

2006

Green Theatre: proto-environmental drama and the performance of ecological values in contemporary Western theatre

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GREEN THEATRE:
PROTO-ENVIRONMENTAL DRAMA
AND THE PERFORMANCE OF ECOLOGICAL VALUES IN CONTEMPORARY
WESTERN THEATRE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by
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December, 2006

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For my family, notably my mother, who provided me with the gifts of humility and empathy, and my brother Mark, who greatly inspired me throughout my developing years by his reverence for all things Green.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all those who offered their overwhelming support, both academic and moral, during my doctoral process. Dr. Les Wade's mentorship and support has been immeasurable, as has his continued presence as an artistic and academic role model. Dr. Bill Harbin, Dr. Femi Euba, Dr. Leigh Clemons, Dr. Robin Roberts, and Dr. Jennifer Jones-Cavanaugh have all unselfishly shared their wisdom, guidance, and alongside Dr. Wade, were instrumental in helping me bridge the practical and theoretical gaps between my work as theatre practitioner and my dedication to environmental activism. My deepest thanks to my family for their continued support. Sincere thanks to The Nature Conservancy, the Louisiana and South Carolina chapters of The Sierra Club, and Playmakers of Baton Rouge, all whom generously contributed to my research. A special thanks to Dr. Joanne Klein and Dr. Mark Rhoda who have served as a continued source of inspiration and friendship. I also extend my gratitude to the faculty and staff of the Louisiana State University Graduate School, and the department of Theatre and Dance at Missouri State University. During the course of my

doctoral study I have developed many friends who, over an impressive number of beers and a greater quantity of stimulating conversations, played an immeasurable role in both my theoretical development and my growth as a human being; Dr. Pat and Sarah Bynane, David and Donna Sedevie, Kristen Rosfeld, Dr. Jeannie Woods, Dr. Alice Burmeister, Dr. Gino Chelakis, and most especially my wife, Courtney Heinlein. Courtney, I am eternally thankful for your love, friendship, and support. Your empathy and passion for life are inspiring. Acknowledgement is due also to our newborn baby girl, Ruth Heinlein, whose birth in the midst of heated dissertating served not as a distraction, but as a reminder of the consequences that our socio-environmental behavior has upon the future of our children. And last but certainly not least, many thanks to my canine companions Moses, Luke, and Green.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to illustrate the purpose and potential of theatre that promotes a proto-environmental agenda, or Green Theatre, in re-orienting Western behavior and mores in a direction that creates positive socio-environmental change. In correlation, this dissertation will examine the objectives and performance modes of several educational and professional theatre entities that house a distinctly unique Green agenda. The primary performances featured will include Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, Blue Man Group's *Tubes*, performances by Koko the signing lowland gorilla, and Playmakers of Baton Rouge's production of *Habitat Cats*.

CHAPTER ONE DEFINING GREEN

Ecological victory will require a transvaluation so profound as to be nearly unimaginable at present. And the arts and humanities, including the theatre, must play a role. (Una Chaudhuri)

One of my earliest and most vivid memories involves a rainy day in kindergarten, when all the children in my school were herded into the cafetorium to view a live production of *The Giving Tree*. The work was adapted from the Shel Silverstein book and performed by a theatre group from one of the local high schools. I'm sure I would have much rather been playing soccer or fraternizing on the playground, but I had never seen a play before, and the event probably seemed as good an excuse as any to escape the confines of our classroom. What unfolded before me in that performance, and my innate connection to it, became one of the most unexpected and transformative experiences in my young life. *The Giving Tree* tells the story of a boy and his bond to a tree, a sapling that matures and changes in form to support the needs of the boy as he proceeds through his life and into old age. I recall the story being read to us in kindergarten class prior to my seeing the play, and I'm sure that I enjoyed it, but something

about seeing it performed live onstage reached much deeper into my developing mind, far enough in to create a sense of identification with not just the boy, but with the tree, which had somehow become humanized in front of my eyes.

With identification came a sense of empathy, from empathy emerged a more immediate sensation that I needed to engage, to help, and to convince the people around me in my small world just how important trees are, and how much we needed to respect and protect them. I went home that afternoon intent on educating my fellow beings about the consequences of not giving societal value to trees. To my parent's credit, they supported my vision. I vividly recall digging up maple saplings and delivering them door to door in my neighborhood as an attempt to promote my message and spread good will. Many of those saplings are still growing in the neighborhood, having now matured into 60-70 foot adult trees that shelter picnic benches, swings, and local wildlife.

My mother disclosed in later discussions that I went on a "tree binge" in many aspects of my life at that time, and, upon recently digging through boxes of artwork I had created, I found that she had been on the mark. I discovered tree paintings, tree masks, tree decorations,

and more. The presence of the giving tree and the boy on that stage remains one of the most vivid memories I hold.

What happened in my socio-emotional formation that afternoon? I had previously heard and enjoyed the book, yet remained relatively unmoved, and my family had already instilled in me a general reverence for nature that didn't result in fanaticism; so what unfolded in that live performance to create identification, empathy, and the desire on my part to make positive change? On the most basic level, that production of *The Giving Tree* appealed to some innate connection I had to the natural world, a connection inseparably intertwined with my identity construct. With personal identification came empathy, and from empathy emerged the need to take action on behalf of the environment.

The aim of this study holds a strong personal, theoretical, and practical relationship to that childhood experience, notably, by extending an examination of *The Giving Tree* experience to demonstrate the capacity live theatre holds for initiating positive socio-environmental change. In the course of this study I will illustrate the purpose and potential of theatre as a social tool in promoting a Green, or proto-environmental, agenda. My discussion will center on the efficacy of theatrical

practice, as merged with environmental philosophy in the form of Green Theatre, in its ability to re-orient Western society toward more ecologically sound socio-environmental behaviors and mores. Following my argument regarding the purpose and potential of proto-environmental theatre, I will discuss several relevant performance entities in order to examine their proficiency in meeting a Green agenda within the context of contemporary Western society.

Consequently, my study will attempt the following:

1. Solidify a clear understanding of "Green."
2. Assert the importance of granting moral status to our natural world, and correspondingly, establish the need for an immediate response to the environmental crisis.
3. Demonstrate that all environmental problems are rooted in social problems, thereby justifying the notion that environmental betterment must occur through social change.
4. Argue that the granting of moral status to nature must include the concept that our human identity, and the identification of what we consider Green, are now intertwined and forever dependent upon one another.
5. Establish the particular efficacy of theatre in promoting socio-environmental change by connecting

with the Green identity construct, notably in the form of Green Theatre.

6. Examine the development and success of relevant proto-environmental theatre practices.
7. Examine the proficiency of several contemporary Green Theatre works in inspiring socio-environmental change.
8. Purport the need for new and contemporarily viable forms of Green Theatre in successfully promoting an ecological agenda.

The scope and nature of this task will necessitate the collocation of theatrical practices and environmental theories, an act that may bring to mind foundational questions of "why?" and "why theatre?" Simply put, does the environment really need the help of theatrical practitioners, and how and why utilize theatrical performance in attempting to initiate positive socio-environmental change?

Political spin aside, current scientific facts illustrate the dire need for an immediate and widespread response to a world-wide environmental crisis. This need for action was outlined in a recent *Washington Post* article titled "Warming Debate Shifts to Tipping Point, Some Scientists Worry it's too Late to Reverse Climate Change." The article reads:

Now that most scientists agree human activity is causing Earth to warm, the central debate has shifted to whether climate change is progressing so rapidly that, within decades, humans may be helpless to slow or reverse the trend. This "tipping point" scenario has begun to consume many prominent researchers in the United States and abroad, because the answer could determine how drastically countries need to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in the coming years. While scientists remain uncertain when such a point might occur, many say it is urgent that policymakers cut global carbon dioxide emissions in half over the next 50 years or risk the triggering of changes that would be irreversible. (Eilperin 1)

Eilperin's article underlines conclusive facts demonstrating that global warming has moved beyond the theoretical, and that proactive methods must be immediately found to address the root causes. Environmental theorist Bill McKibben offers a solution to Eilperin's plea in his renowned article "Imagine That, What the World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art." McKibben believes that "Playwrights, poets, and artists [need] to create works which will place climate change deeply in the imagination" (Ashden). McKibben's work will be vital to my argument for Green Theatre practice in many respects, but primarily in its role in establishing the power of theatre in being "an effective way to bring about major and lasting change" (Ashden).

Throughout the course of my argument I will follow McKibben's initiative for socio-artistic action and illustrate the unique power theatrical performance holds in

addressing our socio-environmental crisis. This effort will reciprocally demonstrate the need for additional socio-theatrical treatment of ecological issues. As noted, this thesis requires a fusion of research and practice, and draws from numerous distinct fields of study, including but not limited to theatre theory, theatre history, theatre practice, sociology, psychology, environmental ethics, and the diverse field of Green theory. As I progress through my argument I will demonstrate that, despite the inherent complexities, a collocation of these fields of study in the unified form of Green Theatre endows us with a particularly powerful tool for the facilitation of socio-environmental change.

During the course of my doctoral study I have often found myself addressing a fundamental question. What *is* "Green Theatre?" The integration of these two words may bring to mind a host of diverse theoretical and practical applications. How, ultimately, do we define theatre in this context? What is Green? A color? A theory? Both? These foundational questions arise when simply merging the words, signifying the complexity of fusing theatrical and Green practices as a unified socio-theatrical form. These questions, however, revolve around the lack of clarity in attempting to define each, "theatre" and "Green," as

individual entities within their own unique social constructs.

In a contemporary context, the term "theatre" is used to represent a multitude of semiotic and linguistic items, sometimes referring to traditional stage performances, but often utilized in a much broader social context. This fact is illustrated by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, which provides four distinct meanings of the word. Three of the definitions allude to physical space, and the last refers to "dramatic literature or performance." In the most recent presidential election we heard the term used extensively with regard to "global theatre" or the "theatre of politics," and in linguistic formations such as "the political stage." On the most fundamental level the word theatre simply means "the seeing place," a Greek phrase identifying a social event involving the acting out of stories by performers before audience. With regard to this dissertation and the goals of proto-environmental Green Theatre, the stage may be a political platform, or it could be the streets of Manhattan, a field in Vermont, or a traditional setting (such as a high school auditorium). The stage may even take electronic form on the internet. Though significantly diverse, these variations exhibit several shared components, chiefly the presence of performer and

audience, the performer's awareness of the event's perception as a public performance, and the notion that "when a performance is acted out" it provides the potential for us to "see something about ourselves, as both individuals and social communities" (Lee xi).

Put simply, our definition of Green Theatre will reach beyond the traditional boundaries of the theatrical space, but still encompass the fundamental presence of an artist, an audience, comprehension of the event as a public performance, and the philosophical understanding that, as Maryat Lee observes, the theatre holds the power to help us to see "something about ourselves" by touching some part of our identity construct.

The term "Green," however, is much more elusive, as evidenced by the presence of twelve independent definitions in the Merriam-Webster resource. Derek Wall discusses this in *Green History*, which acknowledges the elusive past and diverse agendas of socio-environmental movements associated with the term. Wall states:

Green history comprises a huge and ill-defined territory. Drawing a boundary around the subject and its contents is a difficult task. Examining the significance of such elements, placing them in a living social context and illustrating their interrelation is rather harder. The term Green is open to ambiguous interpretation. (Wall 7)

Former President George Bush, Sr., a target for contemporary environmentalists, has perhaps surprisingly been referred to as Green. In Western culture we have Green capitalism, Green consumerism, Green theory, Green socialists, Green ecology, Greenpeace, Green Shirts, the German Green Party, the British Green Party, the American Green Party, and even a popular children's toy called The Green Machine, which is ironically designed to resemble a gas guzzling chopper motorcycle. Even contemporary rock bands have adopted the occasionally trendy Green identification, evident in names such as "Green Day," "Green is Good," and "The Green Meanies."

Complicating things further in an attempt to define "Green," are the varying ideological stances that have been associated with the term. Even the field of environmental philosophy is frequently segmented. Most commonly, it is divided into three areas including environmental ethics, anthropocentric reformism, and Green philosophy. All three hold variances in their attempts to define the relationship of humanity and nature. Fortunately, there is collective stance to be discovered in these three respective outlooks:

1. All three ascertain that philosophical and moral status must be given to nature independent of humans.

2. Each asserts and that environmental issues are also socio-political problems in both cause and effect.

As I develop a definition of Green with regard to the proto-environmental goals of Green Theatre, these two commonalities will be utilized as foundational philosophical elements. Correspondingly, I will illustrate how the process of granting nature moral status requires a re-evaluation of approaches that historically have separated the practices and definitions of humanity and nature. In an effort to protect "untouched nature" from degradation, early Green theorists drew hard lines between the definition of humanity and the definition of nature. Instead of drawing philosophical and logistical boundaries, I will follow the contemporary Green model and engage the reciprocal task of unifying our definitive conceptions of "humanity" and of "the natural." This process will illustrate the inseparability of humanity's behavior from ecological consequence, and lend greater moral status to nature as an entity fused with humankind. Additionally, it will facilitate my argument demonstrating how a unification of "humanity" with "nature" empowers both entities in regard to sustainability, and provide legitimacy to practices of socio-ecological reform (including

environmental philosophy and performance as collocated in the form of Green Theatre).

