

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHridge

TRANSCULTURATING CULTURAL MEMORY IN NATIVE AMERICAN
PERFORMANCE

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright Page	ii
Signature Page	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Abstract	ix
Introduction	1
Native Performance & Theatre Anthropology	3
Chapter 1: NAVAJO RITUAL	10
Male Shooting Way	11
Performance & Transculturation	16
Scenic Bios: Life of the Performer in the Ritual	20
Chapter 2: THE NAVAJO PERFORMER	28
Poetry	31
Scenic Bios: Life of the Performer and the Poetry	35
Oral Version 1	39

Oral Version 2	41
Chapter 3: INTER-TRIBAL PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS	46
Indian Marketplace	48
Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Inter-tribal performance & Education	51
Scenic Bios: Dilated Body	54
Pollen Trail Dancers	56
The Autry Center	63
The Market Place: Dilated Body, Dilated Mind	63
<i>Stand-off at Hwy #37: The Dilated Body – the Bridge</i>	66
– the Dilated Mind	
Conclusion	71
Works Cited	74
Appendix A	78
Appendix B	79
Appendix C	80
Appendix D	81
Glossary	82

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Table listing the location, songs, symbols of Male Shooting Way Ritual	13
2. Table listing items in Medicine Man's pouch	13
3. List of Navajo Dances by Pollen Trail Dancers	58
4. Traditional Dances by Pollen Trail Dancers	59
5. Social Dances by Pollen Trail Dancers	59
6. Southwest Dances by Pollen Trail Dancers	60
7. Inter-tribal Dances by Pollen Trail Dancers	60

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Table
1. Figure depicting inside a ceremonial hoghan	14
2. Photo of replica hoghan	15
3. Photo of Old Town Albuquerque pottery	50
4. Photo of Old Town Albuquerque weaving	50
5. Photo of tourist orientated Old Town Albuquerque	50
6. Photo of tourist orientated Old Town Albuquerque	50
7. Photo of commercial Native American merchandise	51
8. Photo of Native American crafts	51
9. – 12. Photos of the exterior Indian Pueblo Cultural Center	52
13. – 14. Photos of performance space outside Indian Pueblo Cultural Center	53
15. Hoop Dancing Performance	57

ABSTRACT

TRANSCULTURATING CULTURAL MEMORY IN NATIVE AMERICAN PERFORMANCE

By

Neda Mae Armstrong

Master of Arts in Theatre

Theatre practitioner and scholar, Eugenio Barba has spent much of his professional life questioning what is known and asking what is unknown. His instinct to look beyond his cultural norms propelled him and his students to obtain knowledge of other methods and practices; discoveries that would lead to the term, theatre anthropology. Utilizing aspects of Barba's theatre anthropology to examine transculturation of cultural memory in Native American performance, discovery of how performance has changed and evolved among Navajo Indians is analyzed. Barba's research provides a framework that enables analysis of Native American performance, and the effect of transculturation - melding methods and practices not familiar to Native culture. In his book, *The Paper Canoe*, Barba explains, "Historical understanding of theatre and dance is often blocked or rendered superficial because of neglect of the logic of the creative process, because of misunderstandings of the performer's empirical way of thinking, and because of an inability to overcome the confines established for the spectator" (11). This thesis observes and analyzes performance of cultural memory of primarily Navajo performers. This thesis charts the changing methods and techniques that have enabled more Navajo individuals to perform their stories, and have enabled

spectators – Native and non-Native – to experience the stories, dances, songs, crafts and arts by artists who are expressing their unique selves.

In the first chapter, the ritual ceremony, Male Shooting Way, is analyzed; in the second chapter, poet Laura Tohe’s writings and performances are analyzed; in the third chapter, inter-tribal events in the Southwest are researched and analyzed through attendance and participation. The journey of this thesis begins with a holy ceremony, expands slightly to an artist’s work inside and outside her Native community and concludes with an analysis of Native performance taken to a larger and commercialized scale; a journey from the micro to the macro: starting small and intimate, evolving to connect with others and concluding with a look at today’s multi-cultural performance practices that draw spectators and performers of diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Introduction

Vivid blue sky punctured with bright white clouds; the terrain is vast and sparse. Rock formations, cacti and uninhabited landscape convey how ineffective man is: paved highways and road signage cannot diminish the beauty or the fact that the land has existed for thousands of years, and no amount of progress in modern times will harness the desert to conform; to become a friendly and easy landscape to traverse. Within the confines of four sacred mountains, a native people, the Navajo, live and thrive. Stretching across three states – Arizona, New Mexico and Utah – the Navajo people have become one of the most visible native peoples in the United States. Their culture, language, traditions and history thrive because they are storytellers.

North America's original inhabitants have devised, saved and nurtured performance rituals, rites, chants and dances for thousands of years. Curiosity arises when analysis of Native American performance is attempted. The key obstacle of successfully analyzing Native American performance practices is academia's reliance of European theatrical traditions. Birgit Däwes wrote in *Indigenous North American Drama*, "On the other hand, however, this rich and exciting field of American performance is only rarely acknowledged by university curricula, let alone by theatre audiences of the general public" (2). Däwes noted that indigenous drama and performance make up the oldest literary genre in the Americas. The primary means of cultural expression for indigenous people across the North American continent has been storytelling. While there is an abundance of primary sources, scholarship in the field of Native performance has only recently gained momentum (2). With migration and settlement, technological advancements and a drive to explore and conquer lands, the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries brought about transformation of traditions and performance practices. What once was private and isolated for thousands of years soon became inter-tribal and more secular: performance in the form of pow wows, pageants, fairs and scripted plays became popular events for Natives and non-Natives to experience Native culture and performance.

The Navajo Nation is a semi-autonomous indigenous group of people living in the Four Corners region of the United States. The Navajo are considered one of the largest and most involved tribes in North America; three-fourths of the population resides on tribal lands that are in Arizona and New Mexico. The Navajo people total more than 250,000 residents amongst the more than one hundred chapters that exist on tribal lands (*Official Site of the Navajo Nation*). Oil was discovered in the 1920s, which prompted the establishment of a systematic government. In 1991, a council approved the creation of three branches of government: executive, judicial and legislative. The Navajo are known for being artistic and spiritual: sacredness is bestowed upon certain colors and numbers; for example, the number four – the Navajo people live on lands that are bordered by four mountains, and they worship the winds, sun and water. Navajo people express themselves through weaving, song, healing and literature. They are a deeply spiritual people, whose culture focuses on life; death is a topic viewed with caution and rarely spoken of. Many of the inter-tribal events occurring throughout North America have many Navajo participants of various disciplines. Thanks in part to their service as code talkers during World War II, discovery of oil, and the successful implementation of a unified and working government, the Navajo Nation is a thriving and prosperous indigenous community.

My interest in the Navajo stems from my background: I am from the Southwest. My father was born and raised in New Mexico, and through his stories and my grandmother's, I was captured by the land, adventure and beauty of New Mexico. Growing up in the Southwest, I was familiar to Native culture via art, food, music and language. It was not until I began my graduate studies that I narrowed my focus on movement, voice and breath. My goal as a performer has always been to never lose sight of imagination and to convey a story through movement, breath and voice. My tenure in graduate school led me back to where I am from: the Southwest. With an enthusiasm to research a region and people I respect and admire, I found performance practices that held movement, voice, and the beauty of imagination in high regard; all things I also value. The journey to find what is happening outside in the Southwest led me to a journey to discover how a region and a culture has inspired me far deeper than I ever acknowledged to myself.

Native Performance & Theatre Anthropology

Diana Taylor, investigating Latin and Pan American Performance Studies, explored the subject of European bias and transculturation's influence, in *The Archive and the Repertorie: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Taylor observed, "The Eurocentrism and aestheticism of some theatre studies, for example, clash against anthropology's traditional non-Western cultural practices as meaning-making systems. The belief by anthropologists such as Geertz that 'doing ethnography is like trying to read...a manuscript – foreign, faded, full of ellipses' and that culture is an 'acted document' runs up against theatre studies' insistence in everyone's active participation and reaction" (*The Archive and the Repertorie* 12). This example of academia's reliance

on Western frameworks limits the possibilities for exploration and discoveries. European settlers came to North America and intentionally established a system of upheaval and censorship by way of transplanting Natives and issuing laws that forbade full expression of freedom through various cultural practices – performance being the aspect that will be explored in this thesis. Linda Walsh Jenkins and Ed Wapp Jr. wrote an article on Native performance for *The Drama Review*. Jenkins and Wapp observed, “Performance events are carriers of Native American cultural traditions and values. From the earliest European contact into this century, missionary and government efforts have been directed at eliminating performance in order to destroy Indian cultures and effect assimilation of Native peoples into Western customs and religions” (*Native American Performance* 5).

While Taylor’s focus has been Latin and Pan America, and her scholarship looks to the imbalance of a European bias in academia, Jenkins and Wapp similarly see European contact with Native peoples as destructive; the prospects are decidedly bleak, however, one theatre practitioner and scholar (with a European background) has spent the majority of his career learning to honor the spirit of the performer, the performance and the culture. Eugenio Barba, director, theorist and theatre anthropologist, observed in his book, *The Paper Canoe*, that all cultures have fixed events which mark the transition from one stage of a journey to another (1). Barba gradually developed what is referred to as theatre anthropology. Barba’s work delves into cultures, embodied memory, performance and an actor’s truth. “Theatre Anthropology directs its attention to empirical territory in order to trace a path among various specialized disciplines, techniques and aesthetics that deal with performing” (10). Barba’s work looks past the idea of absolutes, and instead looks at individuality and performances. The idea of performance according

to Barba, is to fuse various aspects into levels of organization. Barba lists them as the following:

- (i.) the performer's personality, *her/his* sensitivity, artistic intelligence, social persona: those characteristics which render the individual performer unique and uncopiable;
- (ii.) the particulars of the theatrical traditions and the historical-cultural context through which the performer's unique personality manifests itself;
- (iii.) the use of the body-mind according to extra-daily techniques based on transcultural, recurring principles. These recurring-principles are defined by Theatre Anthropology as the field of pre-expressivity. (10)

Barba puts forward that ethnocentrism observes performance only from the view of the spectator. Barba concludes that can only lead to missing the other half of a performance: the creative process of the individual(s) who perform, and the journey taken to adapt a person to a performance. “Historical understanding of theatre and dance is often blocked or rendered superficial because of neglect of the logic of the creative process, because of misunderstandings of the performer’s empirical way of thinking, and because of an inability to overcome the confines established for the spectator” (11).

Barba set forth in his theatrical career to learn about various cultures and theatrical practices; the goal was never to observe and draw conclusions as a spectator, rather, the mission was to learn something, absorb it, and perform it. Barba’s theatre pedagogy is rooted in the interconnectedness that keeps traditions and cultural memory alive through the generations. To isolate and ignore indigenous performances, because their sacredness

does not hold special meaning to those who are not of the same culture, does a disservice to both the Native and non-Native. Every performer has a unique imprint, and through transculturation, stories survive from one generation to the next.

In 1978, Barba's student actors set forth and evolved idea into action by going out "in search of stimuli" (6). The results led to the definition of theatre anthropology. With returning actors demonstrating everything from a Viennese ballroom dance to India's *kathakali*, Barba saw his actors' obvious transformation in technique displayed in the body and voice.

"...ability to assume a particular skeleton/skin – that is, a particular scenic behaviour, a particular use of the body, a specific technique – and then to remove it. This 'putting on' and 'taking off,' this change from a daily body technique to an extra-daily body technique and from a personal technique to a formalized Asian, Latin American or European technique, forced me to ask myself a series of questions which led me into new territory. (7)

Barba's research as practice, practice as research complements this investigation of a culture's performance memory and how transculturation has been utilized to keep that memory alive; alive in the body of the performer, in the memories of others in the community and to outsiders experiencing cultural performance foreign to their own cultural background and knowledge. An excellent source that will aide this discovery process is Barba's collaboration with Nicola Savarese and their book, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer (2nd Edition)*. Barba and Savarese delve into the field of theatre anthropology, and document its various aspects and how

these observations formed Barba's International School of Theatre Anthropology (ISTA). In the strongest push for transculturation's effectiveness, Barba's introduction provides logic, "The risk of isolation is that purity might have to be paid for with sterility. Those masters who isolate their students in a fortress of rules which, in order to be strong, are not allowed to be relative and are therefore excluded from the usefulness of comparison, certainly preserve the quality of their own art, but they jeopardise its future" (7).

