

in the wind clothes dance on a line
performative inquiry - a (re)search methodology

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Mario is hamming it up in the rowboat. I recruited him as my crew for an early morning spot of cod-jigging in the bay, a decision I am beginning to regret. Oblivious to my poetic struggle to create an impoverished coastal outpost in lecture room 210, he halfheartedly pulls at the oars, and sneaks copious gulps of screech from an imaginary flask, slyly winking at the audience. The class, amused, follows our dramalogue. Outside, the january evening spills winter rain against the windows.

“Look Mario, “ I sweep a generous hand across the horizon of blackboards, “ the village looks like the broken grin of an old man’s smile. Boarded up windows. Fallen fences. How many people live here now?”

Mario shrugs. Coughs. Tugs haphazardly at an oar.

“Remember that signpost outside of town, just where the road bends?” I prompt him, my voice on the edge of desperate. I am sweating under the layers of fisherman’s sweater, life jacket and overalls, trying to kickstart our role drama on the fishing industry in Newfoundland. The outpost refuses to take shape. *Why isn’t this working?*

“Never seen it,” says Mario with another swallow of screech.

You’re wrecking the logic of the drama. Of course you’ve seen it! You’ve lived here all your life! The town is only ten houses long!

“You know the sign,” I jab him in the ribs and point emphatically at a sign that I had taped earlier in the day on the blackboard: *Come by Chance - Pop. 157.*¹ I am silently cursing him under my breath, *Come on Mario work with me on this.* But he refuses to play along with my paper props. Refuses to follow my lead.

“Nope. Never laid eyes on it. But” he says, suddenly rocking the boat with unexpected enthusiasm. “ I know how we can figure out the population.”

“How?” I am suspicious. *Is he going to swamp the boat?* The class eagerly leans forward on their seats - sea vultures waiting for us to capsize.

“Count the clotheslines!” He stands triumphantly in the rowboat, pointing to the blackboards. “One, two, three...”

And to my amazement, clotheslines magically appear - diapers, workmen’s overalls, cotton dresses, woolen socks, sheets dancing in the wind. The entire population of the outpost leaps into being. Within that single moment, Mario captures the very heartsoulbody of the outpost and

gifts us life. Realized in the choreography geography of cloth limbs dancing on lines in the wind, the outport unknown becomes known.

Within a moment, *the not-yet-real is realized*, and the role drama opens to exploration.²

*And so, i stumble into the unknown landscape of a wind-swept outport
where clothes dance on lines, and the possibilities for exploration stretch
beyond the cold blue horizon of the Atlantic Ocean.*

I am emboldened by moments: moments that catch at the sleeve of my sweater as I bustle through the library, pulling books from the shelves, smelling them as I have been instructed, looking for words, images, ideas that arrest time.

Moments, insistent taps of morse code that interrupt as I hunt among the volumes of research methodologies -- semiotics, ethnography, hermeneutics, phenomenology, narrative inquiry -- looking for resonance.

Moments that startle as I enter haphazardly, awkwardly, dangerously into drama in the classroom, looking for (what does a drama researcher - educator seek?) --

*wait, the moment whispers,
you know me.
this space-moment³resonates.
go to your being, becoming.*

The research methodology which we choose shapes our understanding of our landscape(s), our questions, our ways of being. Our methodology betrays our communion with

the world; it opens us (and the world) to inspection and introspection, expectation and interspection. Choosing a research methodology is to take off our clothes and expose our passions, our imperfections, our hopes, and yes, our quest.

There are in the many research methodologies which invite exploration, questioning, mapping of landscapes of known-unknown world(s). The question that I, as researcher, must ask is

*which research methodology will voice sound illuminate move
within through my work as researcher and educator towards
moments of interstanding that are my hope and ambition?*

and so i realize performative inquiry
and, in that moment,
recognize a landscape of possibility.

Performative inquiry is a (re)search methodology that explores recognizes honours the absences, landscapes and moments of learning realized through performance. To entertain performative inquiry as a research vehicle, is to recognize the risk, the unexpected, the stop⁴ embodied in action and interaction through performance that opens us to possibility.

My conceptualization of performative inquiry as a re(search) methodology has evolved through my praxis in performing arts education and through my understanding of *academic performance* as articulated by myself and Stothers (1996).⁵ By embracing performative inquiry, I am proposing that performance as research (verb) is a journey of “knowing, doing, being, creating”⁶ and that it is through performative inquiry that we may come to an “interstanding” of our journey/landscape that is the imagining of our universe--

Understanding has become impossible.
because nothing stands under.

Interstanding has become
unavoidable because
everything stands
between.

(Taylor & Saarinen, 1994. p. Interstanding 2)

This paper seeks to illustrate the possibilities of exploration and interstandings which may be realized through performative inquiry as a research methodology. What follows is not a linear explanation but a series of fragments, moments, interruptions within which and through intersection performative inquiry may be realized and recognized. If there is linearity within the multi-dimensional journey we are jointly embarking upon, it is embodied in the dance and choreography-geography below. Remember that the landscape of interstanding is not-yet realized - it is a landscape as yet un-marked by (y)our presence.

performative inquiry - a (re)search methodology

Tugging his drowned grandfather's sweater over his head, the fisherman thrusts it into the startled hands of the business tycoon. " We had dreams and you stole them from us. Here. Take it! I don't believe that my grandfather will sail home, the cod leaping in his bow waves -- take his dreams and mine with you back to the city." Nobody speaks. Nobody moves. The silence is deafening.

