, really do not want to be here.

STAN/MARIE
Stop whining, Charlie. You're a man now, act like one.

FRANK *enters the Lodge back door. He stops.*

FRANK

Excuse me? (*as in who the hell are you people?*)

STAN/MARIE

Son-of-bitch! It's a walkin', talkin', livin', breathin',
ass-kickin', hairy-chested, web-footed genuine duck hunter.
How the hell are ya? I'm Stan. This here dipshit's Charlie.

FRANK

(*very cool*) I'm Frank.

STAN/MARIE

Nice place you got here, Frank. Needs something though.
Maybe some of them cute little doilies, eh?

FRANK

We haven't unpacked the doilies yet.

STAN/MARIE

Get on it, Frank, the friggin' place is crying out for some
little lace doilies.

FRANK

Would you mind telling me what you're doing here?

STAN/MARIE

Whatta we doin' here? Gee-zus, Frank, we come to kill some
friggin' ducks, whatta ya think?

FRANK

This is a private Lodge.

STAN/MARIE

Yeah, we know. Henry invited us. Right, Charlie?

CHARLIE/SHARON

Right, Stan.

FRANK

Henry never mentioned anything to me.

STAN/MARIE

Hey, we're among friends here, right? Henry's a dickhead. He
probably forgot.

FRANK

Henry has the memory of an elephant.

STAN/MARIE

Yeah, and the balls of a mouse. (*roars laughter*) Eh, Charlie?

CHARLIE/SHARON

Right, Stan. Do we get one of these rooms, Frank?

STAN/MARIE

Great, a room. All we need now is one of those sleazy, blonde bimbos with big knockers to bring us room service. You got one of them numbers hidden someplace, Frank?

FRANK

No, I don't. And if you intend to join us here, Stan, I think you should know we don't permit sexist remarks at the Lodge.

STAN/MARIE

No shit. Who woulda thought you needed sensitivity training to kill a friggin' duck.

FRANK

We're not your usual band of happy hunters.

STAN/MARIE

Hey, we can get into this sensitivity stuff, right, Charlie? Just the other day I was bawling my eyes out 'cause my table saw broke down.

CHARLIE/SHARON

Way to go, Stan, you sensitive bastard you.

STAN/MARIE

Yeah. So how do you feel about cussin', Frank? We ain't gonna upset any delicate sensibilities describing your certain bodily functions, are we?

FRANK

As a general precept, the occasional off-colour interjection will be tolerated.

STAN/MARIE

Great. Ain't we a couple of lucky stiffes, Charlie, gettin' hooked up with the country's first politically correct duck hunters. C'mon, let's get our shit.

CHARLIE/SHARON

Don't you mean our hunting accouterments?

STAN/MARIE

Yeah, right, our hunting acooter-dooters.

CHARLIE/SHARON *and* STAN/MARIE *exit the Lodge door.*

FRANK

My God, where did Henry find those guys?



Fig. A1.46. Stan/Marie (Kathie Ardell Prentice, left) carousing with the boys, Cabot McDingus (Gary Minnett, centre) and Sydney (Sean Morin). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.47. Sydney (Sean Morin) as the helpless Annabelle lost in the woods. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.48. Annabelle/Sydney (Sean Morin, right) attempting to talk Stan/Marie (Kathie Ardell Prentice, left) into handing over his/her underwear. The final femininity test, as made up by McDingus, is to get Stan's underpants. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Hotel Hysterium [Spring 1998]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.49. Cast of *Hotel Hysterium*. Back row (left to right): Roy Teed and Gary Minnett; front row (left to right): Deleenia Lovell, Paul Nichols, Patty Whitford Reinsdorf, Marty Duffy, Kendra Hesketh, Laureen Livingstone and Stuart Graham. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Snoggins – Deleenia Lovell
Francis – Paul Nichols
Mrs. Venables – Marty Duffy
Julio Hugybudy – Gary Minnett
Mr. Bog – Roy Teed
HJ – Laureen Livingstone
Roxy, Mrs. Muggins, Rosie Rootertooter – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf
Tunella, Mrs. Flap, Susan – Kendra Hesketh
Clarence, Mr. Flap, Maurice, Billybob Bopeep, The Hot Dog Vendor – Stuart Graham

SYNOPSIS: Pretentious Mr. Bog, manager of Hotel Hysterium, with the aid of his junior manager assistant trainee, Snoggins, is preparing for the fine art auction of the late Mr. Venables' collection of black velvet paintings. Unbeknownst to Mr. Bog, Snoggins has double-booked the hotel's facilities with a vampire convention, which is really the

ridiculous cover for a group of art thieves, headed by the man-eater HJ. Appropriately, an actual vampire shows up for the convention, Julio Hugybugy, only to be perpetually confused for someone else. And as all the chaos ensues, as vampires and quasi-vampires mingle with high society art lovers and faces are painted green (since vampires apparently dislike the colour green), the drooling, hunchbacked bellhop, Francis, sexually services all the visiting ladies from his cubby hole/love nest under the hotel's front counter. He is, after all, the hotel's sex object.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Best Costumes
- Best Make-Up
- Best Supporting Male Actor – Paul Nichols

EXCERPT:

SUSAN

You bastard!

ROXY *looks up but then goes back to her black box business.*

HUGYBUDY

Me? I protest.

SUSAN

You rotten bastard!

HUGYBUDY

I protest again.

SUSAN

You rotten, two-timing, vomit-spewing bastard!

HUGYBUDY

Again I protest. Your salutation is overly familiar. A simple hello is sufficient.

SUSAN

Eat raw sewage and die.

HUGYBUDY

I am a vampire.

SUSAN

You're a parasite.

HUGYBUDY

One interpretation only.

SUSAN

I've been locked up in that two-room apartment with six screaming kids for a week waiting for you to come home.

HUGYBUDY

I do not have six children.

SUSAN

All right, some neighbour kids were over; it doesn't matter. Where have you been?

HUGYBUDY

I have been all over.

SUSAN

That's what I thought. What about your responsibilities at home?

HUGYBUDY

I am a vampire. My only responsibility is to bite you upon the neck and drink your blood.

SUSAN

Not anymore, slimeball. You've given me your last hickey.

HUGYBUDY

I have in my possession no hickeys to give you.

SUSAN

I know, you've left them all over the cleavage of that little tramp Rosie Rootertooter.

HUGYBUDY

You are mistaken. I am completely certain I would remember rootertooters.

SUSAN

You didn't think I knew, did you?

HUGYBUDY

I do not care, for I am a vampire.

SUSAN

Well, you bastard, guess what? I know.

HUGYBUDY

To repeat, I am a vampire.

SUSAN

And I'm going to slap you down so hard you'll never get up again.

HUGYBUDY

You cannot do this, for I really am a vampire.

SUSAN

You'll be hearing from my lawyer.

SUSAN *exits the hotel front entrance.*

HUGYBUDY

(as she leaves) I am sorry, but I will not drink the blood of a lawyer. I have standards.



Fig. A1.50. Julio Huggybudy (Gary Minnett) unsuccessfully attempting to intimidate the no-nonsense Snoggins (Deleenia Lovell). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.51. Mr. Bog (Roy Teed, right) attempting to conceal the vampire convention sign from Mrs. Venables (Marty Duffy, left). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.52. Art thieves, Tunella (Kendra Hesketh, left) and Roxy (Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, centre), capturing a man, the Hot Dog Vendor (Stuart Graham), for their boss, the sexually hungry HJ (Laureen Livingstone, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee [Spring 2000]

Directed by Pete Drewcock & Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.53. The cast of *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* (left to right): Gary Minnett, Stuart Graham, Steve Koning, Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, Anna Arnett, Paul Nichols, Mike Giesbrecht and Chris Helmink. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Donegal Hetch – Gary Minnett
Grimaldi, the Cook – Stuart Graham
Herpes, the Wormkeeper – Patty Whitford Reinsdorf
Ouch, the Guard – Steve Koning
Gazelle Hetch – Anna Arnett
Angle-Iron Hetch – Mike Giesbrecht
Gerbil Hetch – Paul Nichols
Parsnip Meriberry – Chris Helmink

SYNOPSIS: “Medical Alert: This play contains intense scenes of metered poetry.

Audience members who have medical conditions aggravated by intense scenes of metered

poetry should use the ear plugs provided below.” Thus read the sign greeting audience-goers to Donegal Hetch’s palatial universe, a universe of would-be ghosts, out-of-control love potions and iambic pentameter. The morose cook, Grimaldi, a blank verse rambler, believes himself to have poisoned his boss, Donegal, and plastered him into the wall. Donegal, the “ghost,” meanwhile, wanders around the castle, narrating and commenting on all conversations, acting ghost-like, even though he is consistently seen and spoken to. Inheritors of the Donegal estate, Donegal’s sister, Gazelle, her husband, Angle-Iron, their teenage daughter, Gerbil, and Gazelle’s cousin, Parsnip, arrive at the castle with plans of taking over, kicking out the cook, the wormkeeper and the guard. Gazelle and Parsnip are witches, who have merely implanted Donegal’s death into Grimaldi’s imagination. Herpes, the breeder of attack worms and witch, brews up a potent love potion to foil the Hetches’ plans. Drinking the potion, Ouch, the Viking Canadian guard, becomes the sought-after object of everyone’s desires, men and women alike. And as the potion makes its rounds, the chasings throughout the castle grow more intense, much to Herpes’s amusement. In the end, Donegal reveals himself to be very much alive, sibling breaches are mended and no love potions are needed between Gerbil and Ouch.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Outstanding Performance Male – Steve Koning
- Outstanding Performance in Supporting Role Male – Paul Nichols
- Best Production

Mainstage – Provincial Community Theatre Festival:

- Certificate of Merit for Original Script – Roy Teed

EXCERPT:

DONEGAL

The Curse of Castle Hetch descends once more.
You say it is not fair that we alone

Enjoy this place; okay, there's room for all.
It is the law, I think, that castles have
Three witches, so three witches we will have.
My sister, you are welcome here, make this
Your good home. All you had to do was ask.