For this thesis, I will examine transculturation of cultural memory in Native American performance. Utilizing the work of theatre researcher and practitioner, Eugenio Barba, and theatre anthropology, this thesis shall examine Navajo rituals in chapter one, an individual Navajo performer in chapter two and contemporary inter-tribal events in chapter three. Eugenio Barba's work looked beyond theories, observed techniques, disciplines and aesthetics, and without prejudice (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 5). This thesis will utilize Barba's term, *scenic bios*, when analyzing various performance practices. Our discoveries will lead us to better understand the evolution of performance of cultural memory in Native performance: from the sacred rituals on reservations to the commercialization of certain performance events.

Scholarly work on Native American performance and transculturation is plentiful, and covers a wide range of topics: inter-tribal collaboration, Native women, Canadian Native tribes, American Native tribes, social issues and education are some of the more high profiles topics researched and analyzed in scholarly books and periodicals. Ann Haugo, associate professor at Illinois State University, has written essays and periodicals on the subject of Native Americans and Performance. Her book *Querying Difference in Theatre History* is a compilation of essays from the Theatre History Symposium of the

Mid-America Theatre Conference; Haugo served as president of the organization. In collaboration with Bowling Green State University Professor, Scott Magelssen, this text offers insight into issues of transculturation and multi-culturation.

Haugo and Magelssen explain, “Terms such as race, ethnicity, otherness, and pluralism are becoming increasingly problematic as we grapple with issues of identity in the ‘post-multicultural’ discursive landscape of the twenty-first century” (2). The essays chosen that form the chapters of their book express doubt and question various aspects of performance, with the intent to question knowledge and generate new knowledge. Julie Pearson-Little Thunder’s essay, *Acts of Transfer: The 1975 and 1976 Productions of “Raven” and “Body Indian” by Red Earth Performing Arts Company* pushes the boundaries of what is known about Native performance and explains how collaboration among tribes, women and other minority groups formed Native performance opportunities that showcased the art of storytelling. “The ability of Native theater to transmit alternative traditions, histories and memories, and share different ways of knowing by means of performance, is one of its great strengths” (Pearson-Little Thunder 125). Pearson-Little Thunder and Haugo are two scholars who have written extensively about Native performance. The crux of much of their research shows that from the late 1960s and through the 1980s, Native plays and other performance pieces were slowly trickling into the public, but were not mainstream. The inter-tribal performance collaborations seen over the last three decades was prompted by the fact that it was impossible to find enough Native performers to participate, so tribes collaborated in order to fully produce productions. Pearson-Little Thunder noted, “Native theater workers

turned to the repertoire – song, dance, gesture and Native habitus – as well as to enactment, to transform textual representations into Indian theatrical space” (115).

Barba’s groundbreaking work that formed theatre anthropology gave scholars like Haugo and Pearson-Little Thunder the flexibility to analyze Native American performance. Embracing the idea of melding and changing methods and techniques raised the visibility of Native performance. Transculturation has raised the profile of Native performance, Native performers and spectators. This thesis will explore various performance practices that illustrate transculturation in effect.

Chapter One: Navajo Ritual

Navajo culture favors beauty; not beauty in the sense of physical attributes, but beauty in spirit. Emphasis on harmony, beauty and balance are found in many Navajo rituals. Sam D. Gill writes in his article, *Prayer as Person: The Performative Force in Navajo Prayer Acts*, about the meaning of ceremonialism in Navajo life. Gill writes about prayer being “magically compulsive” and analyzes why ceremonies have been sustained over generations (144). “The passing of seasons, the cycle of life, and the efforts to subsist seem to take a position in Navajo ceremonialism secondary to exigencies of maintaining health” (144). Illness and other factors hindering a peaceful existence are brought to the attention of a diagnostician, who refers the patient and the patient’s family to a medicine man. Medicine men are singers who keep in their repertoire a very specific – and small – list of songs and chants they are expert in. These songs and chants are performed as part of the healing process. These ceremonies are filled with symbolism via objects, numbers, geography and movement. Louise Lamphere’s article in *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* delves into the inner workings of Navajo ritual. Utilizing Lamphere’s article as a means of obtaining information not readily accessible to an outsider, observations can be made about certain Navajo rituals and in what ways their performances are sustained via transculturation; with help from Barba and Savarese’s in depth tome.

Navajo ritual is organized around chants with heavy use of symbols. Song and symbols are utilized to communicate, transform the body of patients and remove anything toxic or ugly. Navajo performance uses the performer’s body to conceptualize key elements in Navajo life: plants, animals, topography and the universe (Lamphere 280).

Lamphere analyzes and concludes that Navajo ritual replicates the Navajo universe (281). This is a noteworthy aspect of Navajo performance, because it is through action, movement and symbols that Navajo rituals communicate a message. The message Navajo rituals want to convey, in most instances, is a desire to bring balance and harmony to life via these rituals. Barba's framework, aspects that make up theatre anthropology, complements analyzing Native performance, because Barba breaks down semantics and inflexible theatre tradition. "The tendency to make a distinction between dance and theatre, characteristic of our culture, reveals a profound wound, a void with no tradition, which continuously risks drawing the actor towards a denial of the body and the dancer towards virtuosity" (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 10). Taking the advantage theatre anthropology affords this research; Navajo ritual – with all its songs and movement – will be analyzed as performance. To begin with, Louise Lamphere's research into the ritual titled, "Male Shooting Way."

Male Shooting Way

One spiritual ritual, which has been documented, is Louise Lamphere's research in Male Shooting Way. Male Shooting Way is part of an intricate web of chants and rituals regarding the supernatural; there is also a female component referred to as Female Shooting Way Chants (284). In its original, unedited and un-transculturated form, Male Shooting Way is a multiple day event performed in the direction of the supernaturals (the spirits), with the objective to find harmony (284). This particular ritual derives from a myth.

The myth of Male Shooting Way tells of 2 heroes (Holy Young Man and Holy Boy) who experience a series of trials and misfortunes. Various

supernaturals aid them, and the heroes learn a ceremony which can counteract their troubles. Two female counterparts, Holy Young Woman and Holy Girl, play a minor role in some of the incidents. The major incidents of the myth include a visit of both heroes to the Sun, the trip of Holy Young Man to the home of the thunders in the sky, where he learns much of the Shooting Way rituals, an incident in which Holy Boy is swallowed by a fish, and a series of episodes with the Buffalo People.

(Lamphere 285)

The performance space for this particular ritual is the “hoghan,” or house of the patient (286). Close family members are allowed to view the performance of the ritual as spectators, but the rituals and chants are always focused on the individual; not the group (286). “The placement of objects and sequences of actions show that the chant setting itself corresponds to a “map” of the Navajo universe” (286). The performance space is depicted as a circle. Most performances will happen in a sacred space with the sacred number, four, heavily playing into the placement of the patient, performer and movement of the ritual (287). Movement during a ritual is always clockwise, and men and women must sit in opposite directions; women on the north side of the performance space, and men on the south side of the performance space. Male Shooting Way ritual can be narrowed down to three cores that must be accomplished: identification, offering or sacrifice and removal (295). Below is a Chronology of Male Shooting Way, Chant with Prayersticks, as provided by Louise Lamphere in her academic article. The following is, in theatre terms, the script. The goal of this ritual is to bring peace and harmony. The

following table gives a timeline, the names of songs and objects utilized and the symbolic process emphasized.

Table 1. Male Shooting Way: Myth and Songs

Provided by Louise Lamphere, *Symbolic Elements in Navajo Ritual*.

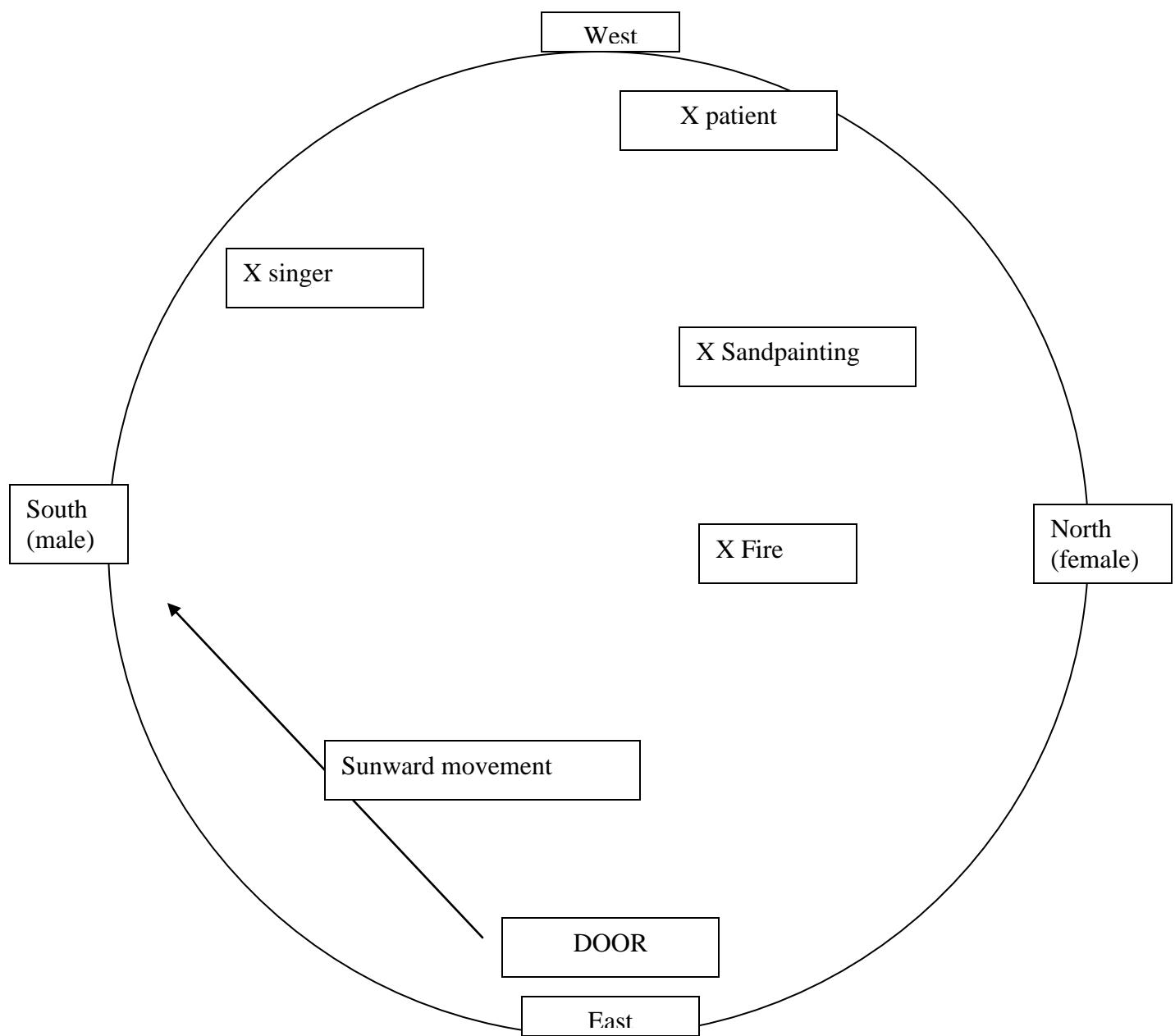
1. Visit to Big Snake and Snake People	Snake Songs (first day, second night)
2. Sky visit	Thunder Songs (second day, third night)
3. Trip with Buffaloes	Buffalo Songs (third day, fourth night)
4. Incidents at the Sun's Home	Sun Songs (fourth day)
5. Holy Boy swallowed by fish	Fish Songs (fifth or last day)

Table 2. Singer's pouch during Male Shooting Way

Provided by Louise Lamphere, *Symbolic Elements in Navajo Ritual*.

4 “wide boards”
4 arrows (tail-feathered, feathered-cane, half-yellow tail, and red-wing arrows)
2 bows
2 smooth canes
4 “talking prayersticks” (representing the sky people, water people, sunlight people, and summer people)
2 “tie-ons”
4 “held to water” plumes
2 medicine stoppers
a whistle, bull-roarer, firedrill, and basket drum

Figure 1. The ceremonial hoghan provided by Louise Lamphere, *Symbolic Elements in Navajo Ritual*



In analyzing Louise Lamphere's figure that clearly depicts the ceremonial hoghan, or to put in theatrical terms – the stage, we see that a male represents South and a female represents North. The door must be to the east, and the patient must be situated on the west side of the hoghan. The singer, who is also the medicine man, is situated to the southwest side of the hoghan (Lamphere 288). In his article, Sam D. Gill observes that mythology informs meaning of ceremonials (145), and as evidenced by the length and detail required to conduct Man Shooting Way ritual, Navajos maintain a strong connection between myth and ceremonials; between myth and performance.