--teacher-in-role, role drama, February 1995

Performative inquiry as a research methodology explores and maps unexpected landscapes that twist in a sudden gust like clothes on a line. In our Newfoundland roleplay, the clothes dancing on the clotheslines did not exist in our "not-yet real" world (although the

population sign taped on the blackboard did). Nobody said, “Oh, by the way, Mario. This outpost has clotheslines.” Yet Mario called into presence our Newfoundland outpost by counting its clotheslines and we recognize the space-moment of possibility.

Performative inquiry is a research vehicle that recognizes performance in action and interaction as a place of learning and exploration. Our tools of inquiry are our bodies, our minds, our imaginations, our experiences, our feelings, our memories, our biases, our judgments and prejudgments, our hopes and our desires -- simply, our very *being, becoming*.

The catalyst for inquiry may be a question, an event, a theme, a feeling, a piece of poetry: a phenomenon which we explore through questions: *What if? What matters? What happens? So what?* These questions are not separate from the action but embodied within the action-interaction of performance.

In performative inquiry, we realize our journey/landscape through performance and then map - recognize our explorations through discussion, reflection, remembering, writing, re-imagining. There is no detached observer in performative inquiry: researcher and participants together “bodymind dance on the edge of chaos” (Fels & Stothers, 1996) into knowledge and beyond, an ever-spiralling circle of creative interstanding. It is a space-moment of life being, becoming; it is a space-moment of risk.

knowledge not as product but as action-verb

Intellect's light sees but is powerless to do.

The body's light sees and is able to do.

(Appelbaum, 1995, p. 121)

Integral to an understanding of performative inquiry as a research methodology is our working definition of cognition. Traditional cognitive theory evolved from 17th century

Descartes' concept of cognition as a mind-body duality. The separation between body and mind suggests, however, a division between "doing" and the "knowing", a dichotomy which belies the experience of learning. In the riding of a bicycle, for example, how does the body and mind coordinate necessary knowledge and action to achieve the balance, forward momentum and road sense to negotiate the landscape? In the choreography of a dance, which leads the choreographer? Body or Mind?

Descartes' body-mind dichotomy has been challenged by academics in the 20th Century, particularly in the fields of feminist research, hermeneutics and phenomenology. However, I find myself leaning towards the works of enactivists who build their understanding of cognitive theory from new biology (e.g., Maturana & Varela, 1992) and it is within this interpretation of cognition that performative inquiry positions itself.

Enactivism proposes an ecological (i.e. interactive, interrelational, interdependent) reading of cognition, in which the body-mind dichotomy is rejected. "...For us", state the authors of *Embodied Mind*, "embodiment has this double sense: it encompasses both the body as a lived experiential structure and the body as the context or milieu of cognitive mechanism" (Varela et al., 1993, p. xxvi). Knowledge is not seen as a mental operation separate from the body in action and interaction with others but as "*an ongoing bringing forth of a world* through the process of living itself" (Maturana & Varela, 1992, p. 11, my italics). Knowledge is a verb, creative, interactive, co-evolving in action and interaction.

Enactivism invites us to investigate the interplay and interrelationships between the learner, object and environment. Enactivism challenges us to reconsider also the interplay between researcher and participants, the site and journey of research, and the possibilities arising when researcher and participant "bring forth a world together" through performance. If knowledge is realized through creative action and interaction (Fels, 1995) then the possibility of performance as a site of learning and consequently an action of research begs investigation.

(aside)

- Fels: Embodied mind. Hummph! Why is the body marginalized as an adjective? Is there not a term that better celebrates the “knowing” of the body and mind co-evolving in interaction?
- Stothers: Yes, the Japanese term “shinshin” or “bodymind”. Let me explain: “in the state of ‘bodymind oneness,’ ...the mind moves while unconsciously becoming one with the body...here, there is no longer a felt distinction between the mind/subject and body/object. This state is referred to by Japanese philosopher, Nishida Kitaro (1870-1945,) as ‘pure experience’ (junsui keiken), or ‘acting intuition” (koiteki chokkan)’ (Fels & Stothers, 1996).
- Fels: Does this “pure experience” or “acting intuition” have anything to do with enactivism and cognitive theory? If I’m exploring through performance or what I might call *creative action and interaction*, am I entering a place of knowing?
- Kitaro: I’ll answer that. “The artist is attempting to express a unique reality. This is not a conceptual reality that becomes the object of cognition; it is a pre-conceptual, (as I define elsewhere, transcognitive), intuitive reality which cannot be expressed in concepts...” (Kitaro as quoted in Fels & Stothers, 1996).
- Fels: ...but which must be “bodymind” danced to action! And if “knowing is doing is being” (Davis & Sumara, 1996), can we, through bodymind dancing (i.e.

performance) create new knowledge? Is transcognition or a space-moment of learning possible within performance?

And it is this inquiry which leads us to the “edge of chaos” and multiple possibilities that are embodied within performance.

academic performance: possibilities on the edge of chaos

(an unexpected space-moment of learning that dances into being)

Clothes on a clothesline, a hotel built from an iron skeleton of barnacles, silence that mourns the loss of a grandfather's life and an outport's dreams. These are space-moments of learning realized through performance and recognized by the participants and researcher individually and/or collectively. Space-moments of learning that open up unexpected territories-landscapes to explore.

Critical to understanding performative inquiry as a research methodology is the notion that it is *through performance* that cognition or learning is realized. The conceptualization of performance as a possible action-site of learning is explored by Fels and Stothers (1996) in “Academic Performance: Between Theory and Praxis” and provides the underpinning for performative inquiry as a research methodology.

When Stothers introduced the term *academic performance* into our conversation, our playful etymological investigation invited an unexpected reading. Although at first glance, the term *academic performance* smells suspiciously of exams and evaluation, it speaks to performance as a place of learning. Plato is said to have taught under a tree, and it is this ecological remembering of *academy* that we wanted to embrace.