As noted, significant complications arise in attempting to define Green within the context of socio-political constructs. It is, as Gould purports in *Early Green Politics*, a virtual impossibility to isolate and define with specificity the dizzyingly illusive conceptions of Green in Western culture. He asserts that the range of ideas embraced by the term "makes clarity of definition even more difficult than in the case of other creations of the human mind" (Gould 12). In *Green History*, Wall attempts to refine varying concepts of Green into one working socio-environmental definition. His conception of Green epitomizes traditional Green theory, which includes a critique of growth, environmental concern, scientific ecology, philosophical holism and the granting of status to non-human nature. However, he also acknowledges that these boundaries in themselves cannot supply a complete picture of the Green package. Gould states:

In seeking to solve environmental problems Greens have been forced to consider human affairs and embrace a set of political, economic, and cultural principles. Any description of Green demands an exploration of approaches to human society. Solving perceived ecological problems undoubtedly demands a transformation of attitudes and institutions. (Wall Intro)

Jonathon Porritt, former leader of the British Green Party, created a table outlining the "distinguishing features of a Green paradigm" (Wall Intro). Corresponding with Wall's stance, Porritt's table compares and contrasts the "politics of industrialism" with "the politics of ecology," illustrating the fact that Green has developed into a universally understood notion that non-human nature is given status, and that to protect it, the concept of Green has come to include a socio-political ideology (Wall Intro). The research of Green theorists Schnaiberg and Sterba support this crucial element, by reminding us "that all environmental problems are social problems regarding both their causes and effects" (Schnaiberg 17).

Environmental leader and former vice-president Al Gore aggressively supported Sterba's stance in a June 2005 commencement address at John's Hopkins University. He stated:

Without significant social action, the planet will see a dramatic increase in violent storms, infectious disease, deadly heat waves and rising sea levels that will force the evacuation of low-lying cities such as Calcutta, Shanghai, and New York City within decades. What is now staring us in the face is the prospect of an imminent crisis, the relationship between human beings and where we live has been inalienably change. We are witnessing a collision between our civilization and the earth, a transformation of the relationship between our species and the planet. Is it only terrorists that we're worried about? Is that the only threat to the future that is worth responding to?

Humans have the ability and the tools to save the Earth but the political will to make that happen is lacking, but political will is a renewable resource. You give me hope.

Hayward and O'Neill support Gore's assertions in *Justice, Property, and the Environment*, vehemently proposing that "environmental degradation has been brought about by socially organized practices" (7). They also acknowledge Gore's central intent, establishing that environmental change must come from within the context of social reform (Hayward and O'Neill 42). The research of Hayward and O'Neill gives credence to the notion of a unified Green agenda, namely that there is a direct cause-and-effect relationship between social behavior and environmental degradation. In their view, degradation arises from neglecting to provide non-human nature with philosophical status in the face of choices brought about by industrialized contemporary culture.

An understanding of the development of Green theory does much to illuminate its contemporary application. Green, as it has come to represent a socio-environmental agenda, is a relatively young outlook. As Wall acknowledges, worries about "environmental destruction seem very modern. Acid rain, the greenhouse effect and ozone depletion are concerns of the last twenty years" (Wall

Intro). As recently as the 1990's, when right-wing American political leaders mocked Gore's theories and dubbed him "the ozone man," environmental scientists were struggling to identify and illustrate the connection between socio-industrial behavior and the documented changes in the global environmental climate.

Correspondingly, in order to explore the construct of the contemporary Green movement, we can conclude that one must look to the Green identification as an ideology that is not only environmental, but socio-political. This concept sheds light upon the idea of a humanly unified connection to the natural, and invites a long history that represents a multitude of great theorists such as Muir, Thoreau, Hegel, Marx, Kropotkin, Horkheimer, Adorno, Leopold, Marcuse, and Habermas.

However, the contemporary environmental movement is often said to have begun in the summer of 1962 when marine biologist Rachel Carson, previously a noted author of marine life books, stated the following:

As man proceeds toward his announced goal of the conquest of nature, he has written a depressing record of destruction, directed not only against the earth he inhabits but the life that shares it with him. The history of the recent centuries has its black environmental passages. Now, to these and others like them, we are adding a new chapter and a new kind of havoc, the question is whether any civilization can wage such relentless war on life without destroying itself,

and without losing the right to be called civilized.
(Sale 3)

From these revolutionary words, the *term* Green evolved and was coined for socio-political use by the mid-1960's. Provided with a theoretical foundation by these earlier thinkers, contemporary Green philosophers such as Bookchin, Sterba, Gore, and Linden are walking beside McKibben and building philosophical legitimacy for the re-definition of Green into its contemporary formation, and, ultimately, toward practical socio-environmental applications (such as proto-environmental performance). Earlier eco-philosophical treatments do share an underlying tenet with contemporary Greens, notably the cause and effect relationship between humanity's behavior and ecological degradation, and the notion that we must find a course of action to stop, focus, and re-direct our socio-environmental behavior.

However, current Green practice has broken from its philosophical roots by embracing a primary element that earlier Greens had opposed, notably the ideological separation of humanity and nature. This notion is a key facet of my argument. By breaking down the barriers that historically separate notions of human social behavior from notions of the natural, contemporary Greens are striving to illuminate the inseparable connection between each. By

displaying a uniform connection, nature is endowed with moral considerability previously only provided to humans, thus encouraging the discovery of means by which to promote eco-human sustainability. Simply put, by unifying notions of human behavior into the natural equation, contemporary Greens are aiming toward the discovery of methods for ecological betterment, primarily through devices that encourage changes in socio-environmental behavior. On the most foundational level, by sustaining nature, we are sustaining ourselves.

Bill McKibben began to propagate these concepts in *The End of Nature*. Written in 1989 (what now seems like the dark ages of the Green movement), McKibben predicted many of the environmental consequences of global warming which have now come to display themselves. McKibben writes, "It is the contrast between the pace at which the physical world is changing and the pace at which human society is reacting that constitutes the key environmental fact of our time" (xvi). Most importantly, McKibben utilizes *Nature* to underline the unproductive historical disconnect between our concepts of humanity and nature, and promotes their unification to advance the sustainability of both. Correspondingly, *Nature* provides a crucial link for contemporary Green philosophy and practice. It creates a

bridge in the relationship between agents for socio-ecological change, and environmental betterment.

In *Nature*, McKibben fruitfully examines the state of environmental affairs in contemporary society, proposing and disproving a host of solutions to addressing environmental degradation. The remaining solution, according to McKibben, lies in utilizing and re-orienting the very anthropocentrism which has attributed to our current state of degradation. McKibben maintains that we are different from the natural order for the single reason that we possess the possibility of self-restraint, or for "choosing some other way" (12).

McKibben's theory is highly significant in that it marks a monumental departure from earlier Green theory by moving from a separatist, nature vs. man philosophy, toward an integrated eco-human stance. This creates a more empowered position for the creation of ecological change through social devices. McKibben's work opened the door for the re-reevaluation of earlier Green practices, adding a philosophical footnote to the *granting of non-human nature philosophical status outside our own interests*, to include the concept that, *our human identity, and the identification of what we refer to as nature, are now forever intertwined and dependent upon one another.*

McKibben's assertions in *The Death of Nature* forged the way for, and are highly representative of, current Green integrative philosophy.

Now that I have established a more thorough understanding of Green, I find it important to briefly re-insert the need for agents of socio-environmental change, proto-environmental theatre included. Current environmental statistics are shedding an unarguable and foreboding light upon the work of contemporary Green theorists who have spent recent years struggling for legitimacy in the public sphere. These figures highlight the immediacy in discovering relevant methods by which our environment can be rescued. Importantly, increases in scientific research and media documentation are also helping to illuminate the importance in developing social practices that encourage environmental betterment. Only a decade after George Bush Sr. first referred to Gore as "the ozone man," contemporary Western society is being forced to view the facts and acknowledge the clear causal relationship aligning societal behavior, global warming, and the consequent decay of global ecology. Renowned environmentalist Eugene Linden, most often associated with Project Koko, supported the need for immediate action in a recent *Time Magazine* Article titled "Critical Condition." Linden writes:

For more than 40 years, the earth has been sending out distress signals. At first they were subtle, like the thin shells of bald-eagle eggs that cracked because they were laced with DDT. Then the signs were unmistakable, like the pall of smoke over the Amazon rain forest, where farmers and ranchers set fires to clear land. Finally, as the new millennium drew near, it was obvious that the earth's pain had become humanity's pain. The collapse of the North Atlantic cod fishery put 30,000 Canadians out of work and ruined the economies of 700 communities. Two years ago, deforestation worsened China's floods, which killed 3,600 people and left 14 million homeless. Population pressures and overcrowding raised the toll from last year's rains in Latin America, which killed more than 30,000 people and created armies of environmental refugees. What will it take for us to get serious about our environment? When will environmentalism move from being a philosophy promoted by a passionate minority to a way of life that governs mainstream behavior and philosophy? (34)

Though corporate energy interests and political finger-pointing have done much to complicate the specific causes of environmental decay, contemporary scientists have left no room for argumentation against the fact that global climate change is occurring, and is spawning disastrous environmental consequences at an alarming rate. Consider the following statistics:

1. The amount of carbon dioxide in the air has increased 40+% since the industrial revolution.
2. The amount of nitrogen in the environment has tripled.
3. Each day there are 70 more square miles of desert.
4. Each day, up to 70 species of life become extinct.
5. Each day, at least 1.5 million tons of hazardous waste will be released into the air, water, and land.
6. Each day, 35,000 people will die of starvation related illnesses.

7. The 12 months of 2004 were the 12 warmest since records have been kept, marking a gradual rise in global temperature in recent decades. 10 of the 12 warmest years in history have taken place since 1994. (Sterba 1)

These numbers are a small sample of the barrage of current data that points to global climate change and environmental decay. They also, according to McKibben in *Nature*, "Underline the point that we live in the oddest moment since our species first stood upright, the moment when we are finally grown so big in numbers and appetites that we alter everything around us" (xvi). The scientific numbers negate argumentation and demonstrate "the end of nature" as a force independent of man. This concern is strongly resonated by leaders of the contemporary Green movement such as Gore and McKibbin.

On June 13, 2005, a *USA Today* headline read "The Debate is Over: Globe is Warming, Politicians, Corporations, and Religious Groups Differ Mainly on How to Fix the Problem." Authored by Dan Vergano, the article is notable for its focus on the need to arrive at widespread social solutions for addressing the climate problem. It also assists in ending the lingering political spin over whether or not a problem exists. Vergano documents significant climate changes, including increased flooding due to a 20% rainfall increase in wet regions, droughts resulting in a 20% rain

decrease in arid regions, melting glaciers, warming oceans, and an average two-foot rise in sea level on all U.S.

coasts by 2010. Vergano states:

Climate scientists say this acceptance comes none too soon. All the time we should have been moving forward has been wasted arguing if the problem even exists. What the various factions don't necessarily agree on is what to do about it. The heart of the discussion is really about how to deal with climate change, not whether it's happening. (1A)

Societal growth and behavior has inarguably and

irreversibly altered life on every inch of the planet.

McKibben's contemporary Green view, that nature as a force independent of man has "ceased to exist," supports this notion. We can no longer argue that nature has a value independent of human action, because, simply put, nature in its "untouched" state no longer exists.

The need for a new course of socio-environmental action has become clear, the next logical step is, as Vergano proposes, addressing *how*. Contemporary Green philosophy stresses socio-environmental applications that strive to connect societal behavior, or human processes, with the world that we traditionally view as "natural." It is no longer viable to separate humanity from what we determine to be natural, because human activity has now grown so expansive, that it has altered and affected all natural processes on a global scale.