Figure 2. Example of a hoghan: A replica of a hoghan displayed at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Photo Source: Neda Mae Armstrong

Performance & Transculturation

What is performance? Diana Taylor defines, “Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called ‘twice-behaved behavior.’ ‘Performance,’ on one level, constitutes the object/process of analysis in performance studies, that is, the many practices and events – dance, theatre, ritual, political rallies, funerals – that involve theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event-appropriate behaviors” (*The Archive and Repertoire* 3). Taylor explains that performance is framed within an event; it has a clear beginning and end. Further expanding on Taylor’s rubric, performance is an ontological affirmation and a localized one. What one group of people considers a performance might not constitute the term “performance” to other groups of people. Victor Turner wrote in the 1960s and 1970s that, “performances revealed culture’s deepest, truest, and most individual character” (Taylor 4). Turner believed that universality and transparency would foster understanding via performance.

Barba defines, “In an organized performance the performer’s physical and vocal presence is modeled according to principles which are different from those of daily life” (9). These nuanced analyses of what performance is, what it entails and how it can be viewed in various lights to various groups of people aide exploring this research by giving a flexible parameter to work within. The parameter boils down to the following definition for this thesis: performance encompasses memory and history, and is communicated through embodiment.

Taylor’s, Däwes’ and Barba’s conclusions regarding academia’s exclusion of the Americas thrusts the issue of transculturation to the forefront: as Taylor opined,

performance studies necessitates active participation and reaction. The exploration of transculturation in Native American performance is necessary to understand the place of Native Americans in the United States. Native Americans are tasked with the challenges of maintaining their traditions and culture, but they must also make their culture accessible to non-Natives in order to remain a viable and thriving cultural element in the Americas. “Transculturation denotes the transformative process undergone by all societies as they come in contact with and acquire foreign cultural material, whether willingly or unwillingly. Transculturation has been going on forever. But the cross-cultural discussions remain as strained as ever” (Taylor 10).

At the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, Jennie Joe, a Navajo woman, spoke of the changing traditions in Navajo healing. Joe received her Ph.D. from University of California, Berkley, and currently serves as a professor at the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the College of Medicine (DFCM); she is a faculty member of American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona, serves as the director of the National American Research and Training Center (NARTC), has published numerous books and articles and participates in many health related studies. Joe gave a lecture about how Navajo healing rituals have been transculturated from private ceremonies performed on reservations to public hospitals. Joe shared that many hospitals in Arizona, a state with a large Navajo population and lands under the jurisdiction of the Navajo people, were now incorporating Navajo medicine rituals as part of standard health care services in Arizona. Healers perform rituals for Natives and Non-Natives; much like religious services are available to patients and their families, Arizona has now instituted Navajo healers as part of their network of social services for the

mental and emotional health of a patient. The Navajo culture naturally revolves around the concepts of beauty, balance and spirituality. Recognizing possible benefits to patients seeking other options than traditional medicinal practices, Navajo rituals have been adapted as a healing service for those in need.

Thomas J. Csordas wrote an article about a research project Natives and non-Natives conducted. Csordas' article, *The Navajo Healing Project*, examined the therapeutic process in contemporary Navajo religious healing. Csordas notes that the complexity of religion and spirituality and the connection to health care and healing is an obvious example of Navajos walking the line between traditional life and modern, adapted life (463). "Just as Navajos orient themselves geographically within a territory defined by four sacred mountains in a field of vital interaction among four modes of healing: conventional biomedicine, Traditional Navajo healing, Native American Church (NAC) healing, and Navajo Christian faith healing" (463). Joe mentioned in her presentation that many Navajos today are Catholic, because when the Spanish were conquering the Southwest, converting to the religion of the conquerors was a method of survival. According to Dr. Joe, many Navajo are able to practice their Christian faith and their Native spiritual practices without any conflict; many Native American tribes have saints' days, where Christian saints are celebrated with Native celebrations.

Traditional healing is that of the *hataalii*, who performs intricate chants and sandpaintings, and of the diagnostician who works by methods such as hand-trembling, crystal-gazing, or coal-gazing. NAC healing is that of the road man, who prays at his earthen altar or fireplace and administers sacramental peyote. Christian faith healing is that of the independent

Navajo Pentecostal preacher, with his revival meetings and laying on of hands, and of the Catholic Charismatic prayer group, with its communal integration of Navajo and Roman Catholic practices. All of these forms are available on the Navajo reservation, and it is worth emphasizing that Navajos typically distinguish among them as representing three identifiably distinct religious traditions – that is, they are in principle not solely etic categories, the boundaries of which are presumed by analysis but ignored in everyday life. The most vivid recent evidence of this was a ceremony broadcast by the tribal radio station during the drought of 1996, the public symbolism of which highlighted a chanter, a road man, and a minister taking turns offering prayer for rain. (464)

In her presentation titled, *To Use in a Good Way: The Aesthetic Necessities found in Traditional Healing Ceremonies of the Navajos*, Joe spoke of her own background: the daughter and granddaughter of healers, she went to university and attained her Master's and Ph.D. Her work has been in the field of Indian Studies and Family and Community Medicine. Dr. Joe's presentation effectively segued into a discussion of how medicine and social services have evolved in Arizona. As Csordas noted, the intent is not to teach or parrot back what is already known, but to present a different perspective and work to understand healing as a cultural system in contemporary Navajo society (*The Navajo Healing Project* 466). Somewhere along the spectrum, between the sacred, multiple day and night performance that is Male Shooting Way and Arizona's evolving Navajo healing and spiritual services available to all patients, there lies a process that allowed transculturation to occur. For this investigation, Eugenio Barba's theatre anthropology

provides a framework that is accessible for scholars to make the connection between past and present; various embodied memory performances can be analyzed via Barba's scenic bios.

Scenic Bios: Life of the Performer in the Ritual

“‘We have two words,’ the Indian dancer Sanjukta Panigrahi said to me, ‘to describe man’s behaviour: *lokadharmi* stands for behaviour (*dharma*) in daily life (*loka*); *natyadharma* stands for behavior in dance (*natya*)’” (Barba 7). Barba’s intent was to always study and discover similar characteristics and traditions among diverse cultures. Barba states that the way we use our body in daily life is substantially different than the way we use our body in performance. As Barba asserted, “We are not conscious of our daily techniques: we move, we sit, we carry things, we kiss, we agree and disagree with gestures that we believe to be natural but that are in fact culturally determined” (7). Techniques are determined by cultural norms, and in the case of the Navajo ritual, Male Shooting Way, we can look to evidence that educates those not familiar. Already knowing the Navajo place heavy emphasis on spiritual harmony, Male Shooting Way is an ancient and sacred ritual performed to rid a patient of anything deemed “bad” or “ugly.” Scenic bios, or stage presence, of the performers who perform in Male Shooting way, are members of the Navajo community with healing powers; their task is to use dance, song and movement in an exact way. The energy of the healer is that beyond the “extra-daily” life Barba refers to; the state that most people exist in while going about their daily lives.

Barba uses theatre and dance interchangeably. He noted, “The tendency to make a distinction between dance and theatre, characteristic of our culture, reveals a profound wound, a void with no tradition, which continuously risks drawing the actor towards a denial of the body and the dancer towards virtuosity” (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 10). Male Shooting Way, in description, parallels eastern performances practices in discipline and movement; Male Shooting Way is not a Navajo ritual which would strike a non-Native, familiar only to traditional theatre, as anything theatrical. Barba’s scenic bios essentially stage presence. “...one perceives that they are ready, able to act, *on the lookout*. This is *scenic bios, pre-expressivity*, that is, a life ready to be transformed into precise motivations, actions and reactions (223). The performers who participate in Male Shooting Way are the actors, and their roles clearly defined. The ceremonial *hoghan* is the stage, and the map that determines where actors should be in the performance space is as precise as blocking for a many produced plays. The *natyadharmi*, or behavior in dance, of the actors in Male Shooting Way requires the use of extra-daily techniques. Barba believed that extra-daily techniques are movements that “do not respect habitual conditioning;” they go beyond the principles that govern how one sits, stands, walks and gestures in real life (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 7).

Male Shooting Way deals with the supernatural, which already qualifies it as embodied memory that is not readily translatable to healing and health care in modern medicine in the Southwest. However, getting down to the root of Navajo culture, Male Shooting Way is ultimately about ridding one of anything that is “ugly.” Lamphere found scholarly evidence that while Male Shooting Way is tied to dealing with the supernatural and malevolent spirits, mental illness and general illness are the “ugly” referred to. It is

thought that mental illness takes a hold of the patient, and while the Navajo would never say someone is possessed, the goal of the Male Shooting Way ritual is to cast out those demons that haunt the patient (Lamphere 291).

In examining scenic bios, we look first to the performer. Medicine men are singers, and they carry with them pouches that contain the tools they need to perform rituals and ceremonies. Medicine men are the leaders in rituals; their movements and actions dictate the course of events and influence the actions of other participants in the ritual. In Male Shooting Way ritual, we have specific placement of the medicine man and other actors in the ritual; the patient is also an active participant. The performers in this ritual utilize extra-daily techniques to perform tasks that are no all out of the ordinary, but require a focus, concentration and discipline that puts the performer in a place of pre-expressivity. The *natyadharma* of the performers in the Male Shooting Way is precise movements, specific placement in the performance area and a specific order of actions to successfully complete the ritual. While the movements and actions of the medicine man and other performers in a ritual require focus, discipline and specific movements, that does not mean the movement appears grand, obvious or theatrical. “Daily techniques generally follow the principle of less effort: that is, obtaining a maximum result with a minimum expenditure of energy” (Barba 8). All movement is made in a clockwise motion, or in the direction of the sun (Lamphere 288). Barba explains that while a body’s daily techniques enable people to communicate, extra daily techniques inform; the purpose of extra daily techniques is information (Barba 8). Reflecting back to Male Shooting Way, a parallel can be made that all performers of the ritual are in a state of using their body to inform. The information communicated is to educate the sick, educate

close family members allowed to observe the ritual and to educate tribe members of the ritual, so that it will continue to be performed for future generations.

When performing the Male Shooting Way ritual, medicine men incorporate objects in their movements. Objects are used in rituals for the purpose of symbolism and creating a cure for what ails the patient. A medicine man's pouch of objects used for the Male Shooting Way ritual include the following: wide boards, arrows, bows, smooth canes, talking prayersticks, tie-ons, medicine stopper, whistler and basket drum (Lamphere 293). This partial list of objects used is entwined with the supernaturals and myths in Male Shooting Way. The movement in this performance requires what Barba labels a fictive body. A fictive body is not playing emotion or attitude, rather it is the performer – in our case the medicine man – allowing the body to play. In order for the performer to find the body's extra-daily techniques, the body must react to stimuli with physical action; response from the body, not the mind or emotions, is the objective.

What the performer is looking for, in this case, is a fictive body, not a fictive personality. In order to break the automatic responses of daily behavior in the Asian traditions, in ballet, and in Decroux's mime system, each of the body's actions is dramatized by imagining that one is pushing, lifting, touching objects of a determined weight and consistency. This is a psycho-technique which does not attempt to influence the performers' psychic state, but rather their physical state. (Barba 17)

Male Shooting Way is an ideal example of the performer's body taking priority over emotions and words; the story is community through body of the performer, and the cultural memory rests within the body of each performer in Navajo life.

Pressing ('ida 'iiltsood) is done with articles from a singer's **ouch**, particularly the 'wide boards,' arrows, bows, and talking prayersticks. Objects are pressed to body parts in the following ritual order: left sole, right sole, left knee, right knee, breast, back, left palm, right palm, left shoulder, right shoulder, and top of head. Bringing sacred objects derived from the supernaturals into direct contact with the patient's body sanctifies him (makes him *diyin*). (Lamphere 296)

A modern day medicine man, Francis Mitchell was featured in *The Daily Times*. Mitchell, a Navajo born in Gallup, New Mexico, was raised by a Caucasian Christian couple in Ohio. Through coincidence and a strong pull to discover his origins, Mitchell drove through Gallup as a young adult and reconnected with his biological family. While not raised knowing the ways of Navajo life, Mitchell learned about Navajo healing from his biological grandfather. Similar to Dr. Jennie Joe, healing and medicine are gifts passed down from generation-to-generation. Mitchell learned the Navajo language and became well versed in rituals and healing. Today, Mitchell declares himself only the keeper of the spiritual refuge he has constructed in his backyard. Harkening back to rituals similar to Male Shooting Way, Mitchell constructed a sweat lodge on his property. The sweat lodge contains a pit in the center, rugs on the floor and one entrance and exit. Visitors must sing songs before entering, and they must move clockwise when moving about the space. Mitchell shared with the newspaper that the key to Navajo rituals and

ceremonies is improvisation. Mitchell advocates the use of Navajo songs and literature to heal, and that there is no write or wrong way to go about doing it; he emphasizes that purity of the heart and intention to help is enough to guide a spiritual leader (*The Daily Times Online*).