The word *performance* invites a jig-saw puzzle approach, with the multiple possibilities that danced us into an unexpected landscape.

In our reading, should we weight *form* or *action*
in *per-form-ance*?

(Remembering that (d)ance is action.)

And the prefix *per* suddenly takes on a split-personality when juxtaposed with the word *form* meaning “utterly, throughout and through” form but also “to do away, away entirely or to destruction” of form.⁷

Is performance action both within through and without form?

In our reading of *performance*, we imagined a creative action-interaction, a birthing and rebirthing simultaneously within form and through the destruction of form, and suddenly found ourselves in an unexpected space between structure and chaos - a space which complexity theorists call the “edge of chaos” where patterns of interrelations are continually created and recreated through an “endless dance of co-ermergence.” (Waldrop, 1992, p. 12)

The edge of chaos where possibilities seduce and life dances into being -

Aha!

It is in this space, we suggest, “on the edge of chaos”, that performance dances into being “possible new worlds” (Varela, 1987) or “aha!” moments which are space-moments of learning, a realization of the “not-yet-known” world made known through performance.

*academic performance: a space -moment of learning both within
and without through which action-process occurs utterly through
form and simultaneously through the destruction of form.*

This is not a definition, this is a possibility.

We voice absence unexpected anticipated unknown through performance. Through performance we bring forth possible new worlds, space-moments of learning: an ecological interstanding which invites the co-evolving world(s) of performance and cognition in an transformative dance.

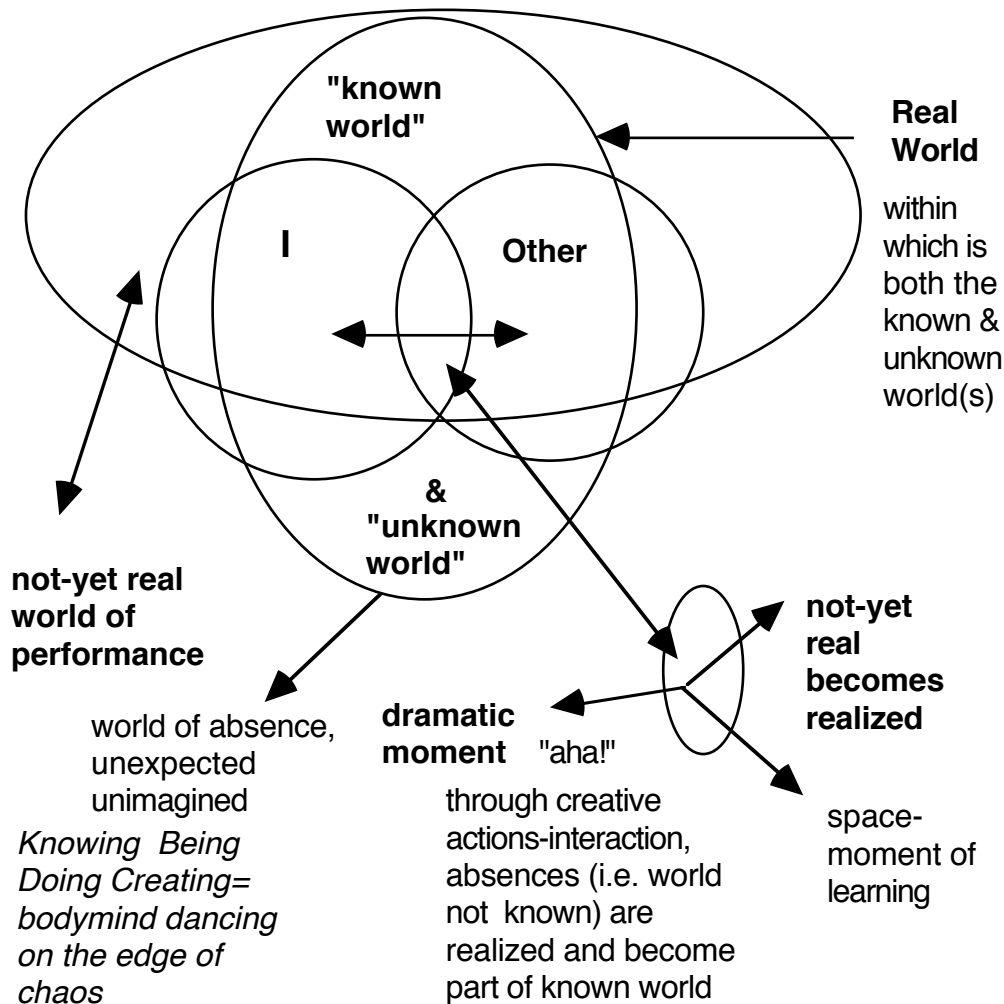
With our recognition of knowledge or embodied mind as “bodymind oneness” and its coupling with complexity through performance, we can now entertain *academic performance* as “bodymind dancing on the edge of chaos”: an action-site where performance realizes space-moments of learning.

We are always in action-interaction with our co-evolving landscape that is this moment. Us. In interaction. Now. Performance. On the edge of chaos.

aha! realizing unexpected landscapes -- exploration in the interstices

Holes in the net are openings for the imagination
(Taylor & Saarenin, 1994, p. Gaping 7)

Performance is a journey of action-interaction precariously balanced between the known, the unknown and not-yet known world(s) of being, realized through the multiplicity-complexity of choreography-geography that is the “bringing forth of possible worlds” (Varela, 1987). As Phelan suggests in her theory of performance, “Performance boldly and precariously declares that Being is performed (and made temporarily visible) in that suspended in-between.” (1993, p. 167)



The diagram above is frustrated by the two-dimensional static linearity. Imagine a multi-dimensional interactive ecology in which “aha!” moments are realized and absorbed into the “known world” shared by the participants (I and You). The so-called “Real world” is not singular to the participants: There are worlds within worlds within worlds, with ever-expanding changing horizons (interstices of intersections) within which I and You play out our interactive cognitive dance.⁸

Performance is the action-interaction that invites us into the interstices between the real and the not-yet real--through which absence (i.e. the not-yet-known) may be made present. We are interested not in dichotomies but in the interaction gaps between. To realize performative

inquiry is not to investigate performance but transcognition, those space-moments of learning realized through performance. It is through the intersection of the “not-yet real” world(s) of performance and the “real” world(s) that absence silence the unknown is realized - transformed into “interstanding”.