GAZELLE

What? All I had to do was ask? Who could
Have known the answer would be welcome back?

ANGLE-IRON

So does this mean the war's over and we can all move in and
be buddies?

GAZELLE

It looks that way.

ANGLE-IRON

Hot damn. I like it here, honey, let's stay in this
universe.

HERPES

Okay, that was easy. Welcome to Castle Hetch everyone. Who's
interested in the grand tour?

ANGLE-IRON

We all are. Right?

GAZELLE

Right.

PARSNIP

Well, I guess this does mean we win, sort of.

GERBIL

But what about my poor Ouchkins?

ANGLE-IRON

Don't worry, sweetheart. Mummy will change him back. Right,
dear?

GAZELLE

In a day or two. Maybe. Or a month.

HERPES

You laughed.

GRIMALDI

I did.

HERPES

Congratulations, friend.

GRIMALDI

Much more than friend, I hope.

HERPES

We are. Hey, boss!

DONEGAL

Hey, Herps. We'll have a tour of Castle Hetch
That starts right here and ends in family.
Let's go, let's tour, let's all be ghosts at once.
(*dons sheet*) Ooooo. Ooooo. Ooooo.

ANGLE-IRON

What a great universe.

*All exit arch one. A moment of silence after DONEGAL'S
ghostly wail fades. Off we hear the inarticulate,
reverberating roar of OUCH'S battlecry. OUCH enters door
right with the mighty war axe BRUCE. OUCH is a frog. BRUCE
is a double-bladed war axe about the size of a vending
machine. OUCH stops at midstage and looks around.*

OUCH

Hello?

Enter GERBIL arch one.

GERBIL

Oh no, my special Ouchkins. You're a giant frog with a
really, really big axe.

OUCH

This is the mighty war axe Bruce.

GERBIL

Hi, Bruce.

OUCH

Bruce says hi.

GERBIL

What are we going to do? You're a frog.

OUCH

But I don't feel any different.

GERBIL

Don't move.

GERBIL *kisses* OUCH. *He shudders and removes his frog head.*

OUCH

Once more I am Ouch! Frogslayer!

GERBIL

Can I kiss or what?

OUCH

And so we close this tale of Castle Hetch,
Our magic place of stone where truth is stretched.
Goodbye. Goodnight. Farewell.

Lights down.



Fig. A1.54. Donegal Hetch (Gary Minnett) haunting his sister, the witch Gazelle (Anna Arnett). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.55. A Hetch family gathering with Angle-Iron (Mike Giesbrecht, left), Gerbil (Paul Nichols, centre) and Gazelle (Anna Arnett, right), as Grimaldi, the cook, and Herpes, the wormkeeper (Stuart Graham and Patti Whitford Reinsdorf, sitting centre), look on. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.56. Gerbil (Paul Nichols) being suitably impressed with the mighty war axe, Bruce, held by her frog-transformed love, Ouch (Steve Koning). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader

[Spring 2001]¹⁷³

Directed by Paul Nichols
Written by Gary Minnett



Fig. A1.57. Amber (Christina McLaughlin, right) observing the primitives, Schmegley (Anna Arnett, left) and Trog (Pete Drewcock, centre). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Trog – Pete Drewcock
Schmegley – Anna Arnett
Golombek – Steve Koning
Amber – Christina McLaughlin
Johnny – Lannie Mycock

SYNOPSIS: Seeing as the script and the video for this play are AWOL, the rather succinct description of this work comes from the author himself, Gary Minnett: “It was a true story [*laughing*] of a time traveller, actually several time travellers. It was about time travel and cavemen and general stuff” (2004).

¹⁷³ Written by Gary Minnett, as part of a play-writing workshop given by Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.58. Schmegley (Anna Arnett) casting herself on Golombek (Steve Koning). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.59. Trog (Pete Drewcock) ogles the transformed Schmegley (Anna Arnett), as Johnny (Lannie Mycock, far left), Amber (Christina McLaughlin, centre-right) and Golombek (Steve Koning, far right) look on. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

Shadows From A Low Stone Wall

[Fall 2001]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.60. Jack (Pete Drewcock, right) having a conversation with his long-gone friend, Archie (Paul Nichols, left). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Jack – Pete Drewcock
Janey – Deleenia Lovell
Archie – Paul Nichols

Jim Waldron – playing bagpipes

SYNOPSIS: A dying, old man, Jack, who is being taken care of by his daughter, Janey, has an ongoing conversation with his wartime memories, specifically with his good friend and fellow soldier, Archie. They served together in Italy during World War II. Jack made it home to marry and raise a family, to live a life, and Archie did not. He was ripped to

shreds by exploding debris and Jack had to shoot him, ending the agony. Jack never told Archie's wife, Jenny, who later became his own wife after the war, or Archie's daughter, Janey, the whole story of Archie's death. And after the truth is told, Jack can finally find his own peace.

EXCERPT:

JANEY

Dad, for your information I'm going to be covering the Second World War in my Socials' classes.

JACK

You mean my war?

JANEY

Yes.

JACK

Well I'll be damned. You're finally going to teach some real history.

JANEY

I thought you'd like that.

JACK

So tell me what you'll be doing.

JANEY

Well, I want to cover how the war changed the concept of women in the work force.

JACK

Yeah, yeah, Rosie the Riveter and all those other dames.

JANEY

Dames?

JACK

You know what I mean.

JANEY

Yes, Dad, and after we discuss women in the workforce, we'll

talk about the Holocaust in detail as well as the internment of Japanese Canadians.

JACK
Naturally.

JANEY
And I'd like to finish up with a look at conscription and how that controversy contributed to the alienation of Quebec.

JACK
Conscription and that goddamn McKenzie King. We used to call those bastards zombies. You don't want to know what we called that goddamn McKenzie King.

JANEY
Well, I think I may leave that part out. So what do you think?

JACK
Is that it?

JANEY
Pretty much. I think I've touched on all the really important topics, haven't I? What else was there?

JACK
Jesus Christ, girl, what do you think I did during the war?

JANEY
I don't know, Dad, you've never talked about it.

Pause.

JACK
I couldn't.

JANEY
Why? We were all interested. The whole family.

JACK
Why? Janey, war isn't something you tell your kids for bedtime stories.

JANEY

I'm not a kid anymore.

JACK

I know you're not a kid, but it still doesn't make it any easier.

JANEY

What would you say to visiting my class to talk about your experiences? As a veteran; somebody real, not just dry words in a history book.

JACK

No.

JANEY

Dad, I want you to do this. I think it'll be good for you.

JACK

Janey, I'm not setting myself up as some kind of freak for a bunch of juvenile delinquents.

JANEY

They're not juvenile delinquents.

JACK

Only because they haven't been caught yet.

JANEY

They're just kids, Dad, good kids; they're curious and they want to learn. You could give them something valuable.

JACK

The answer is no.

JANEY

Maybe you need to think about it first.

JACK

I don't need to think about it. The answer is no.

JANEY

Why?

JACK
Because I say so.

JANEY
That's not an answer. What are you afraid of? They're only kids, they should hear the things you can tell them.

JACK
It's not that simple, Janey.

JANEY
Why?

JACK
Goddammit, is that the only word you know? Why?

JANEY
Yes. Why isn't it that simple? Why won't you talk to my class? Why are you afraid?

JACK
I'm not afraid. It's too complicated, Janey. The war is complicated. It's not something you blurt out off the top of your head. It's all mixed up; it's black and wet and salty and cold and rough and loud and dark and it stinks, Janey, it's like nothing else you've experienced before and the memories are always there, they never go away.

JANEY
Then tell the kids that.

JACK
No! No. I've put my time in, Janey. I've done my share. I've served King and country and made the sacrifices. And do you know what? Do you know what it is that makes it all so goddamn worthwhile? I'll tell you. Forty-five years later no one remembers. No one cares. No one gives a shit, no one understands and no one cares.

JANEY
I care.

JACK
You're not enough.