“Theatre anthropology seeks useful direction rather than universal principles. It does not have the humility of a science, but an ambition to uncover knowledge which can be useful to a performer’s work. It does not seek to discover laws, but studies rules of behavior” (Barba *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*). Delving into the Navajo ritual of Male Shooting Way, what is found isn’t scientific evidence of transculturation of cultural memory. “Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing. The bracketing for these performances comes from outside, from the methodological lens that organizes them into an analyzable ‘whole’” (Taylor *The Archive and the Repertorie* 3). With this investigation in Navajo ritual, specifically Male Shooting Way ritual, what is known and unknown does not change. The ideas and embodied performance of Male Shooting Way have not changed. Due to the sacredness of the ritual, academia can provide basic facts about the basic concepts of this ritual. The Navajo have provided what is known. The role of the medicine man, the sacredness of the hoghan and the importance of objects used as symbols are well-recorded facts.

What has been discovered in this investigation is a better understanding of transculturation of cultural memory. Dr. Jennie Joe is a perfect example of a woman with a traditional Navajo upbringing. Dr. Joe descends from healers through her male antecedents. Unable to pursue the path of medicine man, or woman, because of the

restrictions in Navajo society, Dr. Joe pursued her education, and eventually settled in Arizona. Dr. Joe's work through university pedagogy, academic scholarship and work in the medical and social services field have given her an outlet to bring better understanding and advocacy of Navajo healing to Arizona healthcare. Dr. Joe's work crosses cultural familiarity and safety, by reaching out to all patients who wish to pursue a more spiritual component to their healthcare. The Male Shooting Way ritual speaks of supernaturals and ugliness, but to explain in terminology familiar to the non-Native, the Male Shooting Way ritual is actually a ritual meant to rid a patient suffering from mental illness or other diseases of the mind.

Frank Mitchell's journey differs from Dr. Joe's life. Mitchell's story is of a lost son coming home. Frank Mitchell spent his early adulthood re-connecting with a culture he had been removed from. Continuing in the tradition of his grandfather, Mitchell became a healer. His methods are not as strict or rigid as we've learned from academic scholarship of Navajo ritual. Mitchell acknowledges he is different, but defends that Navajo traditions survive as long as the language and culture are not lost. Mitchell is preserving his culture in his own way, and the result is successful: he is a healer and mentor to many in his community. "We natives have our own language, traditional setting. Some tribes have lost their culture, their language to the outside. Songs and language make the difference – the technique stays the same" (*The Daily Times Online*).

Utilizing Eugenio Barba's work that culminated in the term, theatre anthropology, a study of Male Shooting Way is possible. The basic ideas of *scenic bios* – stage presence – allow this thesis to study how the body moves, how the body remembers performance and how performance survives. Echoing Barba's ideas, the body must respond to stimuli,

and the resulting action creates an effective performance. Sustaining a multiple day ritual, with specific actions requires concentration and discipline. Barba's ideas extra-daily techniques in achieving effective *natyadharma* and a fictive body result in a believable and engaging performance. To take heed of Barba's warning that there is no way to copy any performance exactly, to banish ideas of strict pedagogy with inflexible theories narrows the scope of what is performance, what is theatre and doesn't allow for examination of how performance of cultural memory survives. Learning what has been uncovered from Male Shooting Way ritual, and modern Navajo healers today, a conclusion can be drawn that no two performances can exactly be the same, because the life of the performer is unique to the individual. Similar to how no two thumbprints can match, a performance is as unique as the performer; that uniqueness is what keeps rituals like Male Shooting Way relevant. Theatre anthropology provides ideas, tools and multi-cultural perspective that allow the idea of performance to push beyond the traditional ideas of theatre many people have.

Chapter Two: The Navajo performer

Discovering the background of ceremonials, the rituals performed and the chants sung, an understanding of transculturation of cultural memory has been established via Eugenio Barba's work in theatre anthropology. The Navajo have unending stories, ceremonials and poems that have survived generation after generation. Maintaining the sacredness of many of these cultural performance events, certain ceremonials (such as Male Shooting Way) are not performed for the public. Academia only has evidence of these types of performances, because they have observed and researched (with tribe cooperation and permission) for many years. Aspects of Barba's theatre anthropology helped unshed the mystery behind performances occurring on tribal lands and for patients and their families. A connection was made between Native rituals and transculturating the art of healing ceremonies, so that these traditions are carried on for the benefit of the next generation of healers and for the health and well being of the community.

Now, I take a journey away from the idea of community, and examine the individual. With migration, industry, Navajo services in World War II as codetalkers and newer generations seeking education and opportunities off the reservation, this thesis will leave reservation life and strike out into the heart of the Southwest. Since the middle of the last century, many Navajos have left the reservation when they come of age. Arizona and New Mexico have prosperous colleges and universities that educate the next generation of Navajo youth. Opportunities for education, higher paying jobs and adventure, have created busy college towns with booming job markets in cities like Phoenix and Albuquerque. In this chapter, I examine the idea of individual Navajo artists who have struck out in the world, and how they have utilized transculturation when

honing their craft. The reasoning behind each artist's choices is different, but it does not make any of them any less Navajo.

The Navajo worldview originates from the creation stories told to the people. These origin stories are the foundational base of the Navajo society and way of life and are passed down so that the Navajo can have a connection to the Diyin Diné'e. The Navajo worldview translates to Navajo cultural identity. Generally speaking, the stories, values, and beliefs Navajo people are taught at a young age formulate a Navajo person's approach to life. Although the creation stories, values, and beliefs are fairly universal to the Navajo, those interpretations will affect each Navajo individual differently. This difference does not mean that an individual is not Navajo, but rather that the individual is indeed Navajo because he or she molds those beliefs and values into a philosophy that benefits the individual's life. (*Lee, Navajo Cultural Identity: What Can the Navajo Nation Bring to the American Identity Discussion Table?* 81)

Utilizing principles of theatre anthropology, a parallel can be found as to how individual Navajo artists that have struck out on their own have utilized methods that enable an artist to feel they are maintaining their true identity without compromise. In exploring the individual performer, a departure will be taken from the idea of a medicine man performing chants and rituals they have been meticulously trained in; poetry, jewelry and weaving will be examined.

Navajo scholar, Miranda Haskie discusses Navajo culture and achievement in her dissertation, *Preserving a Culture: Practicing the Navajo Principles of Hozho doo K'é*. Haskie's dissertation studied the life of her grandfather, Albert "Chic" Sandoval Jr., who received an education and was elected to the Navajo Tribal Council later in his life. Sandoval lived what scholars call a traditional Navajo life: Sandoval lived on the reservation, led an agrarian lifestyle, spoke Diné and interacted with the Western, non-Native way of life (89). Haskie's work sought to explain how Navajos could practice their cultural identity while living as a minority in society (Lee 81-82). Lee's article, *Navajo Cultural Identity: What Can the Navajo Nation Bring to the American Identity Discussion Table?*, primarily researches the question: how do Navajos practice their culture, when their culture is not dominant? This academic question raises challenges that include: examining who decides what ways cultures practice expression, and does this research teach or demand Navajos express themselves in a certain way? Jane Turner's book, *Eugenio Barba*, is an excellent guide to the uninitiated. In fact, her text is an excellent introduction to Barba as a theatre practitioner and scholar, and her work is most helpful to read before reading Barba's own words on his work and research. Turner writers about Barba's stand on culture, "...Barba is not interested in culture. Although he advocates a theatre that transcends cultural specificity and encourages the development of an identity that is formed from living in the theatre rather than a society, he also celebrates cultural diversity" (23-24). This chapter seeks to find performances that have been transcultured with the intent to preserve cultural memory, but will side step the issues of tribal discourse and academic disagreements. Rather than judge the

development of artistic expression among contemporary Navajo individuals, this chapter seeks to investigate and document the work that is currently generated in the Southwest.

“Navajo society since creation has produced both tangible and intangible products that reflect Navajo culture” (Lee 88). The Navajo area highly adaptable people, and through the years, their ability to adapt has ensured their survival. As Dr. Joe discussed in her workshop at the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities, Navajos have incorporated religion and social practices of conquering people into their own; Catholicism the most high profile example of Navajos adapting religion to fuse with their own ancient beliefs. Looking at the surface, outward appearance and aesthetic preferences have been adapted over the years, as well: Navajo dress, jewelry and other material goods identify the Navajo; the purpose over the generations has been to give the Navajo identity, but also adapt so that young Navajos would recognize and embrace the styles of material goods the Navajo produced (88).

Poetry

Navajo cultural identity is tied to language and worldview. The Navajo have one of the most well documented traditions of written word and oral stories. “Language has become pivotal to the people because everything about Navajo society, such as the prayers, songs, ceremonies, and rituals, is based on how the people interact, analyze, and synthesize the way of life through language” (Lee 93). Paul G. Zolbrod wrote about Navajos and poetry in his epic text, *Diné bahane'*, which gives a complete version of the Navajo creation story. Similar to epic poems, the Navajo creation story is expansive with religious significance. Unlike epic poems, like *The Odyssey*, the Navajo creation story

has no objective or purpose; it is a grand oral story that has been recorded and preserved because the Navajo people are more inclined to collaborate with the outside world than the more conservative and isolated Pueblo tribes.

What initially began as an experiment in text retrieval soon became research of an expanded view of poetry and poetics. Becoming fascinated with studying oral traditions, Zolbrod began conducting research in the southwest in the late 1960s through the 1970s. Untouched by mainstream academia and literary critics, Native American oral history and poetics became a difficult terrain for Zolbrod to navigate. After being rejected by many Pueblos in rural New Mexico, Zolbrod found receptiveness among the Navajo people. “Since its inception well over a century and a half ago, for example, the Bureau of American Ethnology has fostered a great deal of direct research among Indian tribes all over North America and has published numerous transcriptions of prayers, songs and narratives in its numbered bulletins and reports” (Zolbrod 4). Zolbrod found the information available lacking; even revolutionary work done during the last two decades of the nineteenth century were not all encompassing because the work had been piecemealed over time. “They were seldom assembled as an exercise in Native American literary history or in primitive poetics, but these volumes at least indicated that Native Americans everywhere on this continent had traditions not generally acknowledged outside such academic disciplines as folklore, ethnography, or linguistics” (Zolbrod 4). Poetry is one part of the foundation of Navajo storytelling, and in this chapter, individual, contemporary poetry will be explored under the freeing framework of Eugenio Barba’s theatre anthropology.

Utilizing language to create poetry, to create a story, the artistry of an individual performer is created. Building upon the idea of adapting and incorporating Native and non-Native cultures, and applying that practice to the art of poetry, Anthony K. Webster observed in his article, *To All the Former Cats and Stomps of the Navajo Nation*, “Although it may seem obvious, I want to point out that using English does not always irretrievably index ‘colonizing’ ways of speaking, Navajos – and this point is more general, I believe – have not simply been forced to speak English and passively accepted it. Rather, they have engaged with English and actively adapted it” (66).

Webster analyzes the work of poet Laura Tohe. Tohe is a Navajo poet, playwright, librettist and scholar. Growing up on tribal land, Tohe earned her Bachelor’s degree at University of New Mexico, and earned her Master’s and Doctoral degrees from University of Nebraska, Omaha. Tohe studied creative writing, and through academic work was able to express herself artistically via her writings. Tohe has performed her poetry across the United States and abroad. Besides using her poetry to perform solo, Tohe’s published works have been produced by performance companies: her book of poetry, *Making Friends with Water*, was translated into dance and music by The Moving Company of Omaha, Nebraska; her commissioned libretto, *Enemy Slayer: A Navajo Oratorio*, received rave reviews at the Phoenix Symphony’s sixtieth anniversary (*Laura Tohe Website*).