Performative inquiry recognizes and maps these new possible worlds or “aha!” moments - researcher and participants active conspirators in the unfolding of a co-emerging co-evolving cognitive landscape-journey enacted through performance and in the recognition - an opening of new possibilities within which to wonder and wander.

transcognitive.

absence voices its silence in the conversation

a space-moment of learning

Singing the space

there are meetings

and I am transformed...

(Barba, 1995, p. 165)

Bolton (1992) speaks of the “here and now” “spontaneous” and “existential” moments that may be found in dramatic playing which he states has two components: the descriptive and the existential. (pp. 10, 17) When participants “submit” to the fictitious world they are creating, the dramatic play is “here and now”; the performers straddle the not-yet real and real world; in the intersection, an not-yet-known world becomes known. It is within the intersection of this real-not-yet real world i.e. “our edge of chaos”, that possible space-moments of learning occurs. And it is within these meeting places that research is possible through performance.

it is in the meeting places between when we become

Here and Now, something happens.

A space-moment of learning is called into being when Mario counts invisible clotheslines that become visible in the counting. This moment of the “not-yet-real becoming real” precariously suspended-in-between gives the researcher-participant(s) a “new possible world to explore” through performance, reflection, writing, discussion. Who lives in our outport? How many diapers does the Johnson’s baby go through in a week? Sadie has new jeans- wonder where she got the money for them? Do clotheslines exist in your world?

A solitary moment in a role drama becomes a springboard into the unknown world made known. In the dramatic moment, when the unimagined is imagined, we open a space-moment of learning to explore. We realize through performance unexpected landscapes. In action and interaction, we dance an unknown landscape into being, and in the space-moment of dance, recognize its presence embodied in our choreography-geography.

This is not to suggest that all performance realizes moments of transcognition in which the “unknown” or “not-yet-known” becomes “known”, absence sounding presence. There are many times when an improvisation or dramatic scene struggles within a cognitive reality that prevents the realization of that “unique reality” which Kitaro calls pre-conceptual (or transcognitive), intuitive reality. Nor are these space moments of learning necessarily universally shared or simultaneously experienced by the participants. Perhaps only one person may realize-recognize⁹ “a new possible world” that moves her or him into a space-moment of learning. These moments may or may not anticipate further creative action and interaction within the performance, but they are embodied in the recognizer and remembered.

How many of us participating in the roleplay “saw” Mario’s clotheslines? Did others, like me, see clothes dancing on a line in the wind and suddenly see the possibility of naming members of our fictional outport or (any home with a clothesline) by the empty cloth limbs dancing naked under a blue sky? Or did they see only the blackboard? How can I, in that

moment, as researcher-participant, help Mario bring into our roleplay this unexpected unfolding that opens up new possible conversations in action and interaction? Do others in realizing and recognizing other (as yet unnamed) space-moments of learning through performance bring that recognition i.e. *mapping in action* into the continuing dialogue of the performance?

And so, the action of research through performance continues until the end of our role play (i.e. performance), our creative action and interaction testimony to the possibility of learning and (re)searching. Through our social mapping-in-action which announces performative inquiry as research methodology, we invite others to share in the knowledge of our individual and social moments of creative knowledge-making.

And when we have bodymind danced to a temporary conclusion, it is through the process of reflection, sharing, recreating in dialogue and writings the journey/landscape experienced collectively and individually, that we (researcher-participants) map our performative inquiry. And in our mapping, we name the resonances, echoes, possibilities within our rememberings and those space-moments of learning that performative inquiry as research methodology seeks to chart.

Through performative inquiry as research methodology, we seek dramatic moments: unexpected moments of realization-recognition which co-evolves through bodymind inquiry in interaction with the environment (real and imagined) and others (both “as is” and “in role”). We embody these moments to map the landscape of knowing, being, doing, creating. And in the mapping, possibility enters our language of action.

performance as a site (sight) of inquiry and revolution

performance not as process but as journey

not as product but as co-evolving landscape

bodymind dancing on the edge of chaos

into being

To explore the possibilities and contradictions which make possible performative inquiry a space of educational research, we need to entertain the multiple possibilities of performance. Performance, as defined for the purposes of this paper, is the creative action and interaction realized through “bodymind dancing on the edge of chaos (Fels & Stothers, 1996).

Our interest and investigation(s) in performative inquiry lie in those performances called into being through improvisation, role drama, and creative movement and sound work-- performance embodying both “process and product” which is based upon a site of inquiry suggested by the researcher and/or participants. We are seeking existential moments or what Bolton calls those “moments of spontaneity (which) occur ...when suddenly something seems ‘real’ to the actors, when there is a sense of “it is happening now’ ...(however) it is an important feature of existential occurrences that they cannot be repeated.” (1992, p. 9)

The unrepeatable. Unexpected landscapes. Space-moments of learning.