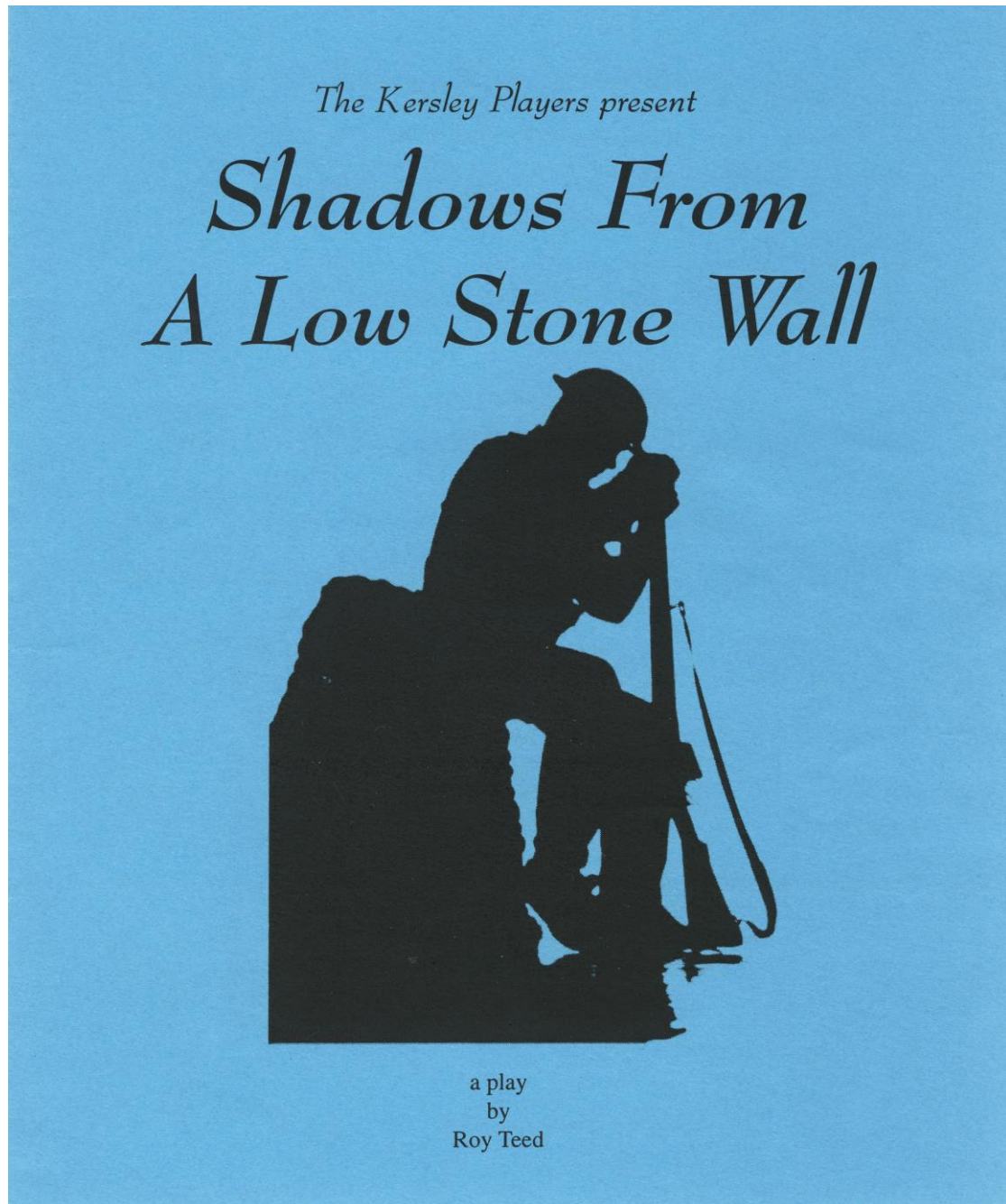


Fig. A1.61. Playbill cover for *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

Shadows From A Low Stone Wall

directed by Roy Teed

CAST

Pete Drewcock Jack
Deleenia Lovell Janey
Paul Nichols Archie

and on the bagpipes, Jim Waldron

The Play is set in Italy, 1943 and Canada, 1990.

WARNING; Loud shots & explosions

Crew

the low stone wall built by
Pete Drewcock, R.Teed, Pam Crocker-Teed, Monica Seguin
makeup by
Mary Beningfield
Property Master
Bert Koning
Poster design by Pete Drewcock

Canadian battledress courtesy of the Western Canada Theatre Company

A special thanks to:

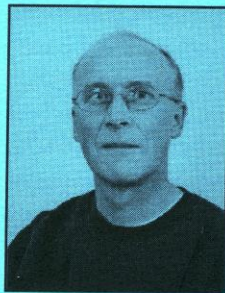
Quesnel Little Theatre for the loan of the lights
Monica Seguin for the sofa and counter

There will be a fifteen minute intermission between acts

Fig. A1.62. Playbill for *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the cast of Low Stone Wall. During rehearsals they've retaught me the meaning of dedication, commitment and excellence. I have been blessed three times and the names of the blessings are Pete, Deleenia and Paul.

R. Teed



Pete is one of the founding members of the Kersley Players and was a cast member of that now mythical first Players' production—the Christmas play of 1986 where he played a deranged Santa. Pete has been involved in over a dozen productions as actor, director and backstage crew. In the past Pete has won an award as Best Supporting actor in All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round at a Central Interior Zone drama festival.



Deleenia joined the Kersley Players in 1992 for The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again. Since then she has been involved in almost every Players production either onstage employing her considerable acting talents or backstage employing her equally considerable talents for charm, persuasion and tact to make things run smoothly. In 1994 Deleenia won a Best Actress award for her role of Marnie in Strangers on a Glade.



Paul has played parts as varied as a saucy pirate to a teenager named Gerbil since he became part of the Kersley Players in 1996. Last year he directed for the first time with Gary Minnett's play The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader. Paul was chosen as the Best Supporting actor at the 2000 Central Interior drama festival for his role in The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee, then later in the year was chosen for an Honourable Mention in the same role at the provincial drama festival.

Fig. A1.63. Playbill for *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Kersley Players would like to thank the
following individuals and organizations for
their help with this production.

The Kersley Community Association
The Kersley General Store
The Kersley Volunteer Firefighters Association
The Kersley Woman's Institute
The Kersley Elementary School
The Kersley Mudhens
Cariboo Propane
Quesnel River Pulp
Quesnel Little Theatre
Murray Cryderman
Christine Crain
The Red Cross
The Royal Canadian Legion
Lucy Drewcock
Donna Koning
Monica Seguin
Pam Crocker-Teed

Fig. A1.64. Playbill for *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.65. Janey (Deleenia Lovell) comforting her father, or rather stepfather, Jack (Pete Drewcock). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.66. The young soldier, Archie (Paul Nichols), talking to his old friend, Jack (Pete Drewcock). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

An Evening With Myron [Spring 2002]

Directed by Roy Teed
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.67. Florentia Bigsby-Barnes (Mary Beningfield) trying to patiently deal with the intrusive heckler and chair stealer, Heckal (Paul Nichols). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Florentia Bigsby-Barnes – Mary Beningfield
Myron – Stuart Graham
Bruno – Rory Parr
Heckal – Paul Nichols
Breeze – Anna Arnett

SYNOPSIS: The Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society (informally referred to as “Ruffles”) is holding its monthly reading, with its pompous president, Florentia Bigsby-Barnes, as the evening’s host. Her gracious hosting abilities are sorely tested by a

befuddled and timid poet, Myron,¹⁷⁴ who keeps shuffling papers and walking offstage, since he apparently cannot perform his readings without his black condom, size small, which he has misplaced. This leads to outbursts from an audience member, Heckal, who insists on getting his money back, eventually finds the condom and demands to sit onstage, stealing Florentia's chair. Then, another audience member, Breeze, pipes up, saying it's unfair that Heckal can sit onstage, so she ends up onstage as well, regaling the performance with salacious comments about the poet's butt. Bruno, the mute, beer-swilling stagehand, appears with more chairs and proceeds to occupy one himself, much to Florentia's annoyance. And, after all the disturbances (including a cell phone call from a telemarketer, lights turned off by disgruntled techies and a shoe screwed to the floor), Myron finally recites his poems, while Heckal reveals his hidden talent for miming the poems, including a cat with tire tracks on its back and a smoking one-eyed love bandit.

EXCERPT:

Lights up on a podium. Beside the podium a small table and a glass of water. To the left and behind the podium is a single chair. FLORENTIA BIGSBY-BARNES enters. She wears an evening gown.

FLORENTIA

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society's monthly reading. I'm Florentia Bigsby-Barnes your host for the evening and the President of the Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society. The Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society, or Ruffles as we like to call it informally, is delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor these monthly readings which showcase new and emerging talent in all the literary genres. Last month we had the distinct pleasure of hearing for the first time an

¹⁷⁴ Indeed, for those in the know, this is the same Myron character from *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round*, and the two poems recited, "What Cats Like" and "Love Poem by me," also originate from the 1991 production.

excerpt from Wolfgang Micklemeister's brilliant avante garde novel, *A Silver Key For Gustav*, which he has written entirely for the right ear. Those of us who were here for that are still unable to use our left ear. Well, all joking aside, tonight's reading is by the Royal Upper Literary Society's most recent discovery, a poet of startling talent who writes with extraordinary vision and power. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Myron no last name, the poet.

FLORENTIA *applauds.*

MYRON *enters. He is a poet and dressed as such. He carries with him an untidy sheaf of papers. FLORENTIA exits. MYRON places his papers on the podium and begins to search for something which he does not find. As the search goes on he becomes more agitated and the strained smile he directs at the audience becomes more desperate.*

MYRON

Oh, poo.

MYRON *exits. Several beats and FLORENTIA enters.*

FLORENTIA

(an uncertain look in the direction MYRON exited) Oh. Was that the title or the poem itself? Well, that is perhaps the shortest poetry reading we've ever had.

HECKAL

(from somewhere in the audience in a spot calculated to cause the most inconvenience when he moves) I want my money back!

FLORENTIA

(not quite able to believe what she's just heard) I beg your pardon?

HECKAL

(standing, a spot comes on him) What kind of stupid poem is 'oh poo?' I want my money back.

FLORENTIA

Yes, I daresay you do, sir, which is not surprising from someone who has the temerity to bellow from the audience as though he were in a common auction house bidding on two tons of pork chops.

HECKAL

I still want my money back.