The contemporary Green outlook regarding "the end of nature" has revolutionized early conceptions of Green and increased the capacity to take social action against environmental degradation. Building upon the conclusion that humankind is now hopelessly intertwined with the natural, contemporary Greens such as Gore, Bookchin, and McKibbin have placed the responsibility for human-environmental preservation directly in the hands of man. In *The End of Nature*, McKibbin discusses the notion that "the basis for our earlier faith is lost," that faith being in the utopian ideal that we can preserve nature independent of man (58). He continues:

The idea of nature will not survive the new global pollution—the carbon dioxide and the CFC's and the like. This new rupture with nature is different not only in scope but also in kind from salmon tins in an English stream. We have changed the atmosphere, and thus we are changing the weather. By changing the weather we make every spot on this earth man made and artificial. We have deprived nature from its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning. Nature's independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us. (58)

In order to facilitate ecological betterment, we must look toward revising what we view as "untouched nature," and fervently push societal mores and behavior in a Greener direction. In their assertions, McKibbin and his contemporaries have inseparably locked the construct of humanity's identity to the natural. In the second chapter I

will demonstrate how this facet engages theorist Roger Rosenblatt who asserts an "innate connection to all things Green" (Rosenblatt). As I will argue, by tracing the relationship between humanity's connection to "all things Green," the inseparability of humanity and nature, and the implication that all environmental problems are social problems, we uncover the potential for socio-environmental agents such as Green Theatre to create ecological change.

Dramatic performance, on the whole, has socio-historical roots buried deep in the natural, and in humanity's attempt to discover its identity as housed within the ecological world. If we look to the beginnings of Western theatre, we discover socially and politically constructed practices born out of ritual and a quest for understanding in the natural and metaphysical order of things. In outdoor performances, the Greeks called to the gods in search of hope, and to question their compromised human role and agricultural capacity in a natural world full of droughts, hardship, and fickle gods. Since these early documented beginnings, humanity has continued to utilize performance to explore and question its identity in the natural order, though technological developments in dramatic practice have slowly made this fact less apparent. Engagement with the natural has been replaced by "advancements" such as moving

indoors, adding artificial light, scenery, and the host of innovations that followed. In its current state, most popular theatre often could not seem more removed from the natural. However, an application of Green theory will prove otherwise.

The socio-theatrical work of Augusto Boal, a philosophical fore-runner to contemporary Green Theatre, asserts in *Theatre of the Oppressed* that "all theatre is necessarily political" (13). Boal validates performance as a "weapon," a means by which identity can be accessed, and a device through which social change can be initiated (14). By establishing theatre as a tool "for social revolution," this outlook mirrors the revolutionary changes in thought and social behavior called for by contemporary Green practitioners. Although representative of two distinct genres, one ecological and one performance-based, a unification of the two creates an empowered stance on the part of socio-environmental theatre. The work of Green Theatre practitioners asserts the notion of social relevancy in performance, maintaining its efficiency as a tool for creating widespread socio-ecological change.

By embracing current Green philosophy with regard to theatrical activity, we discover that theatrical practice is not so far removed from the natural, and is, in fact, a

tool of empowerment for the ecologically concerned. By embracing the contemporary Green notion that humanity and nature are forever intertwined, we are provided a reciprocal base for the idea that human behavior, including theatrical, is part of the natural order. This notion helps opens the doorway for wide variances in Green theatrical practice. Earlier proto-environmental forms such as Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, which is performed outdoors to help promote its Green agenda, is still legitimate, but no more so than performances by Blue Man Group, which examine humanity's identity in the postmodern world. By embracing the notion that humankind has an inseparable and causal relationship with the natural world, Green theory justifies theatrical utilization of the man-made, not just what was formerly viewed as "natural," to address Green issues.

In the following chapters of this dissertation I will continue to unify contemporary Green theory and socio-theatrical practice in order to further address these issues. I will also illustrate with specificity the purpose and potential of Green Theatre that promotes a proto-environmental agenda in re-directing Western mores and socio-ecological behavior.

As noted, the aim of this study holds a strong personal, theoretical, and practical relationship to that childhood response to *The Giving Tree*. It extends an examination of the experience to demonstrate the enormous capacity live theatre holds for initiating ecological sustainability. In the following chapters I will illustrate the purpose and potential of theatre as a social tool in successfully promoting an environmental initiative, and the capacity for that initiative to induce positive ecological change. Our discussion will center on the efficacy of theatrical practice as merged with environmental philosophy in the form of Green Theatre, notably in its ability to re-orient Western society toward more ecologically sound socio-environmental behaviors and mores.

This dissertation will require a much needed collocation of the theories and practices of environmental, theatrical, and sociological agents. I will utilize Green history, theatrical history, and key theatrical and Green theoretical concepts. This investigation will also necessitate the utilization of theory and practice in the areas of sociology, psychology, environmental ethics, and to some degree, economics. I will also investigate examples of Green performance and the manner in which they,

successfully or unsuccessfully, embody progressive notions of Green in their mission for socio-ecological betterment.

Materials utilized will include traditional texts and journal publications, interviews, performance reviews, socio-psychological studies, published and unpublished dramatic works, and first hand accounts of proto-environmental performances. Because Green Theatre is a developing entity, publications examining its history and functionality are still limited. As a result, I will also utilize internet sources that demonstrate consistency and strong reliability of fact.

It is my belief that this study holds value in three primary respects. First, by establishing the power and potential of Green Theatre in promoting socio-ecological change, we are providing the Green movement with a much needed resource in the fight for socio-ecological education. The concept of Green Theatre as a socio-educational tool is especially important amidst the ever-present debate and disorienting political spin revolving around global warming. Secondly, legitimizing the Green Theatre initiative will hold reciprocal value for the socio-theatrical community at large. By purporting the potential of theatre to induce socio-ecological change, this study hopes to lend merit to other forms of social

theatre that do not house an ecological initiative. These notions will be supported with evidence of a causal relationship between theatre performance and changes in social behaviors. Lastly, it is my humble but sincere hope that this examination of Green Theatre inspires additional developments in proto-environmental theatre.

Chapter Two, "Forging the Green Identity, Collocating Green Philosophy & Proto-Environmental Theatre," will provide a keystone in my argument for Green Theatre practice by establishing a causal link between Green theatrical performance, its ability to engage the human identity, and its consequent potential to inspire changes in socio-environmental behavior. Key to my argument will be the assertion that within all humans is an innate connection to the natural.

Chapter Three, "Constructing a History of Green Theatre," will gather and construct the elusive and scarcely documented development of Green Theatre practice and theory in Western society. This task is aimed at legitimizing proto-environmental performance as a distinct theatrical genre, thus lending socio-theatrical credibility to the form in its mission for environmental betterment.

Chapter Four, "The Pageant of the Environmental Possibilitarians, Proto-Environmentalism and Peter

Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre," will examine the efficacy of Green Theatre pioneer Bread & Puppet in inspiring socio-environmental change. Importantly, it will attempt to measure the company's relative success within the context of a contemporary society oriented toward media and technology. The chapter will also provide the framework for argumentation promoting the viability of technological and non-traditional agents of Green Theatre.

Chapter Five, "Transforming Green Theatre: The Post-Natural World of the Blue Man, Gorilla Theatre, and Chuck and L. Wayne's Walk on the Wild Side," will assert the validity of contemporary non-traditional modes of Green performance in achieving its socio-ecological agenda. I will examine the contribution of three distinct Green Theatre entities including Blue Man Group, Project Koko, and the Playmakers of Baton Rouge production of *Walk on the Wild Side*. Each is notable for forging new and contemporarily viable modes of Green Theatre performance. Each group has also helped to legitimize and orient the present and future development of Green Theatre theory and practice.

As we enter the following chapter, I find it necessary to provide a brief clarification of my choice of the term Green Theatre, so as not to be mistaken for similar and

more often used terms. Stemming from contemporary Green theory and theatre practice, "Green Theatre" could be confused with the term "environmental theatre." Although Green Theatre may hold relevancy to forms of "environmental theatre," it is important to note that "environmental theatre" has been used to describe a multitude of theatrical practices and philosophical footings that may or may not represent concern for sustainable ecological practice. Green Theatre is sometimes referred to as Eco-Theatre, but "eco" is a word choice that often lends to additional confusion with the larger "enviro" theatre umbrella, and a choice that does not necessarily provide grounding in contemporary Green philosophy.

As I will argue in the following pages, Green Theatre, as an entity that unifies contemporary Green philosophy and socio-theatrical practices, holds the formidable power to re-orient our socio-environmental behaviors. The time for inserting this argument into Western culture is now, because need for a response to environmental crisis grows more immediate every day. By illuminating the potential for humans to engage in behavioral changes that result in ecological betterment, we are arming proto-environmental performance and sending it into the epic battle for the sustainability of nature and humanity.

CHAPTER TWO
FORGING THE GREEN IDENTITY: COLLOCATING CONTEMPORARY
GREEN PHILOSOPHY AND PROTO-ENVIRONMENTAL THEATRE

In a *Time Magazine* article titled "All the Days of the Earth," environmental theorist and author, Roger Rosenblatt, provides an analysis of Green street theatre. In the article, he asserts that all humans have of an inborn identification with the ecological world, which he refers to as our "Green impulses." Rosenblatt states, "Within all humans is an innate desire to connect with the natural" (1). In his view, human identification with the natural (or "Green impulses"), has significant power in re-orienting socio-ecological behavior. These assertions will be foundational in my mission to promote Green Theatre as an agent for change. I will also demonstrate how the notion of "innate Green impulses" interacts with our definition of Green, which fuses historically distinct concepts of both humanity and nature. Fundamentally, I will utilize this investigation to illuminate how human identity is inextricably linked to the natural world, and how that connection plays a role in determining behavior. These concepts also support the assertion from Chapter One, that all ecological problems are rooted in social behaviors.

In "All the Days of the Earth," Rosenblatt states:

Nature in its monumental autonomy throws us back upon ourselves—not merely our inventive but our moral selves. Humans are the only species able to go everywhere in the world, which also means we have the capacity to do good or ill everywhere. The hardest case to make for acting on an environmental conscience is that it is the right thing to do. Yet, in the end, it may be the only case worth making. If we do not respect nature, we do not respect ourselves. We tend to forget that at except at those moments when the story of who we are and where we come from rises into our life like a field of wheat and tells itself again. (32)

Rosenblatt's words serve as pertinent lead-in to the content of this chapter. His assertion that "Nature in its monumental autonomy throws us back on ourselves," illuminates a fundamental element in contemporary Green practice by noting that notions of "who we are" and "where we come from" are inseparable. Although cultural and technological signifiers seem to indicate that humanity is becoming more distanced from the natural, inherent in all of us remains an innate connection to the natural world.

Rosenblatt asserts that "if we do not respect nature, we do not respect ourselves," a fact we often forget, "except at those moments when the story of who we are and where we come from rises into our life" (2). This concept will be a key component of my argument. By asserting our inseparable connection to the natural, Rosenblatt is also proposing a primary contention of Green Theatre practice.

This contention is housed in his indication that there are "those moments" which draw us back to the natural.

Importantly, "those moments" provide us with the ability to rediscover ourselves as defined within our relationship to the natural world. In my argument I will provide a definitive understanding of "those moments," and demonstrate how they hold the capability to re-generate Green impulses.

In this chapter, I will provide a keystone in our argument for Green Theatre practice by establishing a causal relationship between Green theatrical performance, its ability to create "those moments" that engage the Green component of the human identity, and its consequent potential to inspire positive changes in socio-environmental behavior. Advancing this argument will entail several components:

1. Inserting a clear understanding of the concept of identity as it relates to our "Green impulses."
2. Illuminating the presence of humanity's innate connection to the natural world.
3. Illustrating the formidable relationship between an innate Green connection and our human identity.

4. Fusing these two elements to support McKibben's assertions that man and nature are behaviorally, philosophically, physically, and morally intertwined.

5. Affirming the distinct ability of Green Theatre to create "those moments" which engage our innate Green impulses, appeal to our identity, and facilitate a re-orientation of our socio-environmental mores.

The task will require a continued collocation of Green theory and theatrical practice as fused within the entity of Green Theatre. I will underline my argument through discussion of the theories put forth by Bill McKibben, Roger Rosenblatt, Noam Chomsky, Carolyn Merchant, E.O. Wilson, Stephen Kellert, Susan Clayton, Susan Opatow, and Raymond Nickerson. I will sequentially engage this diverse field of practitioners, which includes environmental philosophers, sociologists, and biologists, to support my outlook.

As I proceed, I ask that the reader remain open to possibilities offered by the processes that connect the intangible mechanics of the mind (such as identity, innate impulses, and imagination), to behavioral outcome. I also ask the reader to keep, in the back of his or her mind, the fantastical power of the theatre, a place where the

identity and the imagination collaborate to re-orient the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

A Monday morning, April 2002. I'd taken a long weekend from a teaching post and traveled to Manhattan. Mondays have great significance to theatre practitioners in New York City. It is the day when the theatres are dark and performers are provided an opportunity to do laundry, eat a long lunch at a favorite restaurant, or sit back on a park bench and watch the city move by. Monday morning also holds significance because it, in contrast, is the also day when the Manhattan business world re-awakens. Cab drivers and delivery people on bikes weave through the urban landscape, honking, yelling, and maneuvering in and out of a sea of yellow. Men and women in business attire emerge by the thousands from the tunnels below, traveling forth with an unflappable sense of capitalist purpose. Street vendors call out, promoting their product, as storekeepers and deli managers roll up the ironwork cages that protected their shops throughout the night. Monday morning in the iconic capital of capitalism, an unsettled, concrete, human, and metal landscape.