Performative inquiry does not take place within a chaotic unstructured environment, but on the “edge of chaos” within which structure (patterns, form) presents both the space and opportunity for us to dance absence into our presence. The form or structure provided by drama presents us with the freedom and responsibility to explore our intersecting world(s) of light and darkness, sound and silence, movement and stillness within a dialogue that recognizes the magic and possibility of performance. To break free of the form is possible but it is also dangerous, and nothing may be realized. Structure like the environment must be fluid, flexible, and always present.

Warns chaos dramatist Alan Hancock (1994) “We are not working towards a fixed goal, (or) through a process which continually narrows down rather than opens up the scope of the project...”

Not a narrowing down but an opening up.

Performance realizes a balance in disequilibrium. On the individual level of the actor, a precarious balance must be established if “life action” is to be realized. “The aim is permanently unstable balance.” (Barba, 1995: 19) Performance as improvisation then is an altercation of balance in which the “real” world is thrown off balance by the imagining of a possible “not-yet real” world. This new balance in disequilibrium throws the status quo momentarily askew, and in the attempt to secure (temporarily) new balances, the unexpected may occur. It is within this space-conflict that the dramatic moment is born -- the “aha” moment that is our learning, our knowing, our being becoming. It is the moment that performative inquiry seeks and maps, charting unexpected waters with the navigational skills honed by terror and risk.

Performance, however, as improvisation is elusive, impossible to capture and remount for inquisitive eyes. Warns performance theorist Phelan, “Performance’s inability to be captured or documented within the re-enactments promised by the copy is part of what makes it, per force, face the impossibility of seizing the Real” (1993, p. 192). We cannot hold on to that “not-yet real” world, it slips through our fingers, eludes our grasping need for permanence. Yet the memory, the experience is embodied, traces remain: these are our witnesses of the space-moment that is performance.

The challenge of the performative researcher is to map the elusive, to honour recognize the *what if?* realized into being. There can be no final destination nor forced conclusions. There is only questions, exploration, possibilities. An opening of new horizons. Demands Barba, “I don’t want to see dance. I don’t want to see theatre. I want to find myself face to face with that which ‘is-in-life’ and which reawakens echoes and silences” (Barba, 1995, p. 162).

The “aha!” space moment of the “not-yet real” world realized in interaction with the “real” world invites new interpretation, new possibilities-response/abilities of action.¹⁰ To realize the potential of performative inquiry, we need to embrace the light and darkness that performance illuminates within the interstices of action realized and recognized. Performance as

improvisation is contradiction, revolution, interruption, disruption, the stop. To discover the possibility of absence, the unknown, the unexpected, performance requires courage to release the known, to freefall into unexpected space moments of learning. Following a predetermined script does not give space-action to the possibility of the unexpected. Performance - bodymind dancing on the edge of chaos - invites Boal's (1995) "moments of crisis" in which co-exists danger and opportunity, and in doing so, introduces the possibility of revolution.

We cannot not pretend that performative inquiry is an innocent journey. The stop - the "aha!" moment embodied in performance - speaks to the potency and revolutionary potential of performative inquiry. Although others may attempt to marginalize performance, denying its potency, we, its practitioners, recognize the inherent danger that performance invites.

Between closing and beginning lives a gap, a caesura, a discontinuity.

The betweenness is a hinge that belongs to neither one nor the other.

It is neither poised nor unpoised, yet moves both ways...

It is the stop.

(Applebaum, 1995, p. 15, 16)

revisiting our exploration of performative inquiry as research methodology

performative inquiry

a mapping-recognition of a space-moment(s) of learning

exploration through which action-process occurs utterly through

form and simultaneously through the destruction of form

chaos, disorder, absence, unknown world(s) not-yet realized

realized

and recognized.

Performative inquiry as a research methodology is a vehicle which allows both the researcher and participants the opportunity and possibility to realize through performance the absences in the known world. We begin with a site of inquiry, a question and place it within a dramatic structure (i.e. action-space). Performance is our tool for exploration, a tool that investigates the “known-unknown” world(s) we inhabit through imagining a “not-yet real” world. The “aha” moment is the moment of transcognition - a space-moment of learning that comes into being. The “aha!” moment realized-recognized is not our end point, but a landmark in the co-evolving landscape that welcomes our exploration.

Performative inquiry is questioning, seeking, searching, investigating, exploring. Performative inquiry promises no answers only a mapping of the presence-absence(s) of our world(s) realized through performance. It is a *space-action of learning*. We map not what we do not know but what we come to know- our mapping through performative inquiry is the learning-knowing that happens in the space(s) between the known world and the unknown through performance.

Performative inquiry is a quest in search of the unknown. The researcher is an experimenter; an adventurer, a facilitator, a catalyst who invites encourages dares exploration through “the laying down of possible new worlds.” Performative inquiry is a risk-taking venture that promises no final destinations, only new horizons to explore.

In realizing a “not-yet-real” world into being, the performative researcher must claim a position of responsibility and complicity.¹¹ He or she co-creates a context through which and within which exploration occurs. He or she is not standing outside the action: his or her participation plays an active role in the unfolding of landscape(s). The researcher must remember that performance happens within his or her presence and recognize his or her own horizons that help create both the dramatic structures that house the inquiry and the responses which may limit investigation or co-evolve into new dimensions of interstanding. There is no detached observer in performative inquiry: researcher and participants together “bodymind dance

on the edge of chaos” into knowledge. *Complicity exists between researcher and participant.* (Davis & Sumara, 1996) Performative inquiry is a space-moment of life being, becoming; it is a space-moment of risk. An interstanding of possibility and response/ability. Both researcher and participant must be (a)ware.