FLORENTIA

The Royal Upper Fraser Literary Society does not provide refunds. It's an official policy. So, you cannot have your money back and I would be grateful if from this moment on you sat upon your chair and stopped flapping those frightful lips at me. *(a beat)* Thank you.

HECKAL *sits, folds his arms and sulks. The spot goes down.*
MYRON *enters.*

FLORENTIA

Ah, the poet returns. Ladies and gentlemen, Myron no last name, the poet.

MYRON *goes straight to the podium takes a single sheet of paper and exits.*

FLORENTIA

He's left again. Is this exasperation I feel, or do I have gas?

HECKAL

(standing again) It's gas, sweetheart, let 'er rip!

FLORENTIA

(directing at HECKAL a look that could kill) Let 'er rip? I am sorry, sir, but these buttocks do not rip.

HECKAL

Will they wobble for a dollar?

MYRON *enters carrying the single sheet of paper.*

FLORENTIA

Thank God. Ladies and gentlemen, Myron, the frequently absent no last name poet. No applause please, we'll see if he stays first.



Fig. A1.68. The stagehand, Bruno (Rory Parr), performing spontaneously on centre-stage, as Breeze (Anna Arnett, far left), Florentia (Mary Beningfield, left) and Myron (Stuart Graham, right) look on. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.69. Heckal's (Paul Nichols) imitation of a cat during Myron's (Stuart Graham) poetry recitation. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Kersley Players & Emerald Pig Productions
Present

***An Evening With Myron
Tales From Me and Irmie***



Fig. A1.70. Playbill cover for *An Evening With Myron* and *Tales From Me and Irmie*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

An Evening With Myron

Written by Roy Teed

CAST

Florentia Bigsby Barnes ----- Mary Beningfield
Myron ----- Stuart Graham
Bruno ----- Rory Parr

CREW

Producer ----- Deleenia Lovell
Stage Manager ----- Alannah Paterson
Lights & Sound ----- Pete & Roy
Property Master ----- Bert Koning
Poster Design ----- Pete Drewcock
The Provider of Sandwiches ----- Donna Koning

A special thanks to Quesnel Little Theatre for loaning us some lights again.

Your Master of Ceremonies for the evening.....Pete Drewcock

There will be a fifteen minute intermission between plays

Fig. A1.71. Playbill for *An Evening With Myron* and *Tales From Me and Irmie*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

Tales From Me and Irmie

Written by Roy Teed

Directed by Sharon Malone

CAST

Sam ----- John Stuart

CREW

Stage Manager ----- Tiana Malone

Lights & Sound ----- Pete & Roy

All About John & Emerald Pig

John is a longtime friend of the Kersley Players. In 2000 he was an integral part of the play we sent to Mainstage, the Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee, in which he looked after sound, played keyboard and generally helped us through the intimidating technical demands of a Mainstage production. His efforts earned us an Honourable Mention in the Best Technical category. John has since moved to the Lower Mainland where he has started a new theatre company, Emerald Pig Productions, an anagram of Maple Ridge, where he now lives. They plan to enter Irmie in the Zone Festival down there later this month.

Fig. A1.72. Playbill for *An Evening With Myron* and *Tales From Me and Irmie*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

Christy Kennedy H 992-5760
W 991-0987

The Kersley Players would like to thank
the following individuals and organizations for their help
with this
production.

The Kersley Community Association
The Kersley General Store
The Kersley Volunteer Firefighters Association
The Kersley Woman's Institute
The Kersley Elementary School
Cariboo Propane
Quesnel Little Theatre
Donna Koning
Paul Nichols
Anna Arnett
Pam Crocker-Teed

Fig. A1.73. Playbill for *An Evening With Myron* and *Tales From Me and Irmie*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.

Tales From Me and Irmie [Spring 2002]¹⁷⁵

Directed by Sharon Malone
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.74. John Stuart behind-the-scenes as Sam from *Tales From Me and Irmie*. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Sam – John Stuart

SYNOPSIS: A monologue comprised of stories concerning Sam and his friend, Irmie, and residents of the town of Nestor. The stories range from the brawl at the ballet to the shinny game with the Montreal Canadiens that never happened because of the riot between the local hockey team and the volunteer fire department, from the queen's attendance at Sam and Big Beulah's wedding to the treeing of a lion by Sam's dog, Gub,

¹⁷⁵ Performed by Emerald Pig Productions, a theatre group based out of Maple Ridge, BC.

as well as the time the toilet alligators were moved to the duck pond and the space invaders were chased away by Irmie's flying rocks.

EXCERPT:

Folks in Nestor got a lot to learn anyway, it being your typical small town where watching bread mould is a Saturday night spectator sport. I like Nestor just the way it is though. Down the road. On the farm here we have this little oasis of peace and quiet.

All this is courtesy of my old Dad who one day announced, "Sam, I'm sick and tired of this living off the land stuff. I'm moving to the city to live off supermarkets and 7-11s like everyone else. By the way, I'm shacking up with a twenty year old red-haired dental assistant so send money." So here it is, one of those family farmlooms passed on from father to son. Two hundred acres of brown fields and gray barns.

And this old farmhouse. Irmie says we should make it into a Bed and Breakfast and put the Cheap Rooms For Rent Hotel out of business, but I don't know, the good folks in Nestor find reason enough already to be suspicious of me and Irmie without aggravating them further with our business acumen. The old farmhouse is big enough though, two stories, or three if you count all the bird's nests and squirrels in the attic and it sort of looms over you when you step up to the front door and has that silent, black-windowed look that almost makes you shiver, like all your classiers B & Bs do.

This old place has history. Ain't that something? Who would expect to find history here? One of those virgin farmboys from a long time ago leaving for school, lunchpail packed with a homemade whitebread sandwich and a skip and dance in his step.

In the olden days everybody loved everybody and there was this golden light that shone down on the whole world. That's the way it was.

Grow up fast or die screaming. Little turnip.

Anyway, one night me and Irmie was having a drink at the Cheap Rooms for Rent Hotel. Irmie was telling the bartender how he had just saved the Earth from alien space invaders hoping this might earn him a free drink again and I was calculating how to sit next to that by-herself-blonde two tables over. I figured I had it solved when I rolled a Looney across the floor and scrambled after it on hands and knees, racing this way and that and sort of came to an abrupt and unexpected stop with my head stuck up between her thighs. I was hoping she'd think it was an accident. She didn't. As you might expect this put a stop to casual conversation in the place.

I could tell Irmie was peeved at me for interrupting his story and the blonde seemed a trifle surprised, but you'd think I'd done something really stupid the way everyone else carried on. I mean, in my opinion, throwing me out on the street was an over-reaction. I didn't even get a chance to finish introducing myself. And I'll tell you one thing for damn sure, that blonde was lucky I wasn't wearing a pair of loose false teeth. Talk about nipped in the bud.

Just another Tuesday night in Nestor you might think, and you'd be right, except you got the days all mixed up 'cause on Tuesdays me and Irmie generally get throwed out of the hardware store for fooling with the power tools.

Irmie's been helping me out on the farm here ever since he showed up on my doorstep that day with his blue tongue and said, "I have to shake the hand of the owner of that lavender Massey Ferguson over there with the personalized license plates." Well, my tractor isn't lavender at all; some days it's a kind of superior aquamarine.

The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon

[Spring 2003]

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.75. T. Bannock Muldoon (Pete Drewcock) offering his services to the bereaved widow, Molly (Heather Shippitt). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Ezekiel – Gary Minnett

T. Bannock Muldoon – Pete Drewcock

Doc Bronegal – Wayne Wark

Harry – Stuart Graham

Molly – Heather Shippitt

Sarah – Jennie Gardiner

SYNOPSIS: Harry is dead, having apparently slipped on a patch of ice on his way to the loo, and the residents of Williams Creek come along to pay their respects and offer their condolences to the lovely widow, Molly. With Harry stretched out on the table, the parlour becomes a gathering point for Doc Bronegal, the drunken town physician with a

keen, intuitive eye, T. Bannock Muldoon, a refined, travelling gentlemen, who claims an abiding friendship with the deceased, Ezekial, a simple, biscuit-loving miner, who is hired to dig the grave, and Sarah, a local hurdy gurdy and personal doxy of the deceased, who is owed \$216.87 for services rendered and means to collect from the rich (or is she poor?) widow. And as all the men come sniffing and a-courting around the widow, with their offers of protection, even Sarah begins to take pity on her, revealing to Molly the deceptive nature of the charlatan, Muldoon. Meanwhile, the good doctor hints at the suspicious nature of a conveniently placed icy patch (when there has been no recent precipitation) and of how accident-prone Molly has been, bumping into the stove, breaking fingers in the water pump and repeatedly banging her head. In the end, it is revealed that this supposedly fragile female is anything but. Molly dupes Muldoon out of money, which she then gives to Sarah, which Sarah then gives to Muldoon to get him to leave Molly alone. Harry wakes up and, discovering him not to be dead, Molly finishes him off with a well-placed cast-iron frying pan, before giving the house to Sarah and hopping on the next BX stage out of town. And Muldoon returns, not to see Molly, but to return the money to Sarah, since he, Toreador Bannock Muldoon, is most unexpectedly, completely and utterly enraptured with a whore.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Backstage Award
- Outstanding Achievement by a Male in a Supporting Role – Gary Minnett

EXCERPT:

MOLLY

If you will excuse me for a moment, Doctor.

BRONEGAL

Yes.