The previous evening I'd heard from some friends at a midtown pub that a group of environmentalists and performers were organizing a morning protest in the

financial district. The friends offering this information were not "Green types," so the data I received about the protest was vague, absent of key facts such as what specifically was being protested and why. Nonetheless, early that morning my dog Luke and I headed south to the financial district.

Suspecting the protest would be disbanded by the N.Y.P.D., I moved quickly until we arrived in the vicinity. Expecting police, blockaded streets, and the stereotypical multitude of "earthy types" chained to trees, I was surprised to discover a gathering of people, composed of both "suits" and "Greens" alike, on the sidewalk in front of one of the large financial buildings. As we moved toward the center of the crowd I made an unexpected discovery. This peaceful gathering was not only the protest, but it was noticeably absent of the traditional and often clichéd protest behavior. Defying expectations of "protest performance," the staging saw no screaming police, no picket signs, no pepper spray, no accusations being carelessly thrown about, and not one dread-locked N.Y.U. student chained to a tree.

In the center of the event was a 10' x 10' round garden. It was placed on the sidewalk directly in front of a building's main entrance, "planted" during late hours of

the previous evening. The garden itself was strikingly arranged, colorful, and strangely serene. Its most visible occupants, however, were the two singers in the center of the space performing an arrangement of show tunes. The event as a whole thoughtfully and skillfully executed a Green mission. It housed an earth-shaped garden planted amidst the concrete jungle in the capitalist capital of the United States, perfectly positioned to aggravate the entrance of business-types longing to attend to their capitalist agenda. But where was the conflict? Where was the volatile protest behavior?

Having consciously complicated morning access to the building, one might have expected the event to stir dissent. Public reaction to the protest, however, proved to be highly unpredictable. Instead of attracting attention through theatrical conflict, the event drew an audience that desired to interact with the garden. The experience resonated accounts of a similar proto-environmental theatre protest staged two years earlier in France. Covering the French event for *Time Magazine*, Rosenblatt wrote:

French farmers staged a dramatic protest against the European Union by hauling sections of wheat fields that had been uprooted, and cattle and sheep, to the center of the Champs Elysoes. The police rushed to surround this sudden imposition of the countryside on the city, which disrupted business and traffic, and they braced themselves for fistfights between the

citizens and the farmers. When Parisians caught sight of the wheat and the animals, however, instead of reacting angrily, they ran toward them and began to stroll in the fields- lawyers, lovers, farmers, cops-dreamily together. For a few hours on that day, they remembered who and where they were, all were happily back in the country. (Rosenblatt 34)

There are several parallels present between the French and N.Y.C. events. First, both obstructed urban capitalist behavior with an intrusion of non-urban natural identifiers. The second and most significant parallel, however, was seen in each audience's atypical response. Public reaction to the New York City event strongly mirrored the French protest, where "instead of reacting angrily, they ran toward them and began to stroll in the fields" (Rosenblatt 34).

At the New York event, a policeman stood by passively, while business-types and tourists intermingled, all joyfully discussing the purpose of the event. Perhaps more significantly, as in the French event, all were taking valuable time away from a scheduled agenda to step "back in the country" and interact with the garden. Many spectators took this chance encounter with nature to stop and smell the flowers. Many joined in the singing of songs, willingly but unwittingly moving themselves beyond spectator status to that of Boalian performer in this unlikely piece of environmental street theatre. Perhaps

most importantly, spectators at the N.Y.C. event took particular care not to damage the garden. Without fail, when given the choice between being late for work or violating the condition of the garden, people put aside their capitalistic impulses and chose the Greener option.

In addition to the garden's natural draw, the familiarity of the Broadway songs encouraged audience participation and helped illuminate the overall intent of the event. A singer belted a wonderful rendition of "Oklahoma," not so subtly reminding participants about the joys of untamed nature. Another singer performed a melodic and catchy arrangement from the Broadway musical *Rent*. The song included the following testimonial voiced by the character of Maureen:

They've closed everything down, like barns, troughs, and performance spaces, and replaced it with lies and rules and virtual life, but there is a way out. *Chorus (leap of faith, leap of faith, leap of faith)*. The only thing to do is jump over the moon. The only thing to do is jump over the moon. I found myself in a desert called Cyberland. It was hot. My canteen had sprung a leak, I was thirsty. Out of the abyss walked a cow. She said "In Cyberland we're forbidden to drink milk. In Cyberland we only drink Diet Coke. (Larson 27)

Maureen's statement, that they've "closed everything down," implies society's destruction of the natural and the replacement of nature with "lies" and "virtual life." References to the loss of the natural are rampant

throughout Maureen's testimony. Note the "cow," a remaining signifier of the natural world which is only "allowed" to produce manufactured chemical product. The message of the event organizers rang clear in Maureen's testament against our post-Green Cyberland, asserting that "a way out" of the hyper-reality is to make a "leap of faith." By proposing a leap of faith, Maureen calls for a rejection of unsustainable industrial capitalistic values (Diet Coke), in favor of a leap of faith back to the natural (milk). Another key facet of Maureen's testimony involves the uniting of elements suggesting a link to the natural (troughs and barns), and the theatrical (performance spaces). As a unified commodity, theatre and nature are threatened by post-natural progress in the form of "lies and virtual life."

The overall intent of the event was best illustrated a few songs later, when the singers performed an arrangement of "Goodbye Old Pal," from Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. The song relates the catastrophic events that befell a boy who chose to sell his best friend, a white cow, for economic gain. The symbolism in the personification of the pure white cow is vital to the song's intent. The bovine serves as a two-fold representation, indicating man's betrayal of the natural, and the boy's loss of innocence in the face of

his decision. The contrast between the song's lighthearted melody and its haunting message rang loud as the audience participants, many clad in tailored suits with briefcases, were encouraged to sing backup. They repeated the verse, "I guess this is goodbye old pal," while re-connecting with the small piece of Green earth placed between them and the concrete.

The audiences in Paris and New York were comprised of two types of spectators including those who had prior knowledge and chose to participate, and those who unwittingly entered into a public performance and also chose to participate. At both events, scores of people had their work-day agendas disrupted. In high-powered urban centers such as New York and Paris, the stakes of time lost for many of these individuals must have been significant. However, at both protests, audience participants chose, without fail, to suspend their agendas. Instead, they opted to use the chance encounter to re-convene with the natural. Green theory provides us with a logical explanation for these responses, owing the outcome to humanity's universal and innate connection to the natural world.

These examples of Green Theatre protests serve as a step into the next phase of my argument. Using them as a reference point, I can begin to illustrate the power of

Green Theatre in inducing socio-environmental change. In Rosenblatt's view, participants in both New York and Paris encountered Green impulses that inspired them to prioritize a connection to the natural over their work-day agendas. This notion is key, because it begins to exemplify how theatrical activity can re-orient social behavior away from technological drives and back to the natural.

Rosenblatt asserts that several conclusions can be derived from such examples of Green street theatre (where urbanites willingly and unpredictably re-oriented their agendas in order to convene with the natural). He first hypothesizes that, had participants not been given the opportunity to re-convene with the natural, they would have continued to conduct their life disconnected from anything in nature (32). Secondly, Rosenblatt asserts "that the appearance of the natural" (such as a garden or the countryside), "clearly and immediately connected urbanites with a submerged world of sympathy long forgotten or ignored" (32). In his view, these empathetic Green impulses counter the behaviors Wordsworth described as getting and spending. Summarizing his hypothesis, Rosenblatt concludes that a central tension emerges between our immediate and innate impulse toward things Green, and our "civilized, industrialized impulses" (32).

Rosenblatt's final assertion identifies a key issue in Green attempts to alter social mores. Importantly, it acknowledges that elements of contemporary society hold the capacity to draw us away from our Green impulses. For, example, many children are faced with a daily decision: go outside and play amidst the natural environment, or stay inside and watch television? As humans grow into adulthood and become invested participants in techno-capitalist society, the conflict grows more essential. This notion is especially pertinent in light of the fact that, as our societal contribution becomes more significant, the ecological impact of our socio-environmental behavior does as well. In Rosenblatt's view, the tension associated with "this conflict comes to characterize our lives and define us as participants in contemporary Western culture" (32). In an interview with Kate Soper, Noam Chomsky reflects upon the conflict between innate dispositions and capitalist driven behaviors:

KS: Do you think that different social and economic circumstances either block or reinforce certain dispositions?

NC: There's no doubt about it. Marketing is manipulation and deceit. It tries to turn people into something they aren't, individuals focused solely on themselves, maximizing consumption of goods that they don't need.

KS: How come we remain both so globally and locally caught up in oppression [capitalist drives]?

NC: It's a serious question. Why are we born free and end up enslaved?

KS: Is there a case here for viewing social factors more determinant than biological factors?

NC: They interact. The genetic component determines strict limits within which variation is possible. (Soper 5)

In light of Chomsky's comments, the issue for Greens involves creating a scenario where Green impulses take precedent over capitalist addictions. In what fashion can humans be oriented away from destructive drives, and back toward a mutually beneficial connection to the natural? Importantly, if we accept Chomsky's assertion that "the genetic component determines strict limits within which variation is possible," we discover room for innate impulses to re-direct our destructive drives.

In Rosenblatt's view, Chomsky's analysis places great importance upon the noted examples of Green Theatre. Importantly, because agents for socio-environmental change (such as Green Theatre events) provide the opportunity for humans to re-convene with the natural, and re-engage our innate but often submerged "Green impulses." Rosenblatt writes, "For a few hours on that day, they remembered who and where they were, all were happily back in the country" (33).

The discussion reminds me of an experience I had recently. During a visit to the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., I took a stroll through the Gorilla enclosure. There was a young boy playing a Gameboy on a nearby bench, entirely disinterested in the Zoo's wildlife. A large female gorilla stepped out from behind a tree and repositioned herself against the thick glass that separated her from the general public. The boy's mother called "come see her," and reluctantly, the boy approached. As the boy stepped toward the glass, only inches from the gorilla, something significant changed in his demeanor. His focus left the technological device and moved to the gorilla. The gorilla placed her left hand on the glass, palm outward. Tentatively, the boy put his right hand on the glass, then noted the similarity of hers to his. The boy stood motionless. He was awestruck. After a long moment the boy inquired, "What's her name?" The inquiry was a clear sign that the gorilla had become humanized in the boy's mind. Most importantly, his identification with the gorilla had taken high priority over the technological device.

Anecdotal perhaps, but the experience exemplifies the "central tension" that faces participants in Western culture. Importantly, the example directs us back to Rosenblatt, whose analysis isolates a concept vital to

Greens, that no matter how much we get and spend, and no matter how fast we develop and implement technology, humans will possess an innate attachment to all things Green. The example also provides reference to Rosenblatt's assertion that a uniform human connection to the natural "will remain fixed and steadfast in our make-up" (32).

Countering potential argument that undermines the impact of our natural encounters (such as the boy and gorilla), Rosenblatt argues that that our innate Green impulses continually surface in the form of legitimate connections to our natural world. He states:

Everything connects: the hard animals with the soft, the tigers with the jellies, the fly with the cutthroat trout with the fisherman. Hidden worlds connect to the things that hide them. Tide pools connect with the unfathomable seas, which connect with our chromosomes. One cannot think of a single composer, painter, or writer who has not tracked a major inspiration to a tree, a bird, a rose. People automatically lose themselves in a world of reverence at the sight of a curlew or a silver cloud of anchovies or at the mournful wail of howler monkeys. Or they stare dumbly out at oceans, as if longing for their microbial past (Rosenblatt 35).

In the above statement, one notes compelling reference to our microbial past. Behavioral inferences within the term "microbial past" are consequential, illuminating our discussion of humanity's innate connection by reminding us of a time when our connection to the natural was not clouded by capitalism and technology. The terminology also

echoes Chomsky's reference to "the genetic component" (Soper). Inferences to evolution aside, the term "microbial past" points us to earlier eras when human identity was more clearly perceived in context of its relationship with the natural world.

It must be acknowledged at this juncture that my Green assertions may appear to counter some current notions of social constructivism. However, as my argument proceeds, I will continue to disclose research in sociological, psychological, and biological studies that displays how humanity's Green connection both embraces and re-orientes constructivist philosophical notions. Humanity, even in its techno-contemporary state, has deep roots in its relationship to the natural. Although our current state of affairs seems to indicate otherwise, those Green roots are an ever-present part of our collective identity, of *who we are* as human beings. Most importantly, our ties to the natural are still of consequence in determining our immediate and long-term socio-environmental behaviors.