In performative inquiry, we seek dramatic moments: unexpected moments of realization recognition which co-evolves through bodymind inquiry in interaction with the environment (real and imagined) and others (both “as is” and “in role”). We bring forth possible new worlds, space-moments of learning: an ecological interstanding which invites the co-evolving world(s) of performance and cognition in an transformative dance. We seek these moments to map the landscape of “knowing, being, doing, creating”(Fels, 1995). And in the mapping, possibility is realized.

praxis: finding ourselves on the map

Let us pause for a moment and consider performative inquiry in praxis. What does this research methodology look like in action-interaction? Last spring I was invited to lead a role drama for a conference at the University of British Columbia.¹² I titled the role drama “Finding Ourselves on the Map”. What amazes me in remembering the role drama, is the richness of possibilities that unfolded. Performative inquiry leads us into an “not-yet real” world, where many space-moments of learning unfold, opening up unexpected landscapes to explore.

The focus for the role drama was to “find ourselves on a map” --how do we create community-place in an environment given only our memories, our anticipations, and our present actions-interactions? Could we create, in sixty minutes, a community that is ours? A place to map on the landscape?

We created a “space on the edge of the ocean in the shelter of the mountains” by spreading a blue sheet on the floor and stacking a pile of cardboard boxes and covering them with a single white tablecloth. To begin the role drama, I asked the group to pile a dozen

cardboard boxes into a mountain range while I spread out the ocean. After the mountains were “created”, I was dissatisfied with the closeness of the sea to the mountains and moved the blue sheet away from the boxes to provide a strip of land between.

“Put that back.” a woman demands, “The mountain comes down to the edge of the sea.”

Oops!

I quickly replace the ocean.

How is it that she sees a landscape?

And am I only thinking in terms of sheets and boxes?

I had a loose script to follow but was determined to follow the direction indicated by the actions of the participants. However, after a while I decided that we should move into the “next scene”. (I confess, the role drama was not unfolding as I had expected but taking a right-angle turn into unknown territory. I yearned to regain control of the “script”). Grabbing a box from the mountain range, I cried, “We need houses. Let’s all build our own houses.” And I began to dismantle the mountains.

“Hey! Stop!” several participants protest. “You can’t do that! Who do you think you are abusing our land?! What’s the idea of clear cutting our forests?!”

And I feel the shock of the unexpected.

Recognition that I (“in role” and as teacher) failed to honour recognize their land, their space. That my agenda (to create a happy community of homes, put into action the anticipated direction that I had imagined for the

role drama) is in conflict with their need to protect their landscape -- the environment.

I feel guilty! Ashamed! So this is what it is to destroy the land. Without thinking of other. Or of the land. For my own purposes.

“I’m sorry,” I say. “I didn’t mean to destroy the mountains.”

In that space-moment, learning comes into being.

Realized and recognized.

A moment opens up - a moment neither intended nor anticipated by the script that I prepared the week before - a moment that opens a space to explore. Through performative inquiry, a space moment of learning is realized which may be recognized and explored by teacher-researcher and participants together and/or individually.

How did I feel when that moment occurred? How did you feel? What do we learn from the experience? How does this relate to the “real world” of land expropriation, Green Peace, environmental concerns, native land claims, etc.

Could I as teacher-leader have anticipated the “raping of the land” argument in the role drama? Perhaps. However, my “intended curriculum” had not included it in the proposed script. It was through performance that the possibility of that unexpected space-moment for learning “happened.”

Our role drama unfolds into unimagined places...

Nearing the conclusion of the role drama, I find myself trying to give birth to my child (played by one of the participants) but she refuses to be born.

Come on, I mutter under my breath, get born and I'll light one of the forty candles I bought for this role drama ...

(a \$35 expenditure that with which I plan to use in a dramatic and moving conclusion - however, much to my frustration, the ending I had envisioned is bodymind writing itself towards an unknown possibility)

“..and we'll all sing happy birthday.”

“You can't light her candle,” explains one of the participants. “She must light it herself.”

and rejecting me

“my child” gives birth to herself through the help of a sea-woman.¹³

I am devastated. In-role, I fail to give birth to my own child!

(a space-moment of learning in which I realize that my own child's journey/landscape is not of my making nor control).

But then

a participant invites me

to light a candle
and
in that moment i learn the possibilities of
my own learning within through
the role drama

The moment of lighting the candle speaks to the hope made possible through one's own explorations (teacher and/or student) and to the learning that comes into being through performance.

Yes, I am here,
in this space at the edge of the sea
in the shelter of the mountains
and I too can become known.

the hand acts, and in doing so speaks. (Barba, 1995, p. 26)

In performative inquiry, we can only trust in the moment unfolding through the action and interactions of all -- our hope as we realize the landscape/journey of the role drama is that we might "light a candle" of learning, being becoming born in the space of interaction between the "real" and the "not-yet-real" world(s) of performance.

a researcher's "laying down a path"

The reporting of performative inquiry is an interpretive dance, each danced remembering-retelling unique to the researcher-writer. Traces are possible footsteps in the landscape/journey we create through performance, but, in drawing a map of our

journey/landscape, we can only hint at the possibilities realized. “The map is not the territory.” There are absences and questions, questions and absences that are the “holes in the net” of our mapping.

Our question, *what if?* is left hanging unfinished, ever co-emerging, co-evolving through time. Like a pebble dropped into a still pond, performance sends ripples through the known-unknown world(s). The knowing that is performance is embodied within each of us; we live that knowing in our bodies, our spirits, our words, our actions. To write our knowing through performance is possible. To write *about* our knowing within performance is a more difficult challenge. Barba warns about the danger of trusting the written word as witness to the theatre.