Tohe’s academic and artistic journey differs greatly from the training and performance practices of rituals on Navajo lands. In another example of transculturation, Tohe kept her identity as a Native woman and used that experience and perspective to

experiences inform her work. While her work is not traditional by Navajo performance standards, her work is still Navajo.

Look at individual narrators and their creativity, their style, and how it is socially located. How do we understand Navajo poetry styles? This may be the wrong way to look at this question. A better question might be: What are the styles of individual Navajo poets? One option is the embedding of poetry in storytelling. Another option, treating poems as isolated objects, occurs among younger Navajo poets. These options – or perhaps constraints – are actualized for reasons; that is, individuals have agency; they invoke rhetoric and strategy. Tohe, for example, performs the three versions (one written and two oral) for reasons. Each version is a specific utterance of a creative individual coproduced – certainly – by the audience. I am not interested in constructing some composite narrative of Navajoness; instead, I want to look at specific individual articulations of narratives of Navajoness (*To All the Former Cats and Stomps* Webster 65-66).

Webster establishes in his article that artists, like Laura Tohe, are not betraying their traditions by finding new ways to artistically express themselves. Tohe respects her culture, and has shared with audiences facets of her culture through her poetry and other writings. As Webster asserted, “In other words, we need to take what individuals do seriously and as worthy of investigation – not merely as examples of “derivations” from some putative norm, but rather as assertions of individual creativity” (*To All the Former Cats and Stomps* 67). Webster began recording Navajo poetry as a means to analyze

different performances. Within the community of Navajo poets, some authors are well known to non-Natives, and some poets are only known on the reservation. It's worth noting that the reach and scope of a poet is not related in any way to whether or not the poet lives on tribal lands or a city with a multi-cultural population. Laura Tohe and other Native poets have been published by regional university and small presses (Webster 68). Southwestern universities have many Native professors (Tohe being one of them) that live off the reservation, but conduct research or produce works based on their culture and homeland. The art of poetry is a notable facet of transculturation of contemporary cultural memory, because the Navajo have placed importance on literature for thousands of years; it's a strong argument for why they have continued to survive for generations with many of their stories intact.

Scenic Bios: Life of the Performer and the Poetry

Laura Tohe's first oral performance of her poem, *To All the Former Cats and Stomps*, was at the Native American Music Festival held at Diné College, in Tsaile, Arizona, in 2001 (Webster 69). Tohe had made a connection with the college's music department after she and three other poets had performed an unexpected poetry reading. Navajos young and old attended Tohe's performance at the Native American Music Festival. After that performance, Tohe performed her poem again at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, Arizona. This event differed from her first oral performance, because Tohe was not amongst other writers; the purpose of this event was about bringing writers together and celebrating their works. At this point, Tohe's poetry is performed for the public without the strict ritual rules of Navajo ceremonies, but the

poetry is still performed before very select audiences: Navajos and academics (many of whom are Navajo).

During this tour of oral performances of Tohe's poetry, Webster examines Tohe's style and notes the mechanics of her performances.

...the poem is embedded within a certain performance style and narrative.

It does not appear out of nowhere; rather a narrative is constructed that makes the appearance of the poem seem 'natural.' Lines have been separated based on breath pause and intonation contours. Short pauses mark lines, and longer pauses mark stanzas. There is a general tendency for each new line to begin at a slightly higher pitch and then trend downward and coincide with a breath pause. (70)

In an interview Webster conducted with Tohe, the poet explained that lines in her poetry were segmented by feelings and rhythm. "She responded that lines were segmented by a 'feeling,' a 'sense of rhythm,' 'where to make breaks or pauses,' and an 'artistic sense.' The breaks in lines could be based on pauses 'or on something more, a pause in time, reflection.' The lines breaks in the orthographic version may represent places to pause, but they may also represent something else: a point of reflection or intensification" (70). In an interview found on YouTube, playwright Suzan-Lori Parks discussed language, rhythm and beat with theatre critic and arts columnist, Linda Winer of *Newsday*. Parks commented that "language of the streets" was necessary for her plays, and that street talk was, in fact, public language. Parks responded to skepticism by explaining spectators need to adapt and accept that just because not every word is

understandable, the story is understood; the feelings are still communicated (*Women in Theatre: Suzan-Lori Parks, playwright*).

Webster's investigation and Tohe's poetry aid this thesis in examining transculturation of cultural memory because as Webster asserts: his article is not about Navajo poetry, but about the performances by Laura Tohe of her poetry. Similar to Webster's exploration of Tohe's performances in respect to rhythm, Barba researched rhythm extensively. At the beginning, Barba and his actors participated and executed the same exercises together, with a set understanding of the rules and expectation of what the rhythm would be for the group (*A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology* 276). Upon further exploration, a discussion of organic rhythm was discussed. "We began to talk about organic rhythm, not in the sense of regular beat but of variation, pulsation, like the rhythm of the heart. This perpetual variation, however minute, revealed the existence of a wave of organic reactions that engaged the entire body. Training could only be individual" (Barba 276). Barba's research and conclusions parallel Webster's research and conclusions regarding performance, in this case Laura Tohe's performance of her poetry. Tohe's work is deeply personal: her identity as Navajo informs her writing, provides her opportunity to express herself and between her academic and ancestral background, she has a built in audience. Tohe's Navajo heritage is one of well recorded tradition; however, transculturation in practice allows her to break away from the strict movements, well recorded chants and songs, insistence of use of symbols and other expectations placed upon traditional Navajo performances. "When Laura Tohe performs her poetry, whether it is an oral or written performance, she is using language creatively

and artistically. She is also playing out a tension between the oral traditions of Navajo expressive genres and her own unique creativity” (Webster 84).

Barba’s shattering the myth of technique allows for a much broader definition of performance and technique. Barba found that one must go beyond the idea of the group, and each individual performer must train and find a unique technique. Barba’s research brings him to the idea of voice work. Barba uses a term coined by his mentor and teacher, Jerzy Grotowski, “resonators.”

In Asian theatre training, the student learns entire roles mechanically, with all the vocal nuances, timbres, intonations, exclamations – a complete fabric of sounds perfected through tradition that the actor must repeat precisely in order to gain the approbation of a critical audience. We too began coldy to find a series of timbres, tones and intonations, and exercised them daily. This period of calculated work, of pure ‘technicity,’ seemed to confirm that the hypothesis of the actor-virtuoso was correct.

The effects produced were interesting. (Barba 276)

So, how can one analyze performance of poetry? On the one hand, the rubric for measurement is open to interpretation. On the other hand, what I may determine to be noteworthy may not resonate with someone else. Based on the research of Eugenio Barba, it is reasonable to assume that his research, with its mindset to transition from “learning” to “learning to learn,” is a suitable rubric to discover, explore and draw conclusions. From this, we can analyze Tohe’s performance of poetry through Barba’s findings on actor training. First, we can examine “a decisive phase.”

Barba began what he terms “a decisive phase,” by telling his actors to go their own way, declaring there was no single method. Barba’s instruction took any reference point away from the actor, and in turn, the work became more difficult, but also more personalized (Barba 276). “It is a way of making one’s intentions coherent. If one has to choose to do theatre, one must do it. But one must also shatter the theatre’s framework with all the power of one’s energies and intelligence” (Barba 276). Paralleling Barba’s command to his actors to go outside long held beliefs, Laura Tohe, and her contemporaries, have not abandoned their Navajo tradition, but rather, have explored personalized ways to express their Navajo viewpoints.

What is Tohe’s technique? Webster observes Tohe’s performances and the feelings expressed via her rhythm, breaks or pauses and reflection in the words. Viewing a video online of Tohe’s performing one of her poems, *Female Rain* (Youtube), a few things become apparent to a viewer unfamiliar with Tohe’s work and performance style; she is very still, her voice and breath pause when speaking English and her voice and breath move at a brisk pace when she is speaking Navajo. Below, are two transcriptions by Webster of Tohe’s oral performance of her poem, *To All the Former Cats and Stomps*.

Oral Version One

cat or stomp
the fe: first few days back at the Indian School
after summer vacation
you wore new clothes
Wrangler tight jeans
stitched on the side

and boots if you were lucky enough to have a pair

Tony Lama

Nocona

or Acme

a true stomp listened to country western music

Waylon and George Jones

dying cowboy music

and all that stuff

you wore go-go boots and bell bottoms if you werw a cat

and danced to the Rolling Stones

even if you wore tennis shoes

it was clear which side you were on

every year the smoking Greyhound buses pulled up in front of the old gymnasium

bringing loads of students

fresh off their reservation

dragging mental trunks

train cases

and cardboard boxes precariously tied with string

the word spread quickly

of some new kid from Chinle

[cheering]

or Many Farms

[cheering]

is he a cat or stomp

someone would ask

stomp

[laughter]

and and those with appropriate clothing would get their chance
to dance with him that night

Oral Version Two

To all the former cats and stomps of the Navajo Nation

The first few days back at the Indian school after summer vacation

You wore your new clothes

Wrangler tights jeans stitched on the side

And boots if you were lucky enough to have a pair

Tony Lama Nocona or Acme

A true stomp listened to country western music

Waylon and George Jones

Dying cowboys music and all that stuff

You wore go-go boots and bell bottoms if you were a cat

And danced to the rolling stones

Even if you wore tennis shoes

It was clear which side you were on

Every year the smoking Greyhound buses pulled up in front of the old gymnasium

Bringing loads of students fresh off the reservation

Dragging metal trunks

Train cases and cardboard boxes

Precariously tied with string

The word spread quickly of some new kid from Chinle or Many Farms

[soft laughter]

Is he a cat or stomp

Someone would ask

[laughter]

Stomp

And those with appropriate clothing

Would get their chance to dance with him

Webster breaks down these two oral versions of Tohe's poem, along with the written version, as well. Webster's article finds the nuances in Tohe's spoken words, how they change and shift depending on audience and revealing how audiences become active partners in Tohe's performances. These discoveries form a line, a connection, to Barba's view of technique – of learning to learn – by giving a real life example of an artist, Laura Tohe, breaking away from her culture's rules and traditions of performance and creating a new method to express herself.

Webster first notes the difference in lines and capitalization between the two oral performances. The first oral performance is structured based on pause length. The first oral version contains thirty-five lines and the second oral version contains twenty-five. The second oral version's shorter length is attributed to Tohe's change in intonation, pause and breath (Webster 74). While Tohe's first oral version more closely resembles her written version of this poem, her second version shifts meaning and intent. As Webster explains, depending on the audience, Tohe will shift the perspective of her poems; "we" versus "you;" the idea of "the other." Webster cites this shift in perspective as one example of the audience aiding to adjust the performance of a poem (76). The setting and audience play an important role in the performance's outcome.

The differences in the number of lines between the two oral versions can be connected, in some measure, to the format of the two performances. As I pointed out above, the first oral performance occurred outdoors at the Native American Music Festival. Tohe, who was an assistant professor at Arizona State University, had been asked by a student organization to perform her poetry at the festival. The setting was relatively informal.

(Webster 77)

Webster finds tension in Tohe's writings is resolved through performance. "In the oral performance the tension is created after *shoes* and is resolved with *It was clear which side you were on*. The former creates tension in a medial position of the utterance, while in the latter a full thought (clause) is the resolution of the tension" (Webster 75). Further delving into tension in writing and release via performance, Webster notes a parallelism of beats, with each line consisting of four beats and creating a specific rhythm. "It appears that the oral versions are more 'aural-friendly,' allowing the listener to process more complete units" (Webster 76).

Looking at two oral performances of a poem, performed by the same actor, the differences in rhythm and beat are the only facets that set the two poems miles apart. As Webster observes, the audience for both those performances were very different; one was relaxed and open to all and the other was largely an academic exercise. Eugenio Barba asked that his actors take on a "decisive phase:" to go their own way and find their own method. Laura Tohe, left the Navajo reservation lands and struck out an artistic and academic life in the southwest. Her identity is Navajo. While her artistic expression does not resemble any sort of ceremony as intense and rigid as the multiple-day Male Shooting

Way, Tohe is Navajo and her work reflects her Navajo culture. No two performances are ever the same, and Tohe's performance of her poem, shows how she has shifted her presentation on two specific occasions. Webster investigates and makes notes of the changes and possible causes: primarily allowing for interaction with audience, changing perspective based on the audience demographic (example: referring to "you" and referring to "we;" the latter creating a bond between performer and spectators) and changing emphasis of words (example: the line second oral version blends three brand names into one line, *Tony Lama Nocona or Acme*, is very different than the individual lines each word has in the first oral version, *Tony Lama/Nocona/or Acme*. Webster classifies Tohe's form off performance as "speech play" (80). Her poetry and her performances are aesthetically pleasing – to Natives and non-Natives. Tohe's work has been produced beyond small performances spaces that primarily draw Natives as audience members: her libretto was commissioned by Phoenix Symphony for its sixtieth anniversary; proof that her artistry has reached beyond people of her own culture and has propelled her work as an accurate depiction of what it means to be artistic, Native and southwestern.