The Webster Dictionary defines identity as "the condition of being oneself or itself, and not another" (349). The notion of "oneself" takes into account all of the elements that contribute to the totality of the human being, both genetic and social determinates included.

However, via Green application, particular attention is provided to the construction of "oneself" as it relates to, and is derived from, our ecological world. This is what Rosenblatt refers to as the "Green identity," more commonly referred to by social-psychologists as "environmental identity".

In the article "Environmental Identity: A Conceptual and Operational Definition," noted social psychologist Susan Clayton provides us with a definition of environmental identity that supports argumentation tying identity to socio-environmental betterment. She writes:

Identity can be described as a way of organizing information about ourselves. Because the social aspects of identity are so obvious and so important, psychologists often overlook the impact of non-social (or at least non-human) objects in defining identity. (45)

Clayton asserts the importance of acknowledging the portion of our identity "that lies in ties to the natural world," such as "connections to specific natural objects like pets, trees, mountain formations, or particular geographic locations" (45). Importantly, she also illustrates the widespread presence of the eco-human identity relationship, noting that it is not limited to "those we refer to as environmentalists." In "Identity," Clayton formulates her observations in a theory of eco-

identity that provides consequential legitimacy to my argument. She writes:

I propose that an environmental identity is one part of the way in which people form self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the non-human natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or similarity, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act to the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are. An environmental can be similar to another collective identity (such as national or ethnic) in providing us with a sense of connection, of being part of a larger whole, and with recognition of similarity between ourselves and others. As a motivating force, a strong environmental identity can also have a significant impact by guiding personal, social, and political behavior. (46)

As a noted social psychologist, Clayton offers a significant contribution to my mission regarding the viability of proto-environmental theatre. First, her theory provides support for the presence of a universal "environmental identity." Additionally, her assertions allow for the inclusion of culturally or socially constructivist determinates, while also legitimizing the presence of an innate connection to the natural life of the planet. She maintains that environmental identity endows us "with recognition of similarity between ourselves and others," a concept that allows for structural or cultural variances within the broader natural context (46). Most significantly, Clayton's assertions demonstrate that the Green portion of our identity (or natural identification

with "what we believe to be oneself"), plays a significant part in determining our socio-environmental behavior.

How then, can we identify or quantify the specific Green-identity relationship that emerged when those New York businesspeople encountered the natural, and re-connected, however briefly, with things Green at the Manhattan street performance? If we acknowledge Rosenblatt's assertion that humanity has a difficult time accessing its Green identification without the actual presence of the natural, how can Green Theatre forms such as Blue Man Group or *The Giving Tree*, which house only representations (not actual elements) of the natural, promote a Green agenda? How can our Green identification be oriented toward promoting positive socio-environmental behavior? Reflecting upon the personal transformation I experienced during *The Giving Tree*, what caused me as an individual to take a temporary sense of empathy with the onstage tree a step further, toward altering my own social behavior? What caused me to take another step forward in desiring to alter the socio-environmental behavior of others? Most importantly, what socio-theatrical process creates "those moments" that facilitate a re-connection to the natural?

Drawing a hard connection between a sense of identification with the natural and the alteration of socio-environmental behavior is an elusive task, as is drawing any hard scientific conclusions about the relationship between behavior and identity. The difficulty arises primarily because the process is not easily quantified, and thus not easily proven. Even the most foundational socio-developmental question, that of nature versus nurture, continues to confound scientists and sociological practitioners in both camps, as well as those contained somewhere in the middle. We know that "nature" (referring to genetic predisposition) plays a vital role in our sociological and cognitive development. We can also ascertain that social learning plays a significant part. However, the exact distribution of those influences as they orient behavior will elude researchers for years to come. Chomsky acknowledged this fact in her statement that "You can't say which factor is more decisive" (Soper 5). We can, however, easily arrive at the vital conclusion that formidable connections to the ecological world can be widely accounted for, and those connections do much to illuminate an innate identity connection between humans and the natural.

For example, sociological studies vividly demonstrate that humans place value upon nature, a value that cannot be accounted for by measures of money, social standing, or material possessions (Clayton 52). Why do many urban dwellers create gardens with their limited ground space? As such, this value is forged within our "Green impulses," and the unquantifiable satisfaction derived from participating in a relationship with the natural.

As I will continue to illustrate, socio-psychological investigations illustrate the fact that humans, via "those moments" of interaction with the natural, are able to renew and strengthen identification with their ecological surroundings. I will also propose that, as a result, humans develop the tendency to engage in more ecological sound behavior. These notions strongly mirror our opening discussion of *The Giving Tree*.

In addition to Rosenblatt, McKibben, Chomsky, and Clayton, scholars from a variety of disciplines (including sociology, psychology, and theatre theory) are striving to address these issues, exploring the relevance of identity to both theatre performance and the natural environment, and how it can be called upon to benefit a Green agenda. As early as 1984, biologist E.O. Wilson stepped out on a limb and published his theory proposing a genetically based

human tendency to affiliate with nature, an innate behavior he called biophilia. The key tenet of biophilia suggests that our relationship to the natural world is a hard-wired part of human nature. It points to a steadfast causal relationship between our innate connection to things Green and the human identity. According to Clayton's *Identity*, "Wilson's biophilia hypothesis proposes that humans have inherited a genetic tendency to respond to the natural environment in certain ways, particularly with certain emotional responses" (8). Clayton also acknowledges, "That like all theories about a genetic basis for human behavior, it is difficult to prove and controversial, although there is evidence to support it. If the hypothesis is valid, then a connection to nature is part of who we are" (8).

Stephen Kellert has elaborated upon Wilson's theory by examining ways in which the biophilia tendency might be displayed. Kellert's work is vital to an argument of behalf of Green Theatre, because it strives to display a causal connection between Green impulses and social behavior. Kellert details the behaviors that develop from what he describes as the link between personal identity and nature, encompassing both mental and physiological indicators that result from human interaction with the natural environment (Clayton 48). Wilson and Kellert's work is ground-breaking

in that it has helped to validate notions of an innate connection between humanity and nature, the same connection Rosenblatt referred to as "Green impulses" following his observations of Green street theatre.

In the noteworthy *Identity and the Natural Environment: The Psychological Significance of Nature*, Susan Clayton and Susan Opatow strive to further the argument connecting identity with socio-environmental behavior. They set out to support Clayton's theory of "natural identity," promoting the idea that our connection to the natural can be capitalized upon to alter behavior that results in ecological betterment. Clayton and Opatow's work is essential to all practitioners, proto-environmental theatre artists included, who seek to promote ecologically sound social behavior by an appeal to the human identity.

Simultaneously acknowledging and surmounting the difficulty of their task, Clayton and Opatow have successfully attempted to provide empirical support to the argument connecting nature, identity, and behavior. Most importantly, they have identified and measured the profound effect our Green impulses have in orienting social mores. In a series of controlled socio-psychological studies, Clayton and Opatow have developed a body of evidence

supporting a cause-and-effect relationship between the Green identity construct and its influence upon our socio-environmental behavior. Their research demonstrates that individuals with the strongest and most active Green identification will predictably engage in more ecologically sustainable behaviors. Importantly, they concluded that our Green identity strengthens as a result of engaging with the natural, or participating in "those moments" that serve to re-connect us to what Rosenblatt purported to be our "microbial past." Clayton and Opatow's work falls in line with Rosenblatt's stance, adding legitimacy to his assertions that the presence of the natural ("those moments") orients social behavior in a Greener direction.

Clayton and Opatow's work has created an important bridge for Green Theatre practitioners. Importantly, it has forged a theoretical foundation for proposing that Green Theatre holds the ability to induce socio-environmental change, notably, by its power to appeal to Green portion of the human identity. The questions that arise for Green Theatre practitioners concerns where and how we draw a relationship between the demonstrated power our relationship to the natural has in altering behavior, and the potential that Green Theatre has in creating the connections that give rise to our Green impulses.

As discussed, Rosenblatt maintains that the "the presence of the natural" re-orient us back toward our "Green impulses." Clayton and Opatow demonstrate that an appeal to those impulses can positively alter our socio-environmental behavior. In Clayton and Opatow's analysis, the process goes as such: in order to change socio-environmental behavior we must first change our thinking, and the most powerful means of changing our thinking is by an appeal to our Green identity. Clayton summarizes, "The natural environment thus seems to provide a particularly good source of self-definition, based on an identity formed through interaction with the natural world and on self-knowledge obtained in an environmental context" (Clayton 51).

In their research, Clayton and Opatow have concluded that Green identity is a formidable influence upon socio-environmental behavior. The Green portion of human identity, though innate and universal, is both constructed and re-visited by "in the moment" encounters with the natural world. These notions at hand, we arrive at a distinct parallel the theatrical shares with the natural, notably its ability to appeal to the human identity and generate Green impulses. In the context of an "in the moment" encounter, the theatrical, like the natural, holds

the power to move us outside of ourselves, engage our identity, and re-orient our thinking as we cognitively move back inside. With a change in thinking comes the potential for positive changes in social mores.

The question that arises once again is *how*. As illustrated by the New York and Paris protests, we see the significance of our Green impulses in directing behavior. In both cases, however, there was the opportunity for direct engagement with the natural. The key, as we have discussed, lies within creating the opportunity for "those moments" that facilitate a re-convening with our Green impulses. Many forms of Green Theatre, such as *Bread and Puppet*, engage this notion by incorporating elements of the natural world into their productions.

I will now attempt to advance my argument by demonstrating how this process can also be achieved by Green Theatre entities, such as *The Giving Tree*, that do not house actual elements of the natural. I will propose, how, in these instances, the *representation* of the natural can also appeal to the identity. The terminology, "representation," will include man-made simulations of the natural, as well as those that are formed in the context of the human imagination.

Raymond Nickerson investigates Green identity and social behavior in his text *Psychology and Environmental Change*. Nickerson's research confirms the role identity plays in determining socio-environmental behavior. Similar to Clayton and Opatow, in Nickerson's assertions, the key to ecological betterment lies in the appeal to the identity, which he maintains will change the way we *think*. In an important additional development, he seeks to demonstrate the importance of finding "non natural" alternatives by which we can appeal to the identity. In his view, this is especially important because we live a world where opportunities to be in the "actual presence of the natural grow more rare" (71). According to Nickerson:

The major challenge is to find the ways to induce behavioral change to make it more environmentally friendly. Behavior in this context includes that of individuals and groups, and the groups of interest range from social, political, and corporate entities to neighborhoods towns and nations. Meeting the challenge is unlikely to be easy, especially important is the need to find effective ways to bring about major and lasting change. (73)

How can a connection to the Green identity be established without the presence of the natural? How can we "find new ways" if, as Nickerson acknowledges in his text, our opportunities to interact with the natural are becoming more limited?

Bill McKibben responds to these questions in his 2005 web article "Imagine That: What the World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art." Expounding upon his revolutionary "end of nature" theory that asserts man and nature are inseparably intertwined, McKibben's article calls out for Western art and theatre communities to respond to the environmental crisis. Echoing a statement by Arena Stage Artistic Director Zelda Fichlander, that she "would love to do Green works "but where are they?", "Imagine That" calls for "playwrights, poets, and artists to create works which will place climate change deeply in the imagination" (Ashden).

"Imagine That" is vital to Green Theatre practice in many respects, including its important role in acknowledging the power of theatre in being an effective way to bring about "major and lasting change" (Nickerson 73). In addition, McKibben's call to the arts fruitfully exposes a tenet that was quietly developing in his earlier *End of Nature*. In *The End of Nature*, he states:

I've spent my whole life wanting more, so it's hard for me to imagine "less" in any but a negative way. But that IMAGINATION is what counts. Changing the way we think is at the heart of the question. If it ever happens, the actions will follow" (189).

McKibben's plea to artists, to bring climate change "deeply into the heart of our imagination" (Ashden), illuminates the relationship between the art of theatre and

the ability to facilitate changes in environmental behavior. Importantly, it acknowledges the role of the imagination in orienting thought processes. McKibben's initiative also addresses the quandary discussed by Nickerson, who also alluded to the imagination by asserting that change comes from altering the way we *think*. Examining the imagination is somewhat like examining Wilson's notion of biophilia. It is admittedly elusive and non-quantifiable. However, the human imagination, as a cognitive process, is a legitimate influence upon the way we think, with what we identify, and ultimately, the way we behave socially. Paralleling noted interactions with the natural that appeal to our Green impulses (such as smelling a flower at a New York protest), the engagement of our imagination in the theatrical context of "those moments" also requires an infusion of our identity (or the "way we perceive ourselves"). As a child watching *The Giving Tree*, the stirring of my imagination in that theatrical context activated my own Green impulses, even in the midst of a production that contained only man-made representations of the natural. In some respect, the representations in the production demanded that I engage my imagination. In invigorating my imagination, I was forced to draw from my own personal development, socio-environmental history, and

notably, my personal identity, in processing the content of the production. The process resulted in the development of a personalized relationship to the onstage entities and to the theatrical experience as a whole. Importantly, it was a relationship that connected with my Green impulses and facilitated the re-orientation of my socio-environmental behavior.