MOLLY *exits to the kitchen with the tray.* BRONEGAL *regards HARRY for a moment. He takes from his pocket a small mirror which he places under HARRY'S nose for only a few seconds before MOLLY enters from the kitchen without the tray.*

MOLLY

Doctor?

BRONEGAL

(unhurriedly putting the mirror away after a quick glance at it) Yes?

MOLLY

Some trouble?

BRONEGAL

No. Good colour for a corpse. And how are you, Molly.

MOLLY

As well as can be expected, I suppose.

BRONEGAL

These are not our favourite times, are they? *(he moves to MOLLY and gently probes her upper arm; this area is hidden by the sleeve of her dress; MOLLY moves away)* Still tender?

MOLLY

I believe they have healed now, Doctor.

BRONEGAL

They were deep bruises, Molly. Injuries like those don't heal overnight.

MOLLY

It's odd of you to say so, because I was just now thinking that injuries like these do, in fact, heal overnight.

BRONEGAL

A miracle perhaps?

MOLLY

Yes, a miracle.

BRONEGAL

It's a wonderful thing, divine intervention. It can solve so many problems with a single stroke.

MOLLY *finds the bottle of rum.*

MOLLY

This is yours, I believe.

BRONEGAL

It is indeed. A quart of Hudson's Bay rum, the Empire's most efficacious restorative.

MOLLY

Shall I bring you a glass?

BRONEGAL

No. At the moment I'm rather enjoying the novelty of a clear head.

MOLLY

I see. May I ask the reason for this second professional visit? I had thought your work was finished this morning.

BRONEGAL

Why am I here? At the very least I can provide solace and comfort for you.

MOLLY

I am comforted. Thank you.

BRONEGAL

And you are a patient of mine. I do care. No more accidental falls against the stove?

MOLLY

No.

BRONEGAL

And you haven't managed to break another finger pumping water from the well.

MOLLY

No.

BRONEGAL

And I see you haven't bumped your head recently.

MOLLY

No.

BRONEGAL

Did it rain last night?

MOLLY

I'm sorry?

BRONEGAL

Talking to myself. I was only wondering if it rained last night.

MOLLY

I don't know.

BRONEGAL

It must have done, of course, to have caused that great puddle on the path which froze over this morning.

MOLLY

Yes.

BRONEGAL

Odd, I don't recall seeing puddles anywhere else.

MOLLY

The efficacious effect of Hudson's Bay rum perhaps.

BRONEGAL

Yes, that must be it.

MOLLY

Was there anything else, Doctor?

BRONEGAL

No, unless you have something you'd like to say.

MOLLY

No.

BRONEGAL

Will you have a small ceremony at the graveside?

MOLLY

Yes. A very small ceremony.

BRONEGAL

Will you invite Muldoon?

MOLLY

He was Harry's friend.

BRONEGAL

Yes, he did say that, didn't he? Interesting fellow, Muldoon. Arrived two days ago, did you know?

MOLLY

No.

BRONEGAL

One wonders why Mr Muldoon didn't seek out his old friend earlier.

MOLLY

Does one?

BRONEGAL

He must regret it terrible, that tragic delay.

MOLLY

I'm sure he does.

BRONEGAL

I should be off then.

MOLLY

Yes.

BRONEGAL

Am I invited to your very small ceremony?

MOLLY

Of course.

BRONEGAL
Thank you.

MOLLY
You're welcome, Doctor.

BRONEGAL *exits the front entrance.* MOLLY *exits to the bedroom.* HARRY'S *arm falls from the table and hangs at his side.* *Lights down.*

The Unlikely Rapture
of
Bannock Muldoon

directed by
R. Teed
with valuable contributions by Paul Nichols

CAST

Pete Drewcock Bannock Muldoon
Heather Shippit Molly
Gary Minnett Ezekial
Jennie Gardiner Sarah
Wayne Wark Bronegal
Stuart Graham Harry

The play takes place early fall, 1867, in Williams Creek.

There will be a fifteen minute intermission between acts.

CREW

Anna Arnett	Stage Manager
Sound Design	Heather Shippit
Property Master	Bert Koning
Set	Cast, Crew & Donna Koning and Pam Crocker-Teed
Make-up	Mary Beningfield
Costumes	Cast & Crew
Advertising	Pam Crocker-Teed

Again, a heartfelt thank you to Quesnel Little
Theatre for the loan of some lights.

Fig. A1.76. Playbill for *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon*. Courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.77. Ezekial (Gary Minnett) trying on Harry's (Stuart Graham) pants, as Sarah (Jennie Gardiner) watches. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.78. Bannock Muldoon (Pete Drewcock) using Harry (Stuart Graham) as a tea tray holder. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.79. Ezekial (Gary Minnett) enjoying Molly's (Heather Shippitt, left) biscuits. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.80. Gary Minnett as the simple miner, Ezekial (centre), and Jennie Gardiner as the prostitute, Sarah. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley [Summer 2003]¹⁷⁶

Directed by Janice Butler

Written by Roy Teed

CAST:

Charles Kersley – Todd Dunphy

Jules Quesnelle – Gino de Rose

Hamish von McFloss-Strossen – Gary Minnett

Gertrudia von McFloss-Strossen – Stephenie Cave

Susan St. Apropros St. John – Dorine Lamarche

Sparkles – Joseph Laidlaw

The Dog – Denver Lamarche

The Cat – Brittany Dunphy

The Yellow Bird – Kaylyn Dunphy

The Voice of Skippy – G.A. McDingus (a.k.a. Gary Minnett)

SYNOPSIS: With conflicting viewpoints as to the “true” story of Kersley, the pretentious narrator, Susan St. Apropros St. John, ends up in an ongoing argument with Charles Kersley and his version of the “truth,” which includes his advice-clucking chicken and best friend, Sparkles. That’s certainly not in any of the history books. Charles is a man of means with his turnip farming and falls in love with Gertrudia von McFloss-Strossen, the very beautiful, but not so bright (she perpetually walks into walls), daughter of the ferocious Scot, Hamish von McFloss-Strossen. Very protective of his daughter who is the sole heir to his fortune, Hamish is extremely picky regarding his daughter’s associations with those of the opposite sex. With designs on the McFloss-Strossen fortune, the villainous, silver-tongued Frenchman and townie, Jules Quesnelle, sets his sights on Gertrudia, and does everything in his power to thwart Charles from winning her, including lopping off Sparkles’ head and convincing Charles to wear yellow – the colour

¹⁷⁶ Joint production with Kersley Musical Theatre for the Kersley Reunion, held in early August 2003.

Gertrudia despises naturally. In the end, Gertrudia chooses Jules, leaving a heartbroken Charles. The increasingly compassionate and passionate narrator consoles Charles with kisses and a song about the joys of yellow and, quite literally, sweeps him off his feet.

EXCERPT:

Lights up on set.

SUSAN

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, or for those of you who are chronologically challenged, good afternoon. My name is Susan St. Apropos St. John and I will be your narrator. The story you are about to see is based on historical fact. It is the true story of Kersley and how it came to be.

As tonight's drama unfolds you will meet a cast of characters both famous and completely unfamous, characters known only to bespectacled researchers buried in the gloomy caverns of the provincial archives.

Central to our story is the beautiful Gertrudia von McFloss-Strossen. She is the beloved daughter of the ferocious Hamish von McFloss-Strossen who was the only child of the unlikely marriage of a Prussian nobleman Helmut von Strossen and a cute but not very bright Scottish lass, Amy McFloss.

If all of this has confused you do not be alarmed. All you need remember is that Gertrudia is beautiful, but like her grandmother, not very bright.

GERTRUDIA enters and walks into a wall. She recovers and curtsies to the audience.

SUSAN

And you also must not forget Gertrudia's father, the ferocious Hamish von McFloss-Strossen whose Scots/Prussian heritage causes him to think he is better than everyone else, but is too cheap to prove it.

HAMISH enters.

HAMISH

Gertrudia, lass, ye wee silly nit of a girl, how many times have I told you? You walk through the doors, you walk around the walls.

GERT

Sorry, father. The doors are the ones with handles, right?

HAMISH

Yes, Ve haff vays of making you valk.

GERT

Yes, father.

HAMISH

You're driving me to distraction, lass.

GERT

Sorry, father.

SUSAN

The von McFloss-Strossen family, as you can see, is filled with joyous love and happy thoughts. But for all the light they bring to the world there must also be darkness... (*lights dim*) We have a villain. This villain is a creature so odious, so oily and underhanded and nefarious that you will recognize him the instant he appears.

JQ enters.

JQ

(*in an atrocious French accent*) I leave behind the trail when I walk because I am the slimy and slippery villain. (*evil laugh*) This job I love it much.

SUSAN

His name is Jules Quesnelle and only he knows what evil he has planned for the beautiful Gertrudia.

JQ leers, GERT looks interested, HAMISH belches.

GERT

Father!

HAMISH

Natural gas, lass. In a hundred years you'll wish it were still free.

SUSAN

Before you are the principal supporting players in *A Rousing Tale – The True Story of Kersley*. Perhaps you would be so gracious as to give them a short round of applause before they leave.

SUSAN applauds, the audience applauds, GERT, HAMISH and JQ exit.

SUSAN

Thank you. We have not yet met the most important character of all. A man whose name appears on all our maps as that modest black dot beside the Fraser River. Modest, however, is not a term we usually associate with Kersley. Perhaps in some mysterious way Kersley has been infused with the spirit of its namesake, Charles Kersley, that doughty English adventurer who came to the New World because he thought it was warmer than Scotland.