Finally, in these performances (oral and written), much of the identity work, the evocation of history, is done by Tohe through the localizing of the poem. In Tohe's performance we see that when poetry is a kind of storytelling, when it is emotionally expressive uses of language, and when it is shared, felt attachments to aesthetic forms, nostalgia for a prior here and now can be evoked. (Webster 85)

Utilizing one contemporary Navajo artist's work, this thesis finds through poetry, an ability to chart a performer's abandonment of any rules or structure, and forming a style and method all her own. As Barba advocated in his text, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, actors must abandon the myth of technique, and instead, an actor must enter a decisive phase; entering a period of self-discovery and finding a personal method of performance that is personal, vulnerable and effective for the actor to communicate the story.

Chapter Three: Inter-tribal Performances and Events

In the late 1800s, the Fred Harvey Company prospered in the West. With its headquarters in Kansas, the company ventured further West into the territories. Laura Jane Moore acknowledges the popular opinion the Fred Harvey Company “invented” the Southwest as “America’s Orient,” in her article, *Elle Meets the President: Weaving Navajo Culture and Commerce in the Southwestern Tourist Industry (Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies 22)*. Over the course of generations, from ancient ceremonies like “Male Shooting Way,” to the contemporary performances of poets like Laura Tohe, there came a period of great prosperity and transition to the Southwest. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, settlers like Fred Harvey, of the Fred Harvey Company, worked hard to create business opportunities; the intent was to make money by convincing outsiders that the unfamiliar land was safe, and it was an opportunity for politicians and others who wanted to see the territories join the Union.

In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt stopped in Albuquerque, New Mexico, conducting a speaking tour through the western territories. A Navajo woman, Elle, was chosen by the Commercial Club to present President Roosevelt with a gift. Elle was commissioned to weave a design created by The Commercial Club, and created a blanket hand-spun in red, white and blue yarn.

Although her own thoughts were apparently ‘beyond expression,’ Elle’s image spoke volumes to turn-of-the century Americans, showing New Mexico as not only conquered but commercialized, safe for investment and safe for statehood. Indeed, Commercial Club members orchestrated

this performance as part of a statehood campaign, a drive for integration into the social, economic, and political life of the United States, an effort that would not pay off for nearly ten more years. (21)

In this brief glimpse of the president of the United States encountering the west, insight can be gleaned from the dynamics of all the players involved. Elle was a Navajo woman, who lived a traditional life on the reservation. Successfully selling her crafts provided her and her husband to spend more time in Albuquerque, which was a bustling city with a train stop that deposited visitors, businessmen and politicians to an untamed region with money to be made for those with ambition. President Roosevelt, in this story, played the part of tourist. The president's encounter with Elle, while calculated and planned, was a demonstration to the rest of America that the Southwest had much to offer. The president was conversing with a Native and the stops the railway made in the western territories were excellent destinations for Americans to visit and make money.

The last player in this story, in this scenario to introduce Americans to the West, is the business owner. Fred Harvey was a man from England, who came to the United States and opened his first restaurant in Topeka, Kansas in 1876 (Moore 22). Harvey planted the seeds for what would become the mythology of the West; Western cinema, to Native performances, to craft fairs and pow-wows, Harvey set out to make money by turning the Southwest into a tourist attraction. The unintended consequence has been generations of adjustment, eventual cooperation, commercialization and transculturation of cultural memory. This chapter will observe present day theatrical events, and analyze how Eugenio Barba's ideas about the *dilated body* is a complementary framework to look at the vast, diverse, inter-tribal and inter-cultural performance events in the Southwest.

The Indian Marketplace

Minnie Harvey Huckel, the daughter of Fred Harvey, was an avid Indian art collector, and Fred Harvey's wealth enabled Minnie to turn a hobby into a profitable business. The Fred Harvey Company had a new hotel in Albuquerque, Alvarado, which displayed Indian art at Minnie Harvey Huckel's prompting. This innocent start led to her husband, J.F. Huckel, a vice president at The Fred Harvey Company, to eventually create and develop the Fred Harvey Indian Department (Moore 22-23). The transition from hobby to business was in large part to the connection the Huckels' had to German immigrant, Herman Schweizer. Schweizer arrived in the Southwest in the 1880s, and began buying and selling Navajo arts and crafts as a source of supplementary income. Schweizer's knowledge of silver, turquoise and crafts aided the Huckels in amassing a large and valuable collection of Indian jewelry, arts and crafts. The success of the Huckels led architect, Mary Colter, to help design the Indian Building at the Alvarado, and create stage space for art to be shared and performed. "Colter was an important force in developing a regional architectural style inspired by local, native design – spaces for the "staged authenticity" that became fundamental to southwestern tourism, and spaces designed for commercial transactions that also offered a seemingly behind-the-scenes view of Indian home life" (Moore 23).

The influx of settlers, Fred Harvey opening restaurants requiring employees and a push by businessmen and politicians to settle in the western territories, the West was becoming a reality for many people, thanks in large part to the railroad. Americans from the east and immigrants were arriving at a destination that had an indigenous culture, and those with a vision to make money were finding ways to incorporate Native American art

into its tourist industry. “Much recent scholarship has explored the elevation of Indian imagery in this period, even as Native Americans remained culturally, politically, and economically marginalized. Indian artisans were central figures in the invention of the Southwest” (Moore 23).

Native American arts and crafts can today be found in shops, at fairs and on the street. The value of these items is always cheaper when sold independently. Through my travels, I have encountered different instances of the Indian Marketplace. My first encounter was in Old Town Albuquerque, a place that seems frozen in time. The center of Old Town is its vibrant square: old buildings that house restaurants, gift shops and hotels surround an historical gazebo. Stepping into any one of the shops with an inventory that ranges from knick-knacks to intricate, there’s an endless supply of Western material to be bought; for display, for wearing, for playing the part of the cowboy. I visited many of these shops during my time in Old Town Albuquerque, but it was the impromptu marketplace outside that caught my eye. Outside these very quaint and tourist friendly shops, Native American men and women sat outside and were selling and making their own pieces. Their displays were small, and their prices were reasonable; a bargain compared to what turquoise, silver, paintings or leather boots cost inside any of the stores in Old Town.



Figures 3. and 4. Old Town Charm: (L) A pottery store and (R) examples of hand woven rugs for sale Photo Source: Neda Mae Armstrong.



Figures 5. and 6. Tourist Charm: Two examples of shops for tourists in Old Town Albuquerque Photo Source: Neda Mae Armstrong.



Figures 7. and 8. Commercial and Authentic: A Native American statue (L) for sale in a gift shop (not Native crafted) and Native American (R) craftsmen and jewelers selling their own art pieces in Old Town Albuquerque Photo Source: Neda Mae Armstrong.

Indian Pueblo Cultural Center: Inter-tribal Performance and Education

In August of 1976, the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center opened in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The non-profit organization is a museum, performance arts center and arts school, showcasing Native American culture of the nineteen Pueblo tribes of New Mexico. The mission statement of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center is, “To preserve and perpetuate Pueblo culture and to advance understanding by presenting with dignity and respect, the accomplishments and evolving history of the Pueblo people of New Mexico” (*Indian Pueblo Cultural Center*). The Navajo are represented via performances and museum exhibits; often times, Navajo performers are performing dances that are culturally melded: it is not uncommon to see dances of two tribes artistically collaborated into one vision. The Indian Pueblo Cultural center is an invaluable source, and an excellent place to see transculturation in effect; there is much collaboration among tribes.

Due to strict rules asking for respect, videos and photos are not easy to locate. In the museum wing of the Center, photography is not allowed with the intent of preserving the antique textiles; in a performance situation, photography is either not possible because of cultural respect, or the performance is no different than a theatre that has produced a play and photography is inappropriate.



Figures 9. – 12. Indian Pueblo Cultural Center: Murals on the walls in the outside courtyard (top) and the view from the courtyard (bottom). A circle performance space,

there is a circle in the center for performances, with chairs lined up around the perimeter of the circle for spectators to sit and watch. Photo Source: Neda Mae Armstrong.



Figures 13. and 14. Performance: A view of a performance in progress (R) and view from above of the entire performance area at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center (L). Photo Source: Indian Pueblo Cultural Center Facebook Page.

When viewing performances at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, what is seen is a positive and successful transculturation of cultural memory. Cultural memory in this sense consists of stories, myths, traditions performed in the context of a dance, chant or original piece of theatre. Many performers have official representation, as they travel around to various performance venues; performance and merchandise sales go hand-in-hand when referring to the professional performers who are represented with Native talent agents. For those who perform as a means to express their culture, the performances are usually a blend of two cultures. Joe Tohannie Junior's artistic expression is one such example of melding cultures. A man of both Apache and Navajo lineage, Tohannie learned the performative aspects of the Navajo from his father, who

taught him the ways of the Navajo medicine men. Tohannie's grandfather was a medicine man from the Apache tribe, and from him, he learned the song and performance styles of the Apache (Teasyatwho-Henry *Indian Pueblo Cultural Center*). Cherileen Teasyatwho-Henry's profile of Joe Tohannie Junior on the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center's website states that Tohannie sought to respectfully blend his two cultures in order to find harmony in his heart and artistic expression. While Teasyatwho-Henry states that Tohannie is the first to attempt this, observations at other inter-tribal events will show that other performers are doing the same thing in an effort to connect with non-Native and uninformed Native audiences.

Scenic Bios: Dilated Body

In analyzing one brief example of dances at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, I arrive to one of Eugenio Barba's most freeing term in the apparatus that is theatre anthropology: *dilated body*. Utilizing this term, I find it possible to analyze contemporary instances of Navajo performance that has transcultured cultural memory with the intent to share with Natives and non-Natives. Barba's explanation deviates from science or structure, but instead, poses that those involved in art expand beyond what one may understand about performer's presence, energy and flow.

The dilated body is a hot body, but not in the emotional or sentimental sense. Feeling and emotion are only a sequence, for both the performer and the spectator. The dilated body is above all a glowing body, in the scientific sense of the term: the particles that make up daily behaviour have been excited and produce more energy, they have undergone an

increment of motion, they move further apart, attract and oppose each other with more force, in a restricted or expanded space. (Barba 52-53)

Barba explains that body-in-life entails more than being alive. Anyone familiar with any type of performance knows that there is so much more than breathing, existing and following movement or vocally expressing one's self. Barba discusses that certain aspects we can't define, nor can we copy it; the magic lies somewhere between the performer and the spectator: the spectators don't know why they like it or are drawn to it, they just are. Barba's real life example drives from his time researching and working in Asia. Barba explains that when a Western spectator watches an Asian actor or dancer perform, and that spectator has no knowledge of the cultural or scenic conventions, it's understandable and expected that the spectator would feel confused, in the dark and not able to grasp the significance of what has been performed. What makes the performance viable, what is not lost in the communication between the performer and spectator, is that the performer has caught the attention of the spectator. Barba explains that the spectator has been seduced in a way that precedes intellectual understanding (52). Diana Taylor's writings in *The Archive and the Repertoire* support Barba's observations, "Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing. The bracketing for these performances comes from outside, from the methodological lens that organizes them into an analyzable 'whole'" (33). Similar to Suzan Lori Parks' usage of street language and beats in her writing, Barba's research and Taylor's research prove that comprehension and mastery is not required of the spectator to form a connection with the performer, performance and story unfolding on stage.

Pollen Trail Dancers

Observing via video posted online of the Pollen Trail Dancers during a short snippet of their performance on YouTube, one can see Barba's idea of the dilated body in effect in the performers while performing the Navajo Basket Dance. The Pollen Trail Dancers is an organization that operates out of Arizona. The group performs professionally for public venues, schools, conducts art classes, sells merchandise and has an artist in residency program. The Navajo Basket Dance is part of the repertoire of dances and songs the group performs. When perusing their website, the group explains that their goal is to be independent and self-reliant. "We work diligently with family and friends to strive to be self-sufficient, self-reliant and independent. We are driven by our passion to work with creativity in sharing the blessings of the Native American spirit. Our work specializes in consulting Native American music, dance, art, tradition and culture" (*ChasingWind Cultural Consulting*).