As noted, Rosenblatt hypothesized that the presence of the natural is vital in re-connecting us to things Green and re-orienting our social actions. It is important to note, however, that he also gives credence to the power of non-natural representations. He does so by acknowledging the vitality of the imagination in taking us to a "world long forgotten" (32). The key in both respects, with or without the presence of the natural, lies in the appeal to the human identity. McKibben's theory takes Rosenblatt's assertions an additional step, one that lends immeasurable power to the theatre as a forum for creating socio-environmental change. Significantly, McKibben identifies the imagination as an entity that holds the power to re-connect us with things Green, *even in the absence of the natural*. This concept is key, especially in light of the fact that what we formerly defined as natural has now

vanished, forever intertwined with humanity's identity and behavior.

In sum, it is my proposition, that through encounters that engage our Green impulses, the imagination, like the presence of the natural, has the power to engage our identity and re-orient our socio-environmental behavior. As a socio-theatrical entity, Green Theatre has the distinct ability to create "those moments" that engage the Green imagination. From a structuralist standpoint, it could be argued that the notion of identity is subject to social constructivism that counters the concept of a universal connection to the natural. However, in a proto-environmental theatre experience, as the imagination is activated during "those moments," the identity is directed by our Green impulses to a place that is more collective and universally human.

It is no accident that, in his street theatre analysis, Rosenblatt utilizes terminology that implies the "immediacy" of "being in the moment" with the natural. It is terminology, however, that is also commonly used to define the actor's craft and the related ability to engage the imagination of the audience to "live in the moment" with the performer. In "Imagine That" McKibben concludes

his plea to engage our imaginations in the battle for socio-environmental betterment. He writes:

There also needs to be hope as well—visions of what it might feel like to live on a planet where somehow we use this moment as an opportunity to confront our consumer society, use it to begin the process of re-building community. They don't have to be romantic visions, but a little romance wouldn't hurt. We are all actors in this drama, more of us at every moment. It may well be that because no one stands outside the scene, no one has the distance to make art from it. But we've got to try. Art. Like religion, is one of the ways we digest what is happening to us, make the sense out of it that proceeds to action. Otherwise, the only role left to us—noble, but also enraging in its impotence—is simply to pay witness. (Ashden)

In the opening pages of this chapter, Rosenblatt's remarks were identified in order to acknowledge humanity's universal and inseparable connection to things Green. They also introduced the idea that there are "those moments" which draw us back into a more grounded connection to the natural world. As I have discussed, "those moments" provide us with the ability to rediscover ourselves as defined within our relationship to the natural world. I asked, "What are those moments and what do they house that has the capability to re-generate submerged impulses toward the natural?" With these questions in frame, I set about to provide a keystone in my argument for Green Theatre practice by illuminating the relationship between Green performance, its ability to engage the Green component of

the human identity construct, and its consequent potential to create "those moments" that inspire positive changes in socio-environmental behavior.

"Those moments," as I have discussed, are found in two forms. The first form is an encounter with the natural. The second form is an encounter that asks us to utilize our imagination. Both forms hold validity in re-orienting our socio-environmental behaviors, because both engage the universal and innate impulses that structure our Green identity.

It is my assertion that uniting contemporary green philosophy and theatrical practice in the form of Green Theatre creates a particularly powerful tool for reaching into the human psyche', engaging our imagination, taking hold of that Green part of the identity construct, and using what Rosenblatt describes as those "empathetic Green impulses" to re-orient modes of thinking and socio-environmental behavior and mores. The decisive factor that caused businessmen and tourists alike to stop that morning in Manhattan and sing songs and smell flowers, was an immediate, double-edged call to their personal identities, one edge natural and the other imaginative, followed by the resulting re-connection to things Green. This argument will be further illustrated in the following chapters as I

construct a history of Green Theatre, then proceed toward an examination of Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, Blue Man Group, Project Koko, and Playmakers of Baton Rouge.

CHAPTER THREE
THE EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY
PROTO-ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE IN THE WESTERN WORLD

As the twentieth century draws to a close, many Americans seek to re-imagine themselves. Those most concerned about the future desire new resources and new ideas with which to confront an uncertain and frightening future. Astonishingly, a simple but effective way of bringing individuals and communities together in caring ways to help them locate their identity-both individual and communal-is by sharing stories. Theatre provides an opportunity to discover things about themselves. It offers a way for communities to enact their ideals and values in a collaborative process. (French xi)

Assembling the history of proto-environmental performance, or Green Theatre, is no easy task. This is due largely to its continued development as an emerging socio-theatrical genre, and the history it has of being contained within or alongside the dialogue and practice of other disciplines. Green Theatre as an independent socio-theatrical genre is still in the founding stages of development, and it is just now beginning to forge a presence outside the complicated construct of the larger "environmental theatre" umbrella. However, the structural and historical elements that have informed Green Theatre's recent emergence can be traced back much farther, including numerous strains from applied theatrical practice, to biology, sociology, ecology, economics, political science,

environmental science, and a host of other artistic and scientific disciplines.

The difficulty of assembling a contemporary Green Theatre history is also due in part to the grass-roots nature of its beginnings. This is a functional tenet of its identity that has not lent well to literary publication and media documentation. To date, a history of Green Theatre in the Western world has not been published. All of these factors illustrate the need for the documentation of contemporary Green Theatre history. Requiring extensive research and the merging of documentation from all of the noted disciplines, the task is also a crucial step in continuing to develop the identity of Green Theatre as its own entity. It will also help it emerge from under the vast canon of "environmental theatre," and sustain its own legitimacy within the spectrum of contemporary performance.

The goal of this chapter is to assemble the primary advancements of contemporary Green Theatre, most notably as they illuminate the evolution of the genre in the Western world. This investigation will acknowledge the deep historical roots of Green Theatre practice, but focus primarily upon its development in context of the contemporary Green initiative. The beginning of the contemporary Green movement is marked historically by the

publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962. My discussion will follow a sequential decade by decade examination of the developing form and illustrate how it has achieved its current state. The investigation of each decade will also seek to achieve the following:

1. Note how the era has contributed to philosophical changes in the form of Green Theatre.
2. Expose what developments emerged with regard to its practical application.

Before attending to the primary goals of the chapter, I wish to first briefly re-visit several key concepts that will secure a clear definition of Green Theatre. This definition will focus our discussion and assist in alleviating any misconceptions regarding Green Theatre's purpose and application. It will also help establish its legitimacy as a distinct theatrical genre.

In Chapter One, I put forward a working definition of the term "theatre" as relevant to our argument. On the most fundamental level the word "theatre" simply means "the seeing place," a Greek phrase indicating a social event involving the acting out of stories by performers for an audience. With regard to this dissertation and the goals of proto-environmental Green Theatre, I also noted that what is referred to as "the stage" may be a political

platform, the streets of Manhattan, a field in Vermont, or a traditional theatrical setting (such as a high school auditorium). It may even take electronic form on the internet. I also established that, though significantly diverse, there are several shared components in these variations, including the presence of performer and audience, the performer's awareness of the event's perception as a public performance, and the notion that a performance provides the potential for us to "see something about ourselves, as both individuals and social communities" (Lee xi).

Our definition of Green Theatre necessitates a reach beyond the traditional understandings of theatrical space, but it still encompasses the fundamental presence of an artist, an audience, comprehension of the event as a public performance, and the philosophical understanding that theatre performance holds the power to help us to see something about ourselves.

In Chapter One, I also forged a definition of the term "Green," drawing on Green philosophy and the historical development of Green Theatre practices. The definition marked a departure from earlier Green theory. It indicated a move away from separate notions of humanity and nature toward an integrated eco-human understanding which yields a

more empowered position for change through social devices. The re-orientation of earlier Green practices placed emphasis on the fact that *our human identity, and the identification of what we view as nature, are now forever intertwined and dependent upon one another.* This act of unification necessitates the granting of moral considerability to what was previously viewed as the natural. It also facilitates grounds for encouraging socio-environmental behaviors that promote the sustainability of humanity and nature as a unified entity.

With these definitions firmly established, we can now derive a solid definition of Green Theatre practice.

Green Theatre: Theatrical performance that promotes ecological preservation and seeks to advance the sustainability of humanity and nature.

As this chapter develops, I will illustrate how our definition of Green Theatre encompasses a diverse body of theatrical applications, all of which are unified within the definitive collocation of contemporary Green and theatrical practices.

The primary goal of this chapter, to unify the major developments of the contemporary Green Theatre form in the Western world, will assist in isolating a clearer understanding of the genre's theoretical and practical development. It will also set the stage for the promotion

of continued advancements in proto-environmental performance. Care will be taken to provide a socio-historical perspective surrounding the significant developments and events (but only as they assist in illuminating the specific practice and purpose of Green Theatre). Our discussion, therefore, will unfold as an examination of the key socio-environmental, philosophical, and practical advancements of contemporary Green Theatre in the Western world, with the underlying acknowledgement that its history is highly integrated with coinciding movements in other host disciplines.

The noted grassroots beginnings of the genre, and the conscious choice of many Green artists to disengage from forms of contemporary media, have resulted in the loss of historical access to a host of significant Green Theatre events. Though not represented in the discourse of Green Theatre history, those lost events and practitioners have played a foundational role in developing the genre. It is my sincere hope that, as an investment in documenting Green Theatre practices continues to grow among historians and theorists, many of those "lost" people and places will be re-discovered.

As this study proceeds, it is my sincere desire that tracing the evolution of Green Theatre form in Western world will aid in the accomplishment of the following tasks:

1. In establishing the key philosophical and practical developments of Green Theatre since the onset of the contemporary environmental movement.
2. In distinguishing Green Theatre as a distinct socio-theatrical entity separate from the larger and more elusive umbrella of "environmental theatre."
3. In providing the genre with a historical sense of self.
4. In incorporating the above notions to promote the legitimacy of its practice and purpose.
5. In creating a documented past of Green Theatre which assists in orienting the genre's historical successes, failures, and its goals for promoting ecological sustainability in the future.

In Chapter Two, I referenced a 1999 interview with Zelda Fichlander about proto-environmental theatre in America. Fichlander, the Artistic Director of Arena Stage in Washington, D.C. replied, "I'd love to do pieces about ecology, but where are they?" (May Greening 13). Her comment illuminates several important points. First, that there is a limited body of contemporary Green works.

Secondly, that as a distinct discipline, Green Theatre is still in the early stages of development. Green concerns, however, had crept into popular drama as early as the mid-1800's. In order to better ground our discussion of post-1962 Green theatre history, it's important to briefly introduce the socio-theatrical developments that set the stage for theatre that promoted eco-human sustainability.

The late 19th century seems an unlikely starting point, but it serves as an important entranceway into a discussion of contemporary Green Theatre. In both America and Europe, the 1870's mark the monumental arrival of serious ecological concerns into Western politics and popular culture. This occurred primarily in response to an increased awareness of the socio-environmental changes brought about by the industrial revolution. The Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872, the same year that Angus Smith introduced his theory of acid rain. The Foundation of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds was developed in 1881, followed by the creation of the American Ornithologists Union in 1883, and the year 1885 marked the creation of the Banff National Park in Canada. The founding of the New York Audubon Society occurred in 1886, and in 1892 John Muir formed the Sierra Club (Papadakis xi).

Provided with a foundation of social drama from the early realists, theatrical treatment of ecological concerns found many of its contemporary roots in the works of Ibsen and Chekhov. Against the backdrop of the industrial revolution, Henrik Ibsen's *Enemy of the People* (1882) demonstrated legitimate concern with what Wordsworth referred to as "getting and spending." It also examined the corresponding decay in moral value, a concept that finds its way into Ibsen's view of humanity's relationship to the natural world. Anton Chekhov was also responding to socio-industrial concerns and related environmental consequences in *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). In Chekhov's view, the decay of social values strongly correlated to the decay of environmental values. This fact is illuminated in the play by the simultaneous destruction of social and ecological entities. Though the utilization of ecological issues by Ibsen and Chekhov tend to primarily highlight humanist concerns by being more metaphorical than activist, their work did provide an important foundation for Green Theatre practice. This is made more consequential by their prominent and visible place among the early realists.

The most direct historical influence upon birth of the 1960's social theatre movement was the post-war theatre of the 1940's and 1950's. Western post-war theatre housed

strong social relevance, bringing with it implications of social identification in both America and Europe. In the U.S. these notions found their way onstage in commercially successful plays such as *Death of a Salesman* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, which put into question the hidden structures of power. Environmental conflicts illuminated a dichotomy between the need for national protection, heavily tied into capitalistic identity, and the need to preserve natural resources.