KERSLEY enters whistling the Blue Danube and waltzing with an axe. He stops when he notices the narrator then looks around as if seeing everything for the very first time.

CK

What's all this then?

SUSAN

Charles Kersley was a man unique in many ways —

CK

Who're you?

(A beat)

SUSAN

Charles Kersley was a man unique in many ways —

CK

What are you on about then?

SUSAN

(slowly, deliberately) Charles Kersley was a man —

CK

That's right, I am a man. Thank you very much.

SUSAN

(fiercely, but not looking at CK) Look, stop that!

CK

Stop what?

SUSAN
Stop interrupting me. I'm the narrator here.

CK
I didn't ask for a narrator.

SUSAN
Would you please stop talking to me. The players never interact with the narrator.

CK
Who's playing? I'm deadly serious.

SUSAN
(*quickly*) Charles Kersley was a man unique in many —

CK
Hello! Are you reading from that book?

SUSAN
Yes.

CK
Is Sparkles in there?

SUSAN
Who or what is Sparkles?

CK
Sparkles is my chicken.

SUSAN
You have a chicken called Sparkles?

CK
I do.

SUSAN
Sparkles is not in this book.

CK

What's that book about then?

SUSAN

This is *A Rousing Tale – The True Story of Kersley*.

CK

How can it be true if Sparkles isn't in it?

A beat.

SUSAN

Charles Kersley was a man unique in many ways. He was that rare combination of entrepreneur and master gardener.

CK

You don't believe in Sparkles, do you?

SUSAN

He also had an uncanny ability –

CK

Do you think my chicken Sparkles is something I made up to amuse myself?

SUSAN

A Rousing Tale does not include a chicken called Sparkles. I know. I've read *A Rousing Tale* five hundred times. Not once in all those narrations did I notice a chicken called Sparkles.

CK

Would you like to meet Sparkles then?

SUSAN

Perhaps another time. In another life.

CK

(calls) Sparkles.

SPARKLES appears at the window of the chicken coop. SPARKLES is a chicken wearing a cute bonnet.

SPARKLES

Cluck?

CK

Sparkles, this is – I don't believe we have been formally introduced.

SUSAN

That is because I am the Narrator. We are not supposed to be formally introduced. We exist on two separate planes of reality.

CK

Why is it then you know my name but I don't know yours?

SUSAN

(resigned) My name is Susan St Apropos St John.

CK

That's a mouthful, isn't it? You have enough there for three people.

SPARKLES

Cluck cluck.

CK

And that's Sparkles, the chicken that isn't in your book.

SUSAN

Hello, Sparkles. How are you today? My God, what am I doing? I'm the Narrator, I don't associate with actors.

CK

Would you like to read from my book?

SUSAN

No.

CK

Would you like to think about it before you turn me down like that?

SUSAN

No.

CK

My book may not be as handsome as you book, but it has other redeeming qualities.

SUSAN

Like what?

CK

It has a happy ending.

SUSAN

So does this one.

CK

My book has a beautiful maid.

SUSAN

So does this one.

CK

My book has an awful villain.

SUSAN

So does this one.

CK

My book is the true story of Kersley.

SUSAN

So is my book.

CK

I suppose you think your book has everything?

SUSAN

My book does have everything.

CK

Well, I know of one big difference between your book and my book.

SUSAN
And what difference is that?

CK
May I see your book to show you?

SUSAN
Certainly.

SUSAN gives CK the book.

CK
Yes, the one big difference between your book and my book is — your book is down the well.

CK drops the book down the well.

SUSAN
You dropped my book down the well.

CK
It was an accident.

SUSAN
That was no accident.

CK
Yes it was. That book accidentally slipped from my fingers what were paralyzed by all the abuse heaped upon me by certain female persons best left unmentioned.

SUSAN
Do you know what a moron is?

CK
I might have heard that term once or twice before.

SUSAN
I am not surprised.

SUSAN reaches into the well and retrieves the book.

CK

I guess I didn't dig that well deep enough, did I?

SUSAN returns to the podium with her book. CK produces his book which is an untidy package of paper bound with string.

SUSAN

Ladies and gentlemen, Charles Kersley was a man unique in many ways. He was that rare combination of entrepreneur and master gardener. He also had an uncanny ability to predict the weather.

Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier

[Fall 2004]

Directed by Pete Drewcock
Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.81. Cast of *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier*. Back Row (left to right): Gary Minnett, Roy Teed, Sue Mathison, Elodieanne Browning, Larry Foreman and Amanda Cherry; front row (left to right): Deleenia Lovell, Mary Beningfield and Gino de Rose. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Dr. Pernicious Broom – Sue Mathison
Mother Broom – Mary Beningfield
Dr. Hercules Pointeteau – Roy Teed
Hubert – Gary Minnett
Bridgett – Elodieanne Browning
Gumbelle – Deleenia Lovell
Gumball – Gino de Rose
Ms. Sloan – Amanda Cherry
Mr. Tubble – John Foreman

SYNOPSIS: As Dr. Pernicious Broom, winner designate of the Bliffen Prize for

Advanced Mad Scientistry and blank verse babblers, prepares her acceptance speech and

fine tunes her invention, the atomic transmogrifier, for its final inspection by the prize committee, her next-door-neighbour and arch-nemesis, Dr. Hercules Pointeteau, rages in incoherent French to his Indian assistant, Hubert, over her imminent win, while affectionately coddling his rat-petting hunchback, Gumbelle. Despite her mad scientific achievements, Dr. Broom's mother continually points out to her daughter her lack of a relationship, which means no grandchildren as of yet. It is also Mother Broom who points out repeatedly the presence of a leaking sink, which is beginning to drip into Dr. Broom's basement lab, but such little matters are not of Dr. Broom's concern and she refuses to hire a plumber, fixing the leak herself with a bucket. Dr. Broom is aided in her mad scientistry by her efficient assistant, Bridgett, and her faithful pet hunchback, Gumball, who rids the lab of spiders. Desperate to foil Dr. Broom's win, Dr. Pointeteau comes up with his own invention, Pointeteau paint, which he hopes will awe the prize committee of Ms. Sloan and Mr. Tubble, causing them to change their minds. While demonstrating Pointeteau paint to Ms. Sloan and Mr. Tubble, disaster strikes in Dr. Broom's lab, when the drip saturates the atomic transmogrifier. The transmogrifier melts down, sending off transmogrifying shockwaves. Pointeteau becomes a cowboy with a rather large, pointy codpiece (he can hang his Stetson on it), Hubert and Bridgett hunchbacks, Gumbelle and Gumball attractive assistants, and Mr. Tubble and Ms. Sloan switch clothing. Pointeteau claims it is the effects of Pointeteau paint and, when they all traipse over to Dr. Broom's lab to see and test her invention, a heartbroken and humbled Dr. Broom admits readily her scientific arrogance and ignorance. Impressed by her graciousness in the face of defeat, Dr. Pointeteau tells the committee to take a hike, refusing to accept the Bliffen

Prize for Advanced Mad Scientistry, and has Mother Broom banning condoms when her daughter invites Pointeteau for tea.

EXCERPT:

BROOM

Now, Gumball, all is ready for what?

GUMBALL

I don't know mistress.

BROOM

But you only moments ago entered and said "All is ready."

GUMBALL

Did I?

BRIDGETT

You said, and I quote, "Mistress, mistress, I have wonderful news. All is ready."

GUMBALL

All is ready for what?

BROOM

That's what we'd like to know.

BRIDGETT

I quote again, "Mistress, mistress, I have wonderful news. All is ready."

GUMBALL

She is lying, mistress, I would never say anything like that.

BROOM

Shame on you, Bridgett. I know you don't like Gumball but that's no reason to lie.

BRIDGETT

I was not lying, Dr Broom

BROOM

Well, whatever you call, don't do it again. I have very little tolerance for that sort of thing.

GUMBALL

Liar, liar, panties on fire.

BRIDGETT

For your information, you odious little creature, my panties never have been and never will be on fire.

GUMBALL

I believe it.

BROOM

Children, children, my metaphorical children – stop fighting.

GUMBALL

Is that why I have lumps, mistress, because I am metaphorical?

BROOM

Those are not lumps, Gumball, those are design features.

BROOM separates herself and stands regarding the ceiling as she opens and closes the tape measure.

GUMBALL

(to BRIDGETT) I have design features, what do you have?

BRIDGETT

Syphilis. Come any closer and I'll get it all over you.

GUMBALL

Oh. Oh. Can you get some on my tongue? *(pokes out tongue, licks lips)*



Fig. A1.82. Dr. Pernicious Broom (Sue Mathison, left) scientifically determining the placement of the bucket with the aid of her assistant, Bridgett (Elodieanne Browning, right). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.83. Dr. Hercules Pointeteau (Roy Teed) with his devoted hunchback, Gumbelle (Deleenia Lovell). Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.



Fig. A1.84. The transformations of Mother Broom (Mary Beningfield) and Dr. Pointeteau (Roy Teed) after the meltdown of the atomic transmogrifier. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase

[Fall 2005]

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.85. Cast of *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase*. Back row (left to right): Gino de Rose, Amanda Cherry, Rory Parr, Ron Potter, Todd Dunphy, Gary Minnett and Elodieanne Browning; front row (left to right): Anna Arnett, Simon Zeegers and Paul Nichols. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

CAST:

Algernon Buggers – Gino de Rose
Bonecrusher Wickham – Rory Parr
Mrs. Grimes – Amanda Cherry
Ms. McBurgo – Anna Arnett
Angie Bunwallop – Paul Nichols
Ernie Bunwallop – Simon Zeegers
Jack Strathbungo – Gary Minnett
Clyde – Ron Potter
Louis – Todd Dunphy
Harmony – Elodieanne Browning

SYNOPSIS: See the production from 1993 for a synopsis.