“The relationship that links *theatre* and *books* is a fertile one. But it is often unbalanced in favour of the written word, which remains. Stable things have one weakness: their stability. Thus the memory of experience lived as theatre, once translated into sentences that last, risks becoming petrified into pages that cannot be penetrated.” (1995, p. 12)

As a researcher-participant of the momentary, the fragmentary, the illusional, I call on the skills of my writing as narrator and poet to re(play) the rememberingings representings of my fellow participants that shape the unfolding of our journey/landscape. We must trust in the imagination, empathy, journeying of our readers to capture the “results” of a performative inquiry. The telling of moments will be rift with holes gaps questions that signal absence(s) and as-yet unrealized possibilities. And the “documentation” fragmentary, elusive, a choreography-geometry of moments and lost rememberingings, will be as eloquent in its silences, as it is in its telling.

*Not walls
of cement, but...
the melodies
of your temperature*

(Barba, 1995, p. 162)

It is the elusiveness of performance and our inability to capture completely through writing and video-texting a re(presentation) of the participants' story(ies) after the fact that draws practitioners of performative inquiry to the praxis of interpretative exploration(s) which are in themselves performative. Performative inquiry is a research of fragmentary moments; an attempt to explore the essence of meaning making. In other words, while I might report matter-of-factly what happened before, during and after a performance ; the final telling co-evolves often into an interpretative dance that invites both the teller and the reader to poetic as well as pragmatic musings.

Horizons colliding.

Creating new worlds.

Absent in their presence

present in their absence

quest of the performative researcher

“Betrayal. From tender youth we are told by father and teacher that betrayal is the most heinous offense imaginable. But what is betrayal? Betrayal means breaking ranks. Betrayal means breaking ranks and going off into the unknown. Sabina knew of nothing more magnificent than going off into the unknown.”

(Kundera, 1984, p. 91)

Passionate knowers use the self as an instrument of understanding, searching for new methods to sophisticate the way the self is used in research.” (Kincheloe, 1991, p. 41)

*Hand over hand hauling in the netted light,
the holes in the representational,
the holes in the visible.*

(Phelan, 1993, p. 177)

How did I come to performative inquiry as a research methodology? My search for moments that resonate, that arrest my blind stumbling through performance to interstanding. Interpretative and narrative inquiry play a critical part in my work as a writer and researcher. Narrative inquiry, in particular, tempts me as a storyteller and writer of my own stories for a number of years. I am however, anxious to embrace a methodology that celebrates the potential of *performance* as a way of knowing; an acknowledgment of “bodymind dancing on the edge of chaos” - the magic that is in being, becoming. Marginalized, I want my body to be invited to dance at the academic ball. Having been touched by the spell of performance, I wish to spell the university into a new way of knowing being doing creating.¹⁴

“In this course I want to learn how to spell spontaneity.”

-student, drama course 335, summer 1996

I want to explore the unknown. The unexpected. The not-yet imagined. The Stop. The Gap (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994). Barba, when intensely involved with his work with Grotowski and his actors, thought that he was “in search of a lost theater” but through time he realized that “instead I was learning to be in transition. Today I know that this is not a search for knowledge, but for the unknown.” (1995:4)

The importance of the reformers resides in their having breathed new values into the empty shell of the theatre. These values have their roots in transition, they are the rejection of the spirit of the time and cannot be possessed by future generations. The reformers can only teach us to be men and women of transition who invent the personal value of *our own* theatre.(Barba, 1995, p. 5)

Questions are the researcher's invitation challenge hope; questions which resonate through the questions of others in an interactive co-evolving seeking for absence, for the not-yet-known, for the voicing of silence.¹⁵ Shaped by and shaping our journey/landscape, we seek, through performative inquiry, a way of knowing in our world(s) - a bodymind dance on the edge of chaos spelling the unknown into presence. New horizon(s) are called into being by the questions we ask, the worlds we dare imagine.

*And invite us to burst through
those barriers boundaries
into new dimensions
the unknown the absent the what if?*

Horizon(s) are our boundaries bordercrossings "...projective, unfolding ahead of us as our pre-understandings and understandings do, altering as our location alters, rather than being static like the metaphor of a framework" (Crusius, 1991, p. 33). Recognition realizes new horizons that become the unfolding of our journey/landscape.

To seek the unknown one must be willing to shift horizons, to be an adventurer, a risk-taker, an explorer sailing over the edge of the world. The old maps trace an ancient world. The new world asks that we trust in the moment, and sail the winds of our imaginations.

*“If you can’t walk in quick sand and dance with electrons,
you’re going to be toast.” (Ogden, 1995)*

“In cyberspace, theory is practice before it is theory: God is gone,
history is over, the self is scattered and the book is exploded.
..Theory must become even more radical than I ever imagined or
they ever feared.” (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. the academy 5)

Performative inquiry is a tool that realizes theory within practice (i.e. praxis). Just as the Taylor & Saarinen argue that their “book will, in a certain sense, be a non-book”, performative inquiry as research methodology requires a new reading of research in co-evolving co-emerging creative action-interaction.

It should not be limited by the linear logic of the past...The work must
also be riddled with gaps, spaces and openings that invite the reader to
write. WHITE SPACE BECOMES THE SITE OF TRANSACTION
IN WHICH THE EVENT OF UNDERSTANDING OCCURS.

(Taylor & Saarinen 1994, p. Gaping 13)

Dramatist Peter Brook (1968) writes of “the empty space” - a bare stage which by its naming becomes no longer an empty space but a space filled with memory, anticipation and possibility. Theatre director Schechner describes performance as including “the whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that take place in/among the time the first spectator enters the field of the performance - the precinct where the theater takes place - to the time the last spectator leaves.” (1988: 72)

Whether researcher is walking across the stage or “spectacting,”¹⁶ he/she is co-involved co-evolved in the action-interaction of realizing “knowing doing being creating” through and within performance. The complexity of performance is not limited to its multi-components but to the continuing co-evolving interaction of relationships between. The complicity of the researcher-participant(s) is to be acknowledged and welcomed.¹⁷

The “white space” of Taylor & Saarinen is the “empty space” of Peter Brooke (1964) is the interstices between the not-yet real and the real, located in the “edge of chaos where we bodymind dance absences into being. The action-site of performative research. Come. We welcome you to the dance.