The year 1948 marked the formation of The World Conservation Union, and in 1951-52 the U.S. and Britain began testing nuclear weapons. In 1953 the Soviet Union also started nuclear arms testing. This was followed the next year by the U.S. hydrogen bomb tests on Bikini Atoll. The years 1956-57 marked the enactment of the Clean Air Act in Britain, and the creation of the U.S. Council for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. These were followed by England's creation of the Committee for Direct Action Against Nuclear War (Papadakis xi). To the mainstream populous, the environmental conflict revolving around the use of nuclear weapons fell as a distant backdrop to issues of human safety. However, to the ecologically concerned, the conflict over nuclear testing forged a cornerstone for contemporary Green activism. Although theatre that held an

ecological agenda was not common in this era, the relationship between the arts and environmental activism was conceived in preparation for its birth in the following decade.

In 1951 Maryat Lee began to formulate her concept of EcoTheatre when she produced the play *Dope* in East Harlem. Over the following three decades, EcoTheatre developed into an entity that demonstrated the significant power that theatre could apply in inducing social change. In a 1998 reflection titled *Maryat Lee's EcoTheatre*, William French states:

Those most concerned about the future of our society and our communities and ourselves desire new resources and new ideas with which to confront an uncertain and frightening future. Astonishingly, a simple but effective way of bringing individuals and communities together in caring ways to help them locate their identity-both individual and communal-is by sharing stories. (French xi)

The term "eco" has roots in "house" or "home," and the term "theatre" translates to "the seeing place." Lee's unification of these terms expresses her strong belief that EcoTheatre, or "the place where we see about our home," has the power to "help people discover things about themselves," their history, their ideals, their values, and their relationship to the environment in which they live

(Lee 7). Lee continued to develop her approach to social drama throughout the 1950's and 1960's.

In 1971 Lee moved from New York City to Pawley's Creek, West Virginia, where she revised her outlook. In 1975 she created a new form of EcoTheatre as an indigenous Appalachian drama. The intersection of her theoretical approach and the ecologically grounded culture of the Appalachian people gave birth to a theatre form that provided value to both human and natural representations. Though not specifically exhibiting what current Green practitioners would refer to as a Green agenda promoting ecological sustainability, Lee's work was revolutionary in that it affirmed the inseparable relationship between humans and their natural environment. It also demonstrated the importance of maintaining a functional relationship between the two. Importantly, Lee's EcoTheatre provided a practical and theoretical model for the birth of Green performance practices that emerged from the socio-environmental movements of the 1960's and 1970's.

The 1960's serve as an important gateway to our examination of contemporary Green Theatre history. This era in Green history holds great weight because it marks the onset of theatrical practices specifically promoting ecological sustainability. Correspondingly, the 1960's gave

rise to the first popularly recognizably Green Theatre company, Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre.

Amidst the growing presence of the human rights and anti-war movements, environmentalists were demanding ecological liberation from the chemical and biological threats carried forth from the Red Scare. In 1961, 150,000 people assembled in Trafalgar Square, concluding a Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament march from Aldermaston to London. 1961 also saw the Arusha Conference on Nature Conservation in Africa. The World Wildlife Fund was founded later that same year. The most substantial Green event of the decade, however, took place in 1962 when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a scathing attack on pesticides and biohazards. *Spring* is commonly understood to have given rise to the contemporary Green initiative.

Accessible and sensible to people on all fronts, *Silent Spring* bridged the considerable gaps in social dialogue between the scientific community and everyday citizens. It also incited socio-environmental changes in millions of people that had not previously considered the relationship between social behavior and ecological sustainability. Importantly, *Silent Spring* inspired the onset of environmental legislation. President John F. Kennedy read *Spring* then instructed his Science Advisory Committee to

investigate its key facets. This act defied the recommendations of political colleagues, and also ignored formidable attacks from the chemical industry. In 1963 the Advisory Committee unanimously confirmed Carson's socio-ecological findings. According to Nerlich:

It [*Silent Spring*] made people think about the environment in a way they had never done before and inaugurated the environmental movement. The book demonstrated for the first time that a new technology that seems harmless and beneficial might have serious long-term effects on the environment, on wildlife, and on human health. (7)

Carson's work, and the work of peer activists such as Lynn White, who wrote *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, became an inspiration for theatre in the 1960's that held a Green agenda, most notably Bread and Puppet Theatre.

Founded in 1962 by Peter Schumann, Bread and Puppet's primary focus is upon producing politically-oriented theatre. Though Schumann still resists the term "political theatre," the company became most recognizable for participating in the anti-war movement. Schumann's company utilized, and continues to use, music and oversized puppetry in pageant style to challenge contemporary socio-techno-political ideals. All Bread and Puppet circus pageants are performed outdoors, require community involvement, and are followed by a communal eating of

homemade sourdough bread. Operating in what Bakhtin would describe as the carnivalesque, B&P embraces the public by directly involving the audience in the performance.

I will examine Bread and Puppet at length in the following chapter, but it is crucial to acknowledge the historical significance of the company's Green agenda, and notably, the use of the natural environment in their performances. By bringing theatre to nature, instead of mimicking through naturalistic set designs, Schumann's company allows spectators to become active participants in their natural world. B&P emphasizes the presence of the natural by necessitating active community involvement in their performances.

The combination of the spectacular visual aspect of the pageant productions, and the high level of media attention drawn during their anti-war performances, positioned Bread and Puppet firmly on the national stage and demonstrated the power of theatre in inciting social activism and inspiring change. Because of its visibility in the Western world, Bread and Puppet became a leader and catalyst for the evolution of Green Theatre in both the United States and Europe. Importantly, their work played a large part in inspiring the protest and guerilla events of socio-political entities such as Students for a Democratic

Society, the Weather Underground Organization, and the Youth International Party.

The 1970's marked a time of both conflict and growth for environmentalists in the Western world. This is evidenced by the decade's widespread permeation of Green Theatre practices throughout the United States and Europe. Although the 1960's saw conception of proto-environmental theatre practices, the 1970's facilitated Green Theatre's practical insertion into Western culture. Concerns over the long-term viability of fossil fuels, and corresponding increases in dependence upon nuclear power, fueled a vicious debate over the ecological dangers of energy dependence.

Significantly, the year 1970 gave rise to the first Earth Day celebration, a wide-scale event that included many Green performances, including parades, public demonstrations, dance, and street theatre forms, all of which promoted notions of ecological sustainability. The socio-theatrical developments contained within in the first Earth Day were formidable. Importantly, they marked a move away from protest theatre toward forms that, while promoting ecological sustainability, also fostered a more positive and celebratory outlook that generated socially diverse audiences and public involvement. As described by Nelson:

It was on that day that Americans made it clear that they understood and were deeply concerned over the deterioration of our environment and the mindless dissipation of our resources. That day left a permanent impact on the politics of America. It forcibly thrust the issue of environmental quality and resources conservation into the political dialogue of the Nation. That was the important objective and achievement of Earth Day. It showed the political and opinion leadership of the country that the people cared, that they were ready for political action, that the politicians had better get ready, too. In short, Earth Day launched the Environmental decade with a bang. (Nelson 4)

The first Earth Day attracted over 20 million Americans to protests held around the U.S. The overwhelming success of the event made it clear to legislators that the public had become invested in environmental protection (Ashden). Soon thereafter, Max Nicholson published *The Environmental Movement*, which garnered even greater support for the initiative. That same year the most important piece of environmental legislation in history, the National Environmental Policy Act, was signed into law. The years that followed produced an abundance of environmental legislation, including The Clean Air Act, The Water Quality Act, The Water Pollution Amendments, The Endangered Species Act, The Safe Water Act, The Resource Recovery Act, The Toxic Substances Control Act, and The Surface Mining Control Act. (Papadakis xi). The performances of Green arts/protest groups such as Bread and Puppet Theatre,

Friends of the Earth, and The Don't Make a Wave Committee (which later became Greenpeace) were instrumental in educating the public, garnering support for the environmental movement, and pressuring governmental administration to consider ecological sustainability in its legislative processes. The presence of activist groups propagating a Green agenda soon set the stage for the emergence of Green Theatre in more traditional theatrical formats.

Despite their success in gaining public and media attention, proto-environmental entities like the early Earth Day celebrations and the protests of Green activist groups, received criticism from environmental practitioners for "preaching to the converted." David Holman addressed this concern when he wrote and produced the play *Drink the Mercury*. First performed in 1972, *Drink the Mercury* illuminated the effects of heavy metal pollution on the fishing community of Minamata in Japan. *Mercury* served as an indictment aimed toward industrial and legislative irresponsibility. In the play, Holman integrated elements of traditional Noh and Kabuki with an accessible Western sensibility, creating a work that is visually engaging in production, thought provoking, and most importantly, encourages identification with its primary characters.

Based upon factual incidents, the work is focused upon Ioka, a nine year old boy who succumbs to Minamata disease (a serious illness caused by the intake of metal laden water). According to Fred Hawksley, who directed a recent production of *Drink the Mercury* in Newfoundland, "The story chronicles the struggle of the people of Minamata Bay in exacting justice and compensation for this ecological and human tragedy. The human suffering and legal wrangling still continues" (Hawksley 1).

David Holman's remarkable text holds historical significance beyond its artistic merit, namely for inserting of Green concerns into a traditional theatrical format. Holman's success in examining proto-environmental subject matter in a more traditional form allowed Green issues to permeate non-activist audiences that previously had limited access to Green Theatre events (such as Bread and Puppet, protests, and performances housed within the Earth Day celebrations). *Drink the Mercury* inspired additional theatre companies to follow suit. Importantly, Holman's work demonstrated to theatre practitioners that socio-environmental issues could be examined on the traditional stage and be met with both popular and commercial success. Just one year later year, for example, The Royal Court Theatre produced *Savages*, a play by

Christopher Hampton about the extinction of the Brazilian Indians as a consequence of the invasion of Western ideals.

The growing socio-environmental activism of 1970's facilitated the onset of several other notable Green Theatre events, including the 1974 production of Peter Nichol's play *The Freeway*. Produced by the National Theatre at London's Old Vic, *Freeway* told the story of a highway traffic jam, making a statement about the socio-environmental hazards of technological advancement as iconized in the form of the motor vehicle. The mid-1970's also marked the creation of The Mabou Mines Company, followed just a few years later by the publication of Augusto Boal's revolutionary work, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. With a backdrop that included the highly publicized death of Karen Silkwood, The Mabou Mines Company forged into new theatrical territory.

Founded by JoAnne Akalaitis, Lee Brewer, Philip Glass, Ruth Maleczech, and David Warrilow, Mabou Mines focused on a creative process that deconstructed the traditional methods of producing a production from an independently written script. They achieved this by de-emphasizing specialization of theatrical craft and focusing upon ensemble based creations. According to Gerald Rabkin, "Mabou Mines aimed to create a new experimental synthesis,

one that would suffuse the non-hierarchical ideal of the artistic collective" (Mabou).

Having created over 60 new works to date, Mabou Mines has often taken aim at the abusive relationship between humankind and the natural environment. This agenda is fully identifiable in their play *Animal Magnetism*, described on the Mabou Mines website as follows:

Cheri (a chimp) and Tin Tin's (a rhino) passion plays out on the ground, often amidst giant cartoon projections of themselves, as well as in the air. They soar and swoon in awe inspiring aerial pas de deux. More than a love story, *Animal Magnetism* is also an allegory. It points out our species' insatiable appetite for destroying natural resources and the glaring disparities between the first and third worlds. This socio-political erotico live-action cartoon is one you won't see on Disney anytime soon. (Mabou)

Animal Magnetism exemplifies the key facets of the company's philosophy and places them directly in line with contemporary Green theory. The company facilitates this by illuminating the connection between human social behavior and environmental degradation, or as Bookchin referred to it, that all of our present ecological problems arise from deep-seated social problems. Collaborative in its creation and activist in its intent, *Animal Magnetism* is indicative of the Mines mission and has become a hallmark in the company's large repertoire of Green works.

Another important advancement in the 1970's Green Theatre movement took place when Augusto Boal published *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979). Though not directly ecological in its agenda, Boal's work revolutionized notions of social theatre, serving to legitimize the power and potential of performance as a tool for inciting political change. These advancements did much to facilitate the legitimization of theatre as a contemporary forum for generating socio-ecological concerns. In the vein of Bread and Puppet, Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* breaks down the artistic and environmental barriers between spectator and performer, enabling the audience to become active "spect-actors" in a "rehearsal for revolution" (Boal Theatre 14). Originally based at the Arena Theatre in Sao Paulo, Brazil, "Boal developed a series of theatre exercises which promote awareness of one's social situation and its limitations, individual attitudes, and even how our bodies are bound by tradition" (Catalyst). Boal's work reflects the Green mission by demonstrating the inseparable inter-relationships between history, politics, economy, ethics, and the natural world. Most importantly with regard to the development of Green Theatre, Boal's work demonstrated the efficacy of Green Theatre by examining the nature of social

performance and its ability to create socio-political change in the Western world.