Figure 15. Hoop Dance: Pollen Trail Dancers performing a Hoop Dance. Hoop Dances is the one dance that is allowed to be performed at any venue. Photo Source: *ChasingWind Cultural Consulting*.

The Pollen Dancers are definitely a commercial endeavor. The group is seeking to educate and express their culture via artistic expression, but their objective is to do this as a way to remain self-reliant and independent. Their website is open and transparent to what they do. An extensive guide to what services they offer is available with explanations as to what each performance means, with guidance as to what performances are appropriate for certain venues based on the sacredness of the performances.

Repertoire of Performance by the Pollen Trail Dancers

(Source: *ChasingWind Cultural Consulting* website)

Table 3. Navajo Dances

Storytelling Dances
1. Bow & Arrow Dance - Story of the hunting days of the Navajo also used as protection.
2. Maiden (Corn Grinding) - Teaches of the Navajo women's task and role in survival skill of the people
3. Holy People (Four Direction) - Inspired by the four directional spiritual teaches of Hozhooji or Blessing Way.
4. Sash/ Rug Dance (Weaving) - Spider Woman's teaching to Navajo people of Weaving.
5. Cane Dance (Long Walk) - Story act of the Long Walk or removal of the people from their homeland, Dine' Tah.

Table 4. Traditional Dances

1. Basket Dance - Story of the important role of the basket in Navajo Life, and it's spiritual role in all Navajo lifeways.
2. Ribbion Dance - One of the winter dances performed in the Fire Dance, a very colorful dance.
3. Feather Dance - Feathers play an important role in ceremonial life of the people, the feathers are prayer items.
4. Buffalo Dance - Part of the Fire Dance, the buffalos important role in spiritual, livelihood and role in the nomadic days of the Navajo People.

Table 5. Social Dances

1. Two Step Dance - A partner dance performed in the warm season.
2. Skip Dance - A partner dance performed in the warm season.
3. Spinning Dance - A partner dance performed in the warm season
4. Round Dance - A friendship dance resembling a victory dance.

Table 6. Southwest Dances

1. Turkey Dance - Inspired by the Zuni Turkey Dance, although the turkey plays an important role in the Navajo culture.
2. Eagle Dance - A popular dance in the Southwest regions of the USA. The dance is influence and performed in a pueblo style.
3. Hoop Dance - Hoops are important in most Southwest tribe, they are used in many different ways such as social or ceremonial.
4. Apache Dance - Cousins to the Navajo, we honor the people with social dance style from the Apache. Not Masked Dancing (Gaan).

Table 7. Inter-tribal Dances

1. Men's Northern Traditional Dance - All Pow-Wow dances influenced from the Northern and Southern Plains Indians.
2. Men's Southern Traditional Dance.
3. Grass Dance - Personally influence from the Anishinabe, or Ojibway family.
4. Jingle Dress Dance - Personally influence by Ojibway family.
5. Fancy Shawl Dance
6. Women's Northern & Southern Traditional Dances

The performance of the Basket Dance, recorded in a one-minute and eighteen second video by the Pollen Dancers themselves, showcases the basic idea of the dance. Intended to convey the importance of baskets, which are woven by women, and how it is an important spiritual component of Navajo life is a perfect example of Barba's example of a performance that is not understood among non-Native spectators, but the essence of the performance hooks in the spectator; people are drawn to the colors, sounds, movement and essence of the performers.

The Basket Dance was performed in what looks to be a plaza area, possibly a civic center. The performance took place in a circular area. The different shading of the tiled ground gave a natural border to the stage dimension, and the spectators congregated along benches around this circle. Off camera was a Navajo gentleman who sung a chant while the dance was performed by five dancers; drumming accompanied the chant and dance, but it was not clear by the video if the chanter was also the drummer. During the performance, the dancers stomped, traveled in clockwise circles and made large, round, flowing movements with their arms while holding baskets. The chimes and bells attached to their handmade clothing clinked in tune with the drumming and the chanting. The dancers had a uniformity that followed the beat of the chant and drums, so that the performers were one cohesive unit, not five individuals expressing themselves individually. The dancers were all conveying the same message of sacredness of the basket, and were working in tandem.

We often call this performer's power 'presence.' But it is not something which *is*, which is *there* in front of us. It is continuous mutation, growth taking place before our very eyes. It is a body-in-life. The flow of energies

that characterise our daily behaviour has been re-routed. The tensions that secretly govern our normal way of being physically present come to the surface in the performer, become visible, unexpectedly. (Barba 52)

In the performance of the Basket Dance, the performers let go of the way they must move in daily life. Like Barba said, something powerful comes from being physically present; it is unexpected. Diana Taylor noted that anthropologists, like Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, wrote about individuals who became agents of change in their art. Taylor opined, “Humans do not simply adapt to systems. They shape them” (*The Archive and the Repertoire* 7). In the video of the Basket Dance, the performers develop unity in time with the chanting and drumming. The effect is a powerful stillness during the performance. The audience is hooked into the dance unfolding before their eyes. I, personally, witnessed multiple dances accompanied by chanting and drumming. As a spectator, your attention is not pulled to one person; your attention is focused on the energy created in collaboration before your eyes: collaboration between the dancers, singer and drummer (if the singer and drummer are not the same person). It’s important to note that while analysis of the Blanket Dance is possible because the Pollen Trail Dancers recorded it, it is easy to see in the video that the spectators do not record the dance. Just as an audience member would not take out their phone and record a performance of *Death of a Salesman*, in this situation and in every situation I found myself a spectator, observation was respectful; any note-taking for this chapter of live performances was done either during intermission or immediately following the performance.

The Autry Center

The Autry National Center of the American West is an excellent resource for anyone interested in Native culture and performance, and Inter-tribal Native culture and performance. The Autry Center is Eugenio Barba's theatre anthropology in physical form: it is a museum, gallery and theatre that communicates the past and present; it's a place that allows Native artists of mixed heritage to display their blended and transcultured art to Natives and non-Natives. The Autry Center is located in Los Angeles, at Griffith Park, and has over half a million pieces of art and artifacts. The spacious facilities include: Southwest Museum of the American Indian, two research libraries, exhibitions, public programs and K-12 educational services. The Autry Center's mission statement is as follows, "The Autry brings together the stories of all peoples of the American West, connecting the past with the present to inspire our shared future" (*The Autry Center* website). It was at the Autry Center, I attended two events: the famous American Indian Arts Marketplace and the new play, *Stand-off at Hwy #37*. These two cultural events are examples of inter-tribal collaboration, commercial success among craftsmen and craftswomen, dancers, actors and playwrights. The Autry Center's purpose is to explore and share stories (cultural memory), and the Autry takes pride being the only museum devoted to Western history and culture; multiple Native American perspectives and Western history is combined.

The Market Place: Dilated Body, Dilated Mind

Traveling along Interstate 5 the weekend of the American Indian Arts Marketplace, the most obvious thing I noticed was all the out of state plates on the

freeway. License plates from New Mexico, Arizona, Montana, Alaska and British Columbia all made their way towards the Autry Center. Upon arrival, the magnitude of this event for Natives and non-Native, who are either from the Southwest or are enthusiasts of Western culture, became suddenly clear to me. This yearly event is a cultural tradition for Natives and non-Natives near and far. This did not surprise me only because I have attended Hoop Dancing Festivals in Nevada, and many of the spectators were from states west of the Mississippi River. Inter-tribal events, especially events that have aspects of Western cowboy culture, are very popular. Attendance is usually high, and the art displayed and sold is high end. The art displayed at the Autry Center this particular weekend was no different than my previous experiences.

My first activity at the Marketplace was to walk through the various displays. Just as with Old Town Albuquerque, the art for sale is handcrafted and very expensive. The only aspect of this display that resembled the outside of Old Town Albuquerque was the demonstrations some artists performed in their area. While the prices for everything were sky high, like the tourist shops, there were performances occurring in certain stalls. These performances were less formal in nature; if they had to be classified as any type of performance, improvisation would be the most accurate description of what was happening. The weavers, glass blowers, designers and painters would perform their art and engage with their audience. Sacred symbols were discussed and spectators had the ability to step beyond observation and were allowed to ask questions and in some instances take pictures.

From late morning to early afternoon, performances of dances and songs took place in an open area inside the museum area of the Autry Center. The performance area

was constructed into a three-quarters stage scenario, with audiences on three sides, four rows deep. At either one hour or forty-five minute intervals, Native American performers would perform songs and dances for spectators there were both Native and non-Native. The most interesting aspect of these performances was the fact this was the first time I personally was audience to Native performance that melded different Native tribes' performance practices to create a performance piece. Performers of mixed heritage, either of two or more tribes or bi-racial with one Native parent and one Caucasian parent, were performing truncated versions of sacred dances. Sometimes, some performers were giving examples of dances native to their region, but not necessarily of their tribe. On this particular day of the weekend Marketplace, the Grassland Dance of the Omaha and the Rabbit Dance of the Comanche were performed. In watching these two dances performed, it was easy to stay engaged because the dances were short examples of a larger ceremony; the dances felt more like a preview or an introduction. As with many Native performances, photography and videography was not permitted. Both these dances had two performers: a singer (male) and a dancer (female). The female held objects to symbolize the importance of the dances, while the singer stayed rooted to his spot and created the drumming that set the pace of the dance.

Achieving a *dilated body* goes beyond the physical. The energy of daily life must be re-routed, in order to not obtain the same result. Barba explains that everything from posture to costume, from facial expression to freedom of the body contribute to a dilated state. In these two instances, these short versions of the Grassland Dance and the Rabbit Dance effectively communicated to the attentive audience because the performers made a connection with the audience. Applying transculturation to the content of the dances by

editing them, the performers also communicated via their bodies – measured movements by the female dancer and stillness from the male singer – the tone and sacredness of the performance they were sharing. The performers were in traditional dress, and with the bells and ribbons attached to the female dancer, the arms extending frequently out in the space created a soft, melodic noise that accompanied the strong, deep drumming that the singer chanted to. The wide, slow, long arm movement, the precise stomping of the feet and the ramrod straight posture of the singer conveyed a very symmetrical and purposeful body. There was a beauty in the performance that conveyed the importance of the dance, via transculturation the performers were able to effectively share an important part of Native culture; melding various practices and techniques created an entirely new performance, but conveyed the same feelings traditional performances are meant to convey.

Stand-off at Hwy #37: The Dilated Body-the Bridge-the Dilated Mind

Traversing the various performance aspects of Navajo cultural memory and how transculturation has been utilized for preservation of culture, financial gain and autonomy, we arrive to another form of artistic expression: theatre. The Autry Center has been committed to producing plays by Native playwrights and recruiting professional actors, directors and dramaturges to work on world premieres. The Autry holds the Festival of New Plays every year with staged readings of plays in progress and monetary awards bestowed upon works deemed worthy of recognition and support to produce the piece.

This year, I attended the opening weekend of a new work titled, *Stand-off at Hwy #37*. The play was part of the Native Voices project and had a cast and crew of Natives from different tribes. The story revolves around tensions in upstate New York and a small town's tension with the Haudenosaunee reservation. A National Guardsmen of Tuscarora lineage is caught between two worlds: obey the United States military and engaging with peaceful Native protesters, or following his heart and aiding his fellow Native people who are in danger of losing land on their reservation under the guise of the greater good.

Vickie Ramirez, who is of Tuscarora heritage, penned the play. Ramirez's work has been produced regionally and her work reflects her experience as a Native American. The play is filled with history and exposition, with the art of storytelling displayed by each of the characters. The writing and acting were effective, and the direction was excellent; the story clipped at a brisk pace and had a valuable amount of tension, drama and humor. The play's success wasn't in its production elements, but in the feelings it generated in the audience. To analyze and find answers when dissecting a subjective medium like theatre, Barba's ideas of a *dilated body* and *dilated mind* give a flexible framework to analyze a performance that is unfamiliar and not in a spectator's cultural memory. Using *Stand-off at Hwy #37* as an example, we can trace how the elements of production utilize *dilated body*, employ the use of *the bridge* and accomplish a *dilated mind*.

Barba states in his text, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*, that a performer, whether they are starting from the physical or mental, transition from one to the other and form a unity between the mind and body. As a spectator to the emotionally charged production, it is with the lense of *dilated body* and *dilated mind* that an analysis of the

feelings evoked can be understood. To begin with, I begin with the dilated body. As Barba expressed, simply existing onstage is not the same as being in action, of containing energy in your body and have that energy follow through your body. Barba talks in terms of having a “hot body” or a “glowing body” (53). As a spectator, the dilated bodies of the performers could be found in their stances, in their movement and their economy of movement.