Fig. A1.86. Cuticle Clyde (Ron Potter) busting into Buggers' office, much to Angie Bunwallop's (Paul Nichols) horror. Photo courtesy of Roy Teed.

The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again

[Fall 2006]

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed

CAST:

Ackers – Gino de Rose

Blanche – Adrienne Kempling

Miss Birdie – Diana Harvey

Tooley – Gary Minnett

Peaches – Amanda Cherry

Mona – Elodieanne Browning

The Bartender – Ron Potter

B. Bertram Bighorn Smith – Paul Nichols

Slick Joe Weller – Todd Dunphy

Mrs. Bardell – Dave Gunn

Mr. Punch – Simon Zeegers

SYNOPSIS: See the production from 1992 for a synopsis. The only difference with this one, besides many of the actors, is the addition of three gamblers, Slick Joe Weller, Mrs. Bardell and Mr. Punch, who sat at the side of the stage and provided a running commentary on the action – something of a “saloon chorus,” as Roy dubbed it.

Funny Bunny

[Christmas 2006/Spring 2007]¹⁷⁷

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed

CAST:

Santa – Simon Zeegers

Mrs. C – Diana Harvey

Mogg – Gary Minnett

Figgly – Bert Koning

Snerl – Diane Maybee

Smiglet – Kirsten Nichols

Bliffen – Jack Grant/Todd Dunphy¹⁷⁸

Ajax – Gino de Rose

Ozzie Easter Bunny – Paul Nichols

Rhonda Easter Bunny – Adrienne Kempling

Darling Easter Bunny – Stuart Graham

SYNOPSIS: (As provided by Roy Teed) The Easter Bunny family (terrible, awful critters) visit the Claus household just before Christmas and cause havoc. Bliffen saves the day.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:

- Best Ensemble

¹⁷⁷ Having been contacted by the zone festival organizers and asked if they were submitting anything for the festival, it was decided to submit the annual Christmas play. It was performed in the same way as it is normally done in Kersley, complete with scripts onstage and tearing off pages as they go along.

¹⁷⁸ Jack Grant performed for the annual Christmas party, as per usual, but could not make it to the zone festival due to illness, so was replaced with Todd Dunphy.

The Good Game

[Spring 2008]

Directed by Roy Teed

Written by Roy Teed



Fig. A1.87. CJ MacDonald (Gino de Rose, left), Samantha Brown (Deleenia Lovell, centre) and Charlie Boyd (Rory Parr, right). Photo by Annie Gallant. Source: *Quesnel Cariboo Observer*, <http://gallery.pictopia.com/quesnel/gallery/42068/photo/4296028/?o=2> (accessed September 20, 2009).

CAST:

Zack Taylor – Todd Dunphy

Charlie Boyd – Rory Parr

CJ MacDonald – Gino de Rose

Samantha Brown – Deleenia Lovell

Francois 'Pinkie' LaVac – Paul C. Nichols

Brian B – Stuart Graham

Jim – Gary Minnett

SYNOPSIS: Former hockey champions converge for an old-timers' match.

HONOURS:

Central Interior Zone Festival:¹⁷⁹

- Best Set Design – Bert Koning, Gary Minnett, Cast & Crew
- Best Sound Design – Roy Teed
- Best Actor – Rory Parr
- Best Production

Mainstage – Provincial Community Theatre Festival:

- Certificate of Merit for Outstanding Playwriting – Roy Teed

¹⁷⁹ For the first time ever, the festival was hosted by the Kersley Players and held in the Kersley Community Hall. Three of the five plays competing at the festival were written by Roy Teed, including *Har! (The Pirate Play)*, *Shadows From a Low Stone Wall* and *The Good Game*.

Appendix II

Kersley Players

1987¹⁸⁰-2008, An Alphabetical Index

Jim Alexander – Bart Snarwell, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Deborah Armstrong-Borisenkoff – Sharon, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]

Anna Arnett – Gazelle Hetch, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]; Schmegley, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader* [2001]; Breeze, *An Evening With Myron* [2002]; Ms. McBurgo, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]

Lori Arnoldus – Daisy, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]

Bill Atkinson – Reginald Rothbottom, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Mary Beningfield – Florentia Bigsby-Barnes, *An Evening With Myron* [2002]; Mother Broom, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* [2004]

Elodieanne Browning – Bridgett, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* [2004]; Harmony, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Mona, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]

Stephenie Cave – Gertrudia von McFloss-Strossen, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Derek Charlton – Bernard, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Amanda Cherry – Ms. Sloan, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogrifier* [2004]; Mrs. Grimes, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Peaches, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]

Mark Coumont – A ski bum, *The Charles Connection* [1989]

Diane Crain – Fiona Haversham, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]

Becky Dale – Bambi, *The Dinner Party* [1987]; A ski bunny, *The Charles Connection* [1989]

¹⁸⁰ Again, including the silent movie from the early 70's, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon*.

Gino de Rose – Jules Quesnelle, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]; Gumball, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogri-fier* [2004]; Algernon Buggers, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Ackers, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Ajax, *Funny Bunny* [2007]; CJ MacDonald, *The Good Game* [2008]

Pete Drewcock – Reginald Rothbottom, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Miles Myers, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]; Myron, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; Tooley, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Bonecrusher Wickham, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Phil Schickerbicker, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]; Jacob Packard, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Trog, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader* [2001]; Jack, *Shadows From A Low Stone Wall* [2001]; Bannock Muldoon, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]

Marty Duffy – Whiplly Dervish, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Mrs. Venables, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]

Brittany Dunphy – The Cat, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Kaylyn Dunphy – The Yellow Bird, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Todd Dunphy – Charles Kersley, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]; Louis, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Slick Joe Weller, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Bliffen, *Funny Bunny* [2007]; Zack Taylor, *The Good Game* [2008]

John Foreman – Mr. Tubble, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogri-fier* [2004]

Jennie Gardiner – Sarah, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]

Mike Giesbrecht – Angle-Iron Hetch, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]

Stuart Graham – Clarence, Mr. Flap, Maurice, Billybob Bopeep, The Hot Dog Vendor, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Grimaldi, the Cook, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]; Myron, *An Evening With Myron* [2002]; Harry, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]; Darling Easter Bunny, *Funny Bunny* [2007]; Brian B, *The Good Game* [2008]

Bobbi Grant – Saloon girl, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]; Felicity Rothbottom, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Phoebe Hipchek, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]; Tiffany, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]

Jack Grant – Bad Guy, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]; Vic 'The Stick' Stewert, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Collette Grimm – Saloon girl, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Debbie Grimm – Lily, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]; Cecilia, *The Dinner Party* [1987]; Millicent Primrose, *The Charles Connection* [1989]

John Grimm – The Bartender, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Johnny Grimm – The Sheriff, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Rod Grimm – Earl Glint, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]; Dr. Hector Dexter, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Dave Gunn – Charles, *The Dinner Party* [1987] and *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Algernon Buggers, *Buster Hipchek's Matrimonial Two Step* [1990], *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991] and *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Ackers, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Pericles Mavenbrook, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Blodger, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Frank, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]; Mrs. Bardell, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]

Jarret Hannas – Ernie Bunwallop, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Joe, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]

David Harnden – Herman, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Diana Harvey – Miss Birdie, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Mrs. C, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Chris Helmink – Parsnip Meriberry, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]

Kendra Hesketh – Tunella, Mrs. Flap, Susan, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]

Dennis Holbrook – Harry, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; The Bartender, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]

Maz Holbrook – Agnes Hurliburton, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; Blanche, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]

Adrienne Kempling – Blanche, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Rhonda Easter Bunny, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Bert Koning – Figgly, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Steve Koning – Joe, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Clyde, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Ouch, the Guard, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-*

hee [2000]; Golombek, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader* [2001]

Penny Krebs – Dusty Fairweather, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]

Joseph Laidlaw – Sparkles, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Denver Lamarche – The Dog, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Dorine Lamarche – Susan St. Apropros St. John, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]

Sherryl Martens Latimer – Felicity Rothbottom, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Alex Lee – Bad Guy, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Laureen Livingstone – Whiplly Dervish, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; HJ, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]

Deleenia Lovell – Mona, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Angie Bunwallop, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Marnie, *Strangers on a Glade* [1994]; Ludmilla Oyster, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Snoggins, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Janey, *Shadows From A Low Stone Wall* [2001]; Gumbelle, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogriifier* [2004]; Samantha Brown, *The Good Game* [2008]

Christina McLaughlin – Amber, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader* [2001]

Sue Mathison – Dr. Pernicious Broom, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogriifier* [2004]

Diane Maybee – Snerl, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Gary Minnett – Clyde, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Will-Bill Bonnigan, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Cabot McDingus, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]; Julio Hugybudy, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Donegal Hetch, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]; Ezekiel, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]; Hamish von McFloss-Strossen, *A Rousing Tale: The True Story of Kersley* [2003]; Hubert, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogriifier* [2004]; Jack Strathbungo, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Tooley, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Mogg, *Funny Bunny* [2007]; Jim, *The Good Game* [2008]

Maureen Mitchell – Constance Crutchley, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]