To perform is to revolt against the “known world” -- to explode
terrorize the absolute and create possibilities beyond the barriers.

To trust in the moment. To set our sails free. To ride the wind.

To embrace risk.

To perform is to work within and through form and

simultaneously through the destruction of form

a precarious dance that recognizes patterns

possibilities

in the wind that dances clothes on a line

suspended between

a precarious presence

-- a space-moment of learning realized in action and interaction--

on the edge of chaos.

And recognized.

“AHA!”

*performative inquiry a methodology of possibility,
co-emerging, co-evolving in action and interaction
to interstanding.*

postscript

scene 1: at a local cafe. Ph.D. student is hunched over cafe au lait. Committee member shuffles through the pages of the student's methodology chapter. A second committee member is drawing Venn diagrams on a paper napkin. A third is enchanting a table of co-eds with his latest poems. The thesis supervisor is absent. Ashley McIssac fiddles in the background.

1st Member: Okay, I think I've got it. Performative inquiry. You interpret through the recognition. Realization is enacted.

Student: Yes-enacted through performance.

2nd Member: But when you're interpreting, you're still really performing. It's like one of Eshler's drawings, looping back on itself. For me, what's important is the inquiry - our seeking knowledge through inquiry which is performance.

3rd Member: It's the spelling that intrigues me-

1st Member: I think it's spelled right - p-e-r-

Supervisor: (voice-over) Absence sounding presence, don't forget that. -

Student: Do you understand the part about the space-moment of learning realized through performance? That's the critical theoretical underpinning...

2nd Member: Performance as research. Research as performance. With no spectators.

Student: In a moment of realization, recognition maps the landscape.

3rd Member: Have you spell-checked?

In real life, 'if' is a fiction.

In the theatre, 'if' is an experiment. (Brooke, 1968, p. 157)

In research, 'if' is a possible footstep
into a space-moment of knowing

Mario is hamming it up in the rowboat. "I know how we can figure out the population," he exalts. "Count the clotheslines!" And to my amazement, clotheslines magically appear - diapers, workmen's overalls, cotton dresses, woolen socks, sheets dancing in the wind.

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notes

¹ I am aware that Come by Chance has a much larger population and is not the isolated outpost we imagined in our role drama. I was captured however by the town's name, reflective of our attempts to create imaginary landscapes.

² not-yet-real describes the imaginary fictitious world created through performance.

³ a space-moment is simultaneously a space of time and place.

⁴ See Applebaum (1995).

⁵ the term "academic performance" was coined by Lee Stothers. See Fels & Stothers (1996).
Stothers is currently studying Japanese no theatre in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.

⁶ The concept of knowledge as "knowing is doing is being" is introduced by Davis and Sumara (1996). I include the word "creating" in their trilogy to embrace our imagining of the not-yet-real which is incorporated in our being, becoming. See Fels 1995.

⁷ See *The Barnart dictionary of etymology* (1988).

⁸ The I and You of the diagram represents the creative social interaction between participants within performance. The space-moment of learning however may be unique to only one of the participants but in the shared remembering may become part of the group mapping. What is "known" in my world(s) may be "unknown" or "not-yet-known" in another's

world(s). The so-called “Real world” is not a universal rendering but speaks to the multiple realities within our experience.

⁹ I hypen realize-recognize to indicate the near simultaneous space-moment of learning which happens when a “new possible world” is realized through performance and recognized (Aha!) by the participant(s). The recognition that occurs through performative inquiry speaks to the social (or personal) mapping of those Aha! moments by the researcher in reflection with participants.

¹⁰ See Felman, S. & Laub, D. (1994). re: Felman’s play on the word responsibility in which she breaks the word into two: response and ability. In the telling of a story where the teller “bears witness”, we must consider the ability of both the teller and listener to respond to the testimony.

¹¹ I wish only at this moment to flag the complicity and responsibility that rides on the shoulders of the performative researcher. The potential dangers of performance for participants and the unexpected repercussions which may erupt are known within the field, particularly within the realm of popular theatre. (See Salverson, 1995). Performative researchers, like researchers in any field, run the risk of interrupting the wellbeing of their participants. Precautions and a mindful awareness must attend all performative inquiry, knowing, even then, risk remains. As Salverson (in conversation, 1996) asks “under what conditions is trust possible? What can researchers offer, what’s beyond his control?”

¹² “Imagining a Pacific Community: Representation and Education”, an international conference, University of British Columbia, April 23-26, 1995. I shan’t go into a lengthy discussion of the experience and the landscape which unfolded--although in performative

inquiry, such a recalling in order to map the journey/landscape realized is a possibility for the researcher-participants--I will simply highlight two moments in which the unexpected absence in my known world was played into being through the performance.

¹³ See “Dancing on Holy Ground: an exploration of drama as a way of coming to know self and other” by Jeanette Scott, unpublished, 1995.

¹⁴ My thanks to Carl Leggo for introducing the idea of “spelling” through his poem Spell Poetry, (unpublished), Vancouver, B.C.

¹⁵ Stothers in conversation, 1995.

¹⁶ See Boal (1995) for his use of the term “spectactors”.

¹⁷ See Complicity, an unpublished paper by Brent Davis and Dennis Sumara, presented at the American Educational Research Association, April 10, 1996 for their discussion on the complicity of the researcher.