One aspect of contemporary theatre in the United States is a focus on playing attitudes, rather than playing emotion. This observation is subjective, and similar to many of Barba’s academic findings and framework there is no scientific data to determine what is emotionally effective. It is well known that acting pedagogy in America is centered on technique. Barba’s theatre anthropology aims to form a connection between audience and performer through the expression of the body, mind and voice. The techniques and methodologies of Stanislavski, his Method and emphasis on the mind, is the opposite of what Barba’s theatre anthropology can offer theatre performance: it is all inclusive and actively engages the mind, body, voice and individuality of the performer. Barba’s theatre anthropology provides a framework for cultural expression to be analyzed.

During this production of *Stand-off at Hwy #37*, the expressiveness of the Native characters – the kindly older woman with a steely resolve and, angry younger characters – conveyed the various periods of transformation of artistic expression in the Native community. For example, the older character, Aunt Bev, held within herself stoicism. The character represents the past; a character that would understand the importance of ceremonies, like Male Shooting Way. The actress portraying Aunt Bev bridges the elements of *dilated body* and *dilated mind* by tapping into silence and stillness. At the

play's start, Aunt Bev is kindly and polite, but beneath the surface there is a steeliness to her that will not allow her to budge from her protest. As the play progressed, the character that was introduced to the audience as the kindly older woman who followed the old ways became a complex woman who communicated to the younger Natives and the non-Native characters via storytelling. In those instances, the character began moving in soft, sweeping movement; her long skirt, silver jewelry and boots moved with every movement in a way that resembled a Native American dance accompanied by soft music. The actress physically changed, and what allowed that change to occur was her dialogue and blocking, which required her to change the life in her body.

LaVonna Rae Andrews played the role of Aunt Bev with an emotional and physical vulnerability. The vulnerability reaches the spectators, because it's her character's journey through the story that unifies the other characters of the play: from the young, angry Native young people to the culturally uninformed non-Native characters. The Italian theatre dramaturg and professor, Franco Ruffini, wrote about the *Dilated Mind* in Barba and Savarese's extensive book, *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology*. Ruffini confirms what we already know: a performer's presence is his or her way of organically being onstage. While "presence," outside the performance entails only existing in a physical sense (Ruffini 62). "Using the terminology proposed by Eugenio Barba in *The Dilated Body*, where dilated body and dilated mind are respectively the physical and mental aspects of scenic presence, one can say that scenic presence is related to dilated body and a dilated mind in reciprocal interdependence" (Ruffini 62).

Through use of imagery and Native storytelling, Ramirez presented sharply drawn characters that told a story from various points of view. Ramirez constructs conflict in her

play: there is a push-and-pull all of the characters. The play begins with passivity displayed by the respectful Native protesters, and the physical dominance of the antagonistic guardsmen trying to disperse the protesting locals living on the Haudenosaunee reservation. The ninety minute show clipped along with a very intricate movement of performers: Captain Donald Hewitt would often times bellow and rage at the protesters and those under his command. During many scenes that included this character, Ramirez would pair this character's energy with a character that was written as still, quiet and calm. Aunt Bev was oftentimes Captain Hewitt's perfect partner. When Captain Hewitt puffed out his chest and would demand respect, Aunt Bev would sit in her chair and be perfectly still. Ramirez created conflict in a way that was engaging for spectators, and her method of pitting opposites together nicely complements Barba's ideas of *dilated body*, *dilated mind* and the *bridge* that connects the two. In terms of *Stand-off at Hwy #37* and its dramatic structure, Jon Lawrence Rivera's direction created a dance on the stage. Rivera's direction presented a game of frantic versus calm, cat versus mouse; in those particular moments the actors employed *dilated body*. In moments the dialogue became a clash of the opposites – strength versus intimidation – the actors employed *dilated mind*. The *bridge* that connects these two elements is the thing that can't be explained; there is no uniform methodology to reach harmony in body and mind in performance. The only concrete conclusion that can be reach is that for each performer the journey to the performance is different, unique and individual.

Conclusion

In Joel Schechter's *Popular Theatre: A Sourcebook*, he reveals that popular theatre is literally anything; the definition is loose and flexible. Rather than confining the definition to a standard proscenium stage, where plays are performed, Schechter believes a popular theatre is performance of any kind: the common: puppetry, Commedia dell'arte; or the uncommon: a wedding or renaissance faire. "Popular theatre forms lend themselves to adaptation, reinterpretation and changes of content because they originate in unwritten and improvised performance traditions" (Schechter 10).

Native American performance is a form of popular theatre. The tradition of storytelling dates back thousands of years, and exists today in adapted, reinterpreted and improvised forms. In the Navajo community today, there is harmony among the various performance practices. Whether living on the reservation or in large populated cities in the Southwest, Navajos have done what their ancestors did over the centuries to survive and preserve their culture: find meaningful and personal methods of artistically expressing themselves.

"Rituals can also confirm a sense of collective identity for a particular group and involve the participants in some sort of transformation" (Turner, *Eugenio Barba* 8). Exploring and analyzing the different forms of Navajo performance was freeing and insightful, because of the supportive attitude of the Navajo community. The Navajo are one of the most open, inviting and high profile Native peoples in North America. The willingness of the Navajo to engage and collaborate with scholars and non-Natives has built an in-depth library of resources, materials and diverse points of view.

Eugenio Barba's quest to find a methodology, or technique, resulted in a field he termed as theatre anthropology. In this investigation, I utilized different facets that fall under the umbrella of theatre anthropology, and analyzed Native American performance capturing and sharing cultural memory. With the successful application of transculturation, artists have carved out their niche: sacred ceremonies are still private, but Navajo medicine men now share their healing gifts in the healthcare industry; poets and other solo performers, like Laura Tohe, share their Navajo experience with Native and non-Native audiences with their own unique rhythm, beat and emotional vulnerability; venues like the Autry Center and Indian Pueblo Cultural Center have gathered the resources necessary to bring together individuals of various tribes in the spirit of collaboration, artistic and financial reward and professional venues to share and educate spectators of any background and origin.

The goal of this thesis was discovery of a culture's methods of transculturating cultural memory through performance. The journey was satisfying because embracing theatre anthropology provided freedom to arrive at personal and unique conclusions. Just like Barba has persuaded through various terms, some of which we employed when analyzing performances, the viability of performance is in the unknown. The only way for performance of cultural memory to survive is if performance moves beyond the daily existing in life, and move to those "extra-daily techniques" that bring forth an energy that is both engaging to the spectators and the performer. The Navajo are a well-documented example of a Native people who place importance on artistic expression. Over the generations, the Navajo people have cultivated cultural memory via dance, theatre, poetry, songs and healing ceremonies. Without changing who they are, they have

nurtured a desire among their artists to find a personal way to communicate with the world their identity as individuals and as Navajos.

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APPENDIX A

Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities

<http://www.hichumanities.org/>

The purpose of the Hawaii International Conference on Arts and Humanities is to provide an opportunity for academicians and professionals from various arts and humanities related fields from all over the world to come together and learn from each other. An additional goal of the conference is to provide a place for academicians and professionals with cross-disciplinary interests related to arts and humanities to meet and interact with members inside and outside their own particular disciplines.

When: January 9 – 14, 2014

Where: Honolulu, Hawaii

APPENDIX B

Indian Pueblo Cultural Center

<http://www.indianpueblo.org/>

The purpose of the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center is to preserve and perpetuate Pueblo culture and to advance understanding by presenting with dignity and respect, the accomplishments and evolving history of the Pueblo people of New Mexico.

Performances, a museum, arts and crafts and educational events all take place on the grounds.

Where: 2401 12th St NW, Albuquerque, NM 87104

When: Hours of Operation: Monday – Sunday 9a.m. – 5p.m.

Admission: \$6 general, discounts for students and seniors

APPENDIX C

American Indian Arts Marketplace

<http://theautry.org/american-indian-arts-marketplace/overview>

The American Indian Arts Marketplace is a weekend celebration of Native American arts and culture at the Autry. The largest Native American arts fair in Southern California, this high-end marketplace features over 180 Native American artists who represent more than 40 tribes. The weekend will also include performances, children's activities, informative talks and demonstrations, and the annual short play festival from Native Voices, the Autry's resident theatre company.

Where: 4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles, CA 90027

When: November 9 – 10, 2013

APPDENDIX D

Stand-off at Hwy #37

<http://theautry.org/programs/performing-arts/native-voices-at-the-autry-presents-stand-off-at-hwy-37>

In upstate New York, on the border of a small town and the local Haudenosaunee reservation, a young National Guardsman of Tuscarora heritage must choose between upholding the oath he took to defend his country and protecting the traditional lands of his people.

Written by: Vickie Ramirez (Tuscarora)

Where: The Autry in Griffith Park: Wells Fargo Theater

When: February 26–March 16, 2014

Previews: February 26–27, 8:00 p.m.

Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays: 8:00 p.m.

Saturdays and Sundays: 2:00 p.m.

Admission: \$10 Members / \$20 Nonmembers / \$12 Students, Seniors (55+), Military

Previews: Free for Members / \$10 Nonmembers / \$6 Students, Seniors (55+), Military

Glossary

- **The Bridge** – “It is necessary to work on the bridge that joins the physical and mental banks of the river of the creative process” (Barba 53).
- **Ceremony** – An event in Native American culture that holds ritual significance. Ceremonies are performed to heal, mark milestones in life or mourn death.
- **Chant** – Rhythmic singing or speaking of words by a Medicine Man. Medicine Men are also referred to as singers in Navajo culture.
- **Dance** – Performances set to music, sometimes accompanied by chants. Eugenio Barba states that a distinction should not be made between theatre, dance and mime.
- **Decisive Body** – The physical experience of the performer. Something which cannot be experienced by others; it is only possible to understand by living the same experience of the performer (Barba 16).
- **Dilated Body** – “A body-in-life is more than a body merely alive. A body-in-life dilates the performer’s presence and the spectator’s perception” (Barba 52). A dilated body entails the body producing energy via movement.
- **Dilated Mind** - “A performer’s actions can become heavy and blocked by stereotypes, just as the flow of thought can be blocked by stereotypes, judgments and ready-made questions” (Barba 53). A dilated mind entails escaping the traps of old habits, and allowing thought to follow from the movement of the body; the

two should be in sync when in performance, rather than warring against each other, resulting in a performance devoid of meaning and a disengaged audience.

- **Diné** – Navajo language term meaning “the people;” refers to Navajos. In some scholarly work, Diné refers to more traditional Navajo Indians who live on tribal lands and are bilingual.
- **Fairs** – Gatherings of Native peoples and non-Native peoples to showcase performances, crafts and books. Fairs are more about promoting the spirit of “Cowboy Culture.”
- **Fictive Body** – Physiological mechanics that deal with the physical forces that move the body (Barba 17).
- **Lokadhardmi** – Indian term meaning behavior in daily life (Barba 7).
- **Navajo** – Largest federally recognized tribe in the United States. The Navajo Nation is a semi-autonomous indigenous group of people living in the Four Corners region of the United States, residing within the borders of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. The Navajo capitol is Window Rock, Arizona. “Navajo” is also written as “Navaho” in academic writings.
- **Non-Native** – People who are not of Navajo or other indigenous cultures.
- **Performance** – Storytelling expressed by an actor (or dancer, as Barba does not distinguish between the two) via movement of the body; sometimes utilizing sound, music and objects.

- **Pow-Wow** – A gathering of North America’s Native people. These events are frequently inter-tribal.
- **Rituals** – Performances with specific instructions, movements, objects, music and symbolism to execute the successful completion of a ceremony.
- **Scenic bios** – A life ready to be transformed into precise motivations, actions and reactions (Barba 223). The life of the performer.
- **Technique** – Extra-daily use of the body.
- **Theatre Anthropology** – Term created by Eugenio Barba in the 1970s. The term has always been centered on performance. “Again: theatre anthropology is the study of the behaviour of the human being when it uses its physical and mental presence in an organized performance situation and according to principles that are different from those used in daily life” (Barba 5).
- **Transculturation** – Term created by Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz, in his book, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tabacco and Sugar*, in 1947 to describe the phenomenon of merging and converging cultures. Transculturation does not mean one abandons something and fully embraces and adopts another way. Instead, there is a merging of concepts and ideas. Ortiz used the term to describe the history of Cuban culture, as it has melded Hispanic, Caribbean, Native Indian, African and European cultures.