Sean Morin – Skiddy Padoplis, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Harvey Speckledeck, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Sydney, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]

Lannie Mycock – Johnny, *The Infamous Doomsday Bowling Alley Manure Spreader* [2001]

Kirsten Nichols – Smiglet, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Paul Nichols – Louis, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Francis, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Gerbil Hetch, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]; Archie, *Shadows From A Low Stone Wall* [2001]; Heckal, *An Evening With Myron* [2002]; Angie Bunwallop, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; B. Bertram Bighorn Smith, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Ozzie Easter Bunny, *Funny Bunny* [2007]; Francois ‘Pinkie’ LaVac, *The Good Game* [2008]

Lance Parr – A ski bum, *The Charles Connection* [1989]

Mike Parr – Child informant, *Shoot Out at the Kersley Saloon* [1972]

Rory Parr – Bruno, *An Evening With Myron* [2002]; Bonecrusher Wickham, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Charlie Boyd, *The Good Game* [2008]

Lester Pettyjohn – Thor, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Buster Hipchek, *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]

Kat Popein – Helen Schickerbicker, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]; Martha Speckledeck, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]

Ron Potter – Clyde, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; The Bartender, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]

Kathie Ardell Prentice – Penelope, *The Dinner Party* [1987]; Mrs. Grimes, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Daphne, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]; Marie, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]

Patty Whitford Reinsdorf – Kimberley Hurliburton, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; Peaches, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Harmony, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993] and *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Gloria, *Strangers on a Glade* [1994]; Roxy, Mrs. Muggins, Rosie Rootertooter, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Herpes, the Wormkeeper, *The Ghost of Donegal Hetch, Whee-hee* [2000]

Heather Shippitt – Molly, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]

Jim Swaan – A ski bum, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Merv, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]

Roy Teed – Admiral Horatio Faughshaw ret., *The Dinner Party* [1987]; Humphrey Hurliburton, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; Oscar, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Hugo, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]; Mr. Bog, *Hotel Hysterium* [1998]; Dr. Hercules Pointeteau, *Dr. Broom and the Atomic Transmogri-fier* [2004]

Wanda Wallace – A ski bunny, *The Charles Connection* [1989]

Wayne Wark – Vic ‘The Stick’ Stewert, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Alfred, *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]; Basil Calhoun, *All Aboard the Marriage-Go-Round* [1991]; B. Bertram Bighorn Smith, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Jack Strathbungo, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993] and *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]; Oscar, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]; Herschel, *Lace Drakes* [1996/1997]; Bronegal, *The Unlikely Rapture of Bannock Muldoon* [2003]

Mike Webb – Craddock, *The Hocus Pocus Goodtime Motel Blues* [1995]; Jergens, *Har! (The Pirate Play)* [1996]

Brenda Wenzel – Gertrude Faughshaw, *The Dinner Party* [1987]

Mike Whalen – Louis, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]

Wanda Zacharias – A ski bunny, *The Charles Connection* [1989]; Fanny, *Buster Hipchek’s Matrimonial Two Step* [1990]; Miss Birdie, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [1992]; Ms. McBurgo, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [1993]; Hortensia & Barbara Fussel, *The Honcho Rubber Hot Pants Murder Girdles* [1994]

Simon Zeegers – Ernie Bunwallop, *The Incredible Pickled Pigeon Pirate Chase* [2005]; Mr. Punch, *The Rutabaga Ranger Rides Again* [2006]; Santa, *Funny Bunny* [2007]

Appendix III
A Sampling of Glenn Fillmore Poems

Kersley Lumber598

Kersley Snowmobilers599

Harry’s Hope.....600

Kersley Lumber

There's a place called Kersley Lumber,
Where we local boys all go,
To try to earn a living
But the wages are quite low.

We all wear torn trousers
With patches on the knees,
And we go there in the winter time,
To stand around and freeze.

For they can't get nothing started
If it's more than five below.
The foreman there will curse and swear
Till he gets the thing to go.

While he finally gets things started
And he thinks that all is fine,
But they still are using summer fuel
And it clogs up in the line.

Now, in the rainy season
The ground is not too hard,
For they've covered it with sawdust
Instead of gravelling the yard.

The forklifts sink down pretty deep
When they try to work in that,
All you can see of the driver
Are his eyebrows and his hat.

The methods that they're using there
Will date a few years back,
Like nailing boards across a belt
If it is running slack.

The timbers have all rotted now
And sagged down here and there,
The trimsaw's chains are worn out
And you can't cut nothing square.

And if someone should ask you
What they're using for a crew,
There's herring chokers and Frenchmen
And Englishmen and a wooden shoe.

They say that many years ago
When it was it its best,
They used it for a landmark
When they opened up the West.

When I am old and getting grey
I'll take my grandson on my knee,
And tell him about Kersley Lumber
And the way things used to be.

Now that will make his eyes light up
As I sit and hold him near,
And I'll bet he tells his playmates,
"My grandpa was a pioneer."

Kersley Snowmobilers

Now snowmobiling's lots of fun,
So I heard many say.
It would surprise old grampa's eyes
To see the big display

Now Kersley's down twelve miles from
town.
A fifteen minute run.
On Sunday when the boys are out,
They sure have lots of fun.

You'll find them out upon the slopes
When the weather's nice and fine.
I'm gonna introduce the boys
And try to make it rhyme.

Brad and Dad drive Arctic Cats
And they say they like them great.
Jean would like to drive one, too,
But she'll have to wait.

Two Moto-Skis from down the line
Came roaring into view.
Some said, I guess that's big Bert Ness,
And Terry Gallop too.

He took me for a ride one night,
My heart was in my mouth.
We hit a snowbank going north
And wound up heading south.

Dewey Lund is lots of fun,
Especially when he's drinking,
But when he's on his snowmobile,
You can tell that fella's thinking.

The kids are on it all the time,
Or so you'll hear him mutter.
I went and bought myself a horse
And now I'll buy a cutter.

Somebody said that Tony's lost
And we'll have to find him.
Just holler 'Rum' and he'll come
With a cloud of snow behind him.

Harry Herrett likes to talk
And you don't have to wind him.
He climbed a tree with his Moto-Ski
And a moose hooked on behind him.

Ron Dale just bought a big machine
And on it there's no stopping,
For when he pulls that starting cord,
There's hell and pistons popping.

Vic Jacobsen is big and tough;
He drives a new machine.
His wife thinks it's really sharp;
She likes that pretty green.

Larry Martens is a sportsman
And he's tough as leather.
You'll see him out in the snow
In any kind of weather.

Then at last, a streak went past
And I thought that I was dreaming.
Up to the peak went a boy named Zeke
With his Ski-Doo just a-screaming.

Although it's plain, I can explain
The excitement that they're feeling
On Sunday when the Kersley boys
Are out there snowmobiling.

I work for Kersley Lumber
And, unless my job I change,
I guess I'll have to stay at home
And ride the kitchen range.

But the thing I like best of all,
Even though it's not so shocking,
Is when we get three feet of snow;
It sure as hell beats walking.

Harry's Hope

My neighbour next door, with ideas galore,
Said, "Do you know what I think I'll do?
I'll build me a 'freak' to over Yank's Peak,
But I think I'll need help from you."
So we're working out there, and drinking some beer,
And if we can get it to go,
We will bring back alive the ones that survive
And the rest we'll just stamp in the snow.

Then a neighbour came by, with a gleam in his eye,
"What's that thing?" He wanted to know.
"Can't you tell, you big dope, why that's 'Harry's Hope',
And he's hoping to hell it will go."

Then his wife came out, in his mind there was doubt,
And soon tempers started to flare,
And she said, "I can tell, you're going to hell,
And there's no snow for that buggy down there."

We worked day and night to get everything right,
Then came the day for the test.
We all gathered round and were holding it down,
With the nose of it pointed straight west.
As he climbed on his seat and pulled up his feet,
And gazed out into the snow,
All jumped aside to save our own hide,
And hollered, "All right, let her go."

When he threw it in gear, it kicked up its rear,
And started in pawing the ground.
It was then that he said, "I've got 12 gear ahead,
And none of them slow the thing down."

Then the tracks finally caught and forward it shot,
And made a mad pass at a tree.
Then he jumped on the brake, and oh, for Godsake!
It's turned and it's headed for me.

I ran with some haste, in snow to my waist,
And wishing about then I could fly,
But I sighed with relief, and some disbelief,
As that creature went roaring on by.
Then the shifting gear broke and those tracks were a joke,
So we towed it back home with a rope.
Now he's working out there, with a look of despair,
Just Harry and poor 'Harry's Hope'.

Appendix IV

Sample Consent Form

Research Participant Consent Form

I, _____, agree to my participation in research conducted by Jessica Grant Jørgensen for work required for the completion of a Doctor of Philosophy in Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland. All material(s) that result(s) from this research are given voluntarily by myself.

Description of material(s):

I understand that the research may be used for the following purposes: Ph.D. thesis, class papers, and/or class/public presentations. I give permission for all material(s) connected with myself to be used for academic/educational purposes, with the following exceptions:

I give permission for my name to be used in any written work that results from my participation in this research.

_____ Yes _____ No

I give permission that the material(s) may be deposited in a suitable archive at the researcher's discretion. Following this, I understand that the material(s) may then be used by qualified persons for research purposes, but that no publication of the material(s) will be made without written permission by myself and the researcher (if possible), and by the archivist.

_____ Yes _____ No

Signature of researcher

Date

Signature of participant

Date

Participant contact information