Unbeknownst to many of today's retro-fashioned teenagers, the 1980's were more than jelly bracelets, techno-pop, and big perms, although those cultural indicators are legitimate and telling in their own right. The 1980's saw a monumental surge of technology and media forms that fueled the onset of a popular techno-culture. The corresponding mores and social practices that developed, put at risk the great steps toward ecological wellness that activists and Green Theatre practitioners had made in the prior decade. The 1980's obsession with techno-culture oriented mainstream values away from ecological concerns and toward ecologically destructive socio-environmental practices. This was indicated by the boom in the automobile market and exponential increases in leisure travel and gas purchases. Pop-culture indicators also demonstrated a societal orientation toward the non-natural. For many, mere mention of the 1980's brings to mind calculator watches, expensive cars, Apple computers, big-budget Broadway spectacles, "new wave" fashion, and Atari video games. As consumerist items far removed from any reference to the natural, they serve as indicators that the

Western world had become a bit obsessed with self and capitalist consumption.

Elim Papadakis' *Historical Dictionary of the Green Movement* supports this notion, indicating that, in the 1980's, environmental initiatives diminished in priority as compared to personal and national economic concerns. Amidst Reaganomics and the re-orientation of national identity toward techno-progress and capitalism, Green practitioners discovered they had much work to do to keep ecological issues from taking a distant back seat to *Miami Vice*. This fact was made more poignant in 1982 when the United Nations adopted a World Charter for Nature, endorsed by every nation participating, except for the United States.

Witnessing socio-environmental regression that the necessitated a response, the 1980's saw the emergence of several Green Theatre events of Green historical significance, including August Wilson's play *Angels Fall*, The Precipice and Wan Smolbag Theatres, and various guerilla theatre stunts that led to the creation of Blue Man Group in New York City. First produced in 1983, the same year the movie *Silkwood* was released, *Angels* marks progress toward the examination of ecological issues within a traditional theatrical format. Theresa May discusses *Angels Fall* in "Greening of the Theatre," asserting the

play's importance in advancing the natural as captured in the playwrights dramatic setting. May writes:

Playwrights often underestimate and under-explore the power of theatre's place fullness. In eco-drama, the representation of place on-stage can be more than the backdrop against which human action is played out. Place can drive the action; sometimes it becomes a kind of character with its own agency. (16)

May's analysis echoes the themes of Chekhov and Ibsen, pointing to an important facet in the development of 1980's Green Theatre, notably, that socio-ecological issues could be treated by the presence of "environment" on the traditional stage as successfully as it had in outdoor performance forms.

In *Angels Fall*, the highway is shut down following a nuclear accident in New Mexico, and as a result, a college professor and his wife are detoured to a small church. Shortly after they arrive, the couple is joined by a priest, a Navajo doctor, an art dealer, and a professional tennis player. Despite the diversity of the characters represented onstage, all share one uniform trait; they are trapped because of the nuclear meltdown and potential devastation of their natural environment. Wilson's message rings clear here, illuminating the fact that all individuals, regardless of ethnic or economic differences, share a common bond in their relationship to the natural

world. Wilson's timing in the play's production was paramount, coming five years after the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island, and just a few years prior to the explosion of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union.

1985 saw the emergence of the Precipice Theatre, the same year the bombing of Greenpeace's vessel *The Rainbow Warrior* brought a renewed attention to world environmental issues. Founded by Colin Funk and Connie Brill, Precipice is committed to "acting to make a difference in our environment" (History Precipice). According to the company website "the group was formed out of an urgent need for new and creative approaches to environmental education. A key to this approach is in developing plays that interpreted scientific data for the public in an entertaining format" (History Precipice).

In line with the company's mission, two key facets place Precipice in a position of historical significance among Green Theatre practitioners. These include their methodology of new play development and upbeat philosophy of eco-performance. Committed to producing new works with both socio-ecological relevance and scientific validity, Precipice traditionally produces a new work each spring in association with Environment Week. Each fall the

organization holds a ten-week workshop where individuals from the community, the Precipice company, and members from a chosen environmental organization, compile research that culminates at the end in a rough script. The group reconvenes in the winter, utilizing the draft to hold performance workshops and transform it into a concrete script.

Precipice's body of work includes a wide host of Green texts including *Stumped*, a deforestation murder mystery, *Through a Tire Swing*, a children's musical encouraging ecological responsibility, *Watershed of Tears*, a musical revolving around the Alberta Water Resources Act, and *Trash Pageant*, a beauty pageant that encourages recycling. The above works exemplify the company's mission of creation of new works that incorporate scientific fact. They also illustrate the groups aim for the creation of identification with regional audiences by examining topical ecological issues. Whereas many Green Theatre groups have been criticized for creating works that are too "avante garde," too inaccessible, that alienate the audience, or "preach to the converted," Precipice works to create Green Theatre that is accessible to a diversity of audiences. The company also seeks to educate through positive action. According to the Precipice website:

The object of all Precipice productions is to reach as broad an audience as possible. To achieve this Precipice plays are immersed in popular culture and contemporary folklore. Audience members of all ages can identify with the humorous and larger than life characters. Such a non-threatening approach to promoting environmental education has proven to be an excellent format for communicating scientific concepts and controversial issues. The plays are often performed outside and in unconventional spaces such as grass fields, pools and campgrounds, to reinforce the human connection with the natural environment. (History Precipice)

Precipice's aim to draw upon the relationship between the "human connection" and the "natural environment" draws right from the heart of contemporary Green philosophy. Unlike many earlier proto-environmental forms, Precipice aims to educate, not alienate. Additionally, they embrace the innate connection humans have for all things Green in order to orient audience behavior in a direction that promotes positive change. The Precipice model is also of historical significance because it set a precedent for other educational theatre groups, by creating new works with a proto-environmental agenda (including Playmakers of Baton Rouge which will be examined in a later chapter).

In 1986, only one year after *Bread and Puppet Theatre: Stories of Struggle and Faith* was published, New York City witnessed guerilla events that would soon develop into Blue Man Group. In contrast to Bread and Puppet's use of the natural environment to theatrically promote their views,

Blue Man Group utilizes the concrete jungle to initiate a postmodern eco-humanist examination. This approach is evident in their commercially viable production of *Tubes*. Created and originally performed by Matt Goldman, Chris Wink, and Phil Stanton, Blue Man Group (BMG) incorporates many Dadaistic elements in a non-confrontational, audience-friendly format. The performance illustrates the "insanity of contemporary postmodern industrial society" by emitting incessant cultural signifiers in a seemingly irrelevant context (Blue). Blue Man Group has been described as "Interactive performance art in which three blue performers, backed by a rock band, make music on steel drums and day-glo PVC pipes, splash paint, explore chaos theory and share banquets of twinkies" (Blue). With performances running daily in New York City, Toronto, Boston, and Las Vegas, BMG capitalizes on the urban capitalist environment to make a statement regarding humanity's relationship to the natural in our postmodern world. Notably, the group has advanced the Green Theatre form by demonstrating that eco-humanist issues can be examined in a commercially viable entity, a fact that facilitated the permeation of its agenda into the mainstream culture.

The late 1980's witnessed the publication of several revolutionary Green works including *The End of Nature*, by Bill McKibben, and *Blueprint for a Green Economy*, by David Pearce. The latter part of the decade also saw the rise of another vital Green Theatre group, The Wan Smolbag Theatre. Based in the South Pacific, Wan Smolbag is of historical significance to Green Theatre in the West for three primary reasons: first, for its remarkable success in achieving a Green mission; secondly, because of the successful action it created between environmentalists and government agencies; lastly, for its consequent influence upon the development of Green Theatre in America and Europe.

Based heavily upon the methodologies of Boal and Bread and Puppet, Smolbag engages communities and breaks down the traditional barriers between audience and performers to create a socio-theatrical atmosphere energized for positive change. The company website reads:

Wan Smolbag: More Than a Community Theatre
Working with communities through drama to provide a greater understanding of developmental issues in the South Pacific. Solving Problems Together, energizing communities to take action, and adding drama to the development of the Pacific. (Wan)

Founded in 1989 with 15 volunteer actors and a shoestring budget, the company entered regional communities and produced participatory plays about socio-environmental

issues. Because of its appeal to local identity, the company found success and was soon being hired by government agencies to help spread messages regarding health issues and sustainable environmental. Smolbag's popularity marks a socio-environmental victory for Green Theatre artists the world over, demonstrating how the genre can propagate its proto-environmental agenda while also engaging in a positive relationship with legislative agencies. Importantly, the relationship Wan Smolbag created between communities, environmentalists, and government agencies, provided a proactive model for the emergence of additional Green Theatre entities that emerged in the 1990's.

Green Theatre in the 1990's made great strides toward establishing itself as a productive and independently legitimate theatrical genre. Advancements were made in both the number and quality of companies promoting a Green agenda, with the most significant progress being made in the area of educational and/or youth theatre. The 1990's witnessed the emergence of The Evergreen Theatre and Stage Kids, as well as the publication of notable Green solo plays, such as *In the Heart of the Wood* and *Alligator Tales*. Popular commercial theatre facilitated the onstage representation of Green issues in works such as *Angels in*

America: Millenium Approaches, in which we observe an angel descend to earth through a hole in the ozone layer.

In addition, moderate strides were made in the philosophical treatment and scholarly documentation of Green Theatre. These significant advancements are illustrated by the publication of works such as Theresa May's *Theatre in the Wild* (1990) and *Theatre in the Ecological Age* (2003), Una Chaudhuri's *There Must Be A lot of Fish in That Lake* (1994), Richard Schechner's *Environmental Theatre* (1994), Downing's *Eco-Theatre* (1996), Bonnie Maranca's *Ecologies of Theatre* (1996), Boal's *Legislative Theatre* (1998), Garret Sullivan's *The Drama of the Landscape* (1998), and Alan AtKisson's *Believing Cassandra* (1999), in which the author utilizes the dramatic representation of the Cassandra myth as a metaphor for inspiring ecological change.

The Western political climate also inspired developments in Green Theatre in the 1990's, as the environment became a legitimate voter issue. June of 1992 saw the Earth Summit in Rio where 1,600 scientists gathered in representation of 153 countries in order to sign a petition about the dangers of climate change and sustainable behavior (Ashden). The year 1993 witnessed the publication of Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance*. As Gore and Bill Clinton were setting up

residence in the White House, environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, The Sierra Club, and The World Wildlife Fund experienced increases in membership. Shortly thereafter, the Western world saw the first presidential convention of the American Green Party. The decade came to a close with the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in Kyoto, which set new targets for greenhouse emission standards (Papadakis xix).

The presence of ecological issues on the socio-political stage did much to facilitate the presence of both educational and commercial Green Theatre. Responding to public discourse and the corresponding cry for environmental education, The Evergreen Theatre Society was founded in 1991. As self-described practitioners of "science of the imagination," Evergreen is a touring educational group "dedicated to science theatre of the natural world" (Evergreen). Evergreen's focus is upon creating new works that, in the vein of Boal, Bread and Puppet, and Wan Smolbag, facilitate audience involvement to encourage imaginative engagement with the ecological issues present in the production. As stated on their website:

Evergreen Theatre Society believes that the best way to inspire change in the treatment of our environment is to reach out to tomorrow's decision-makers. We believe the most exciting way to do this is with live children's theatre. In an age of multimedia and electronics,

singing pine trees and dancing ducks are a refreshing and engaging approach. Our goal is not merely to hand over information; it is also to inspire our audiences to seek more knowledge and understanding through a renewed sense of wonder and excitement about the world.
(Evergreen)

The company offers a wide performance menu with productions that relate to the needs of a given community. Evergreen has created and produced over 20 full length works, three full day educational/performance programs, several 20 minute programs, and two musical albums, as well as new plays commissioned by external organizations. In a play titled *Full of Hot Air*, Mr. Methane attempts to take over the world by capturing the Sun, Earth, and Water. A description on the company website reads, "Along with his unwitting sidekick Air, Mr. Methane duels a thermometer, raises the forces of extreme weather with a rapping tornado and discos with a weather woman to learn how greenhouse gases really rule the climate" (Evergreen).

Hot Air exemplifies the Evergreen mission. It also echoes the agenda of The Precipice Theatre. By providing young audiences with an accessible means of understanding natural scientific processes, Evergreen both encourages and enables individuals to make positive socio-ecological choices. The historical significance of The Evergreen Theatre Society is tri-fold. First, its emergence in the

early part of the decade both responded to and demonstrated the social need for theatre-based environmental education programs. Secondly, their continued success at a wide range of eco-theatrical offerings has served as a model for other developing companies that hold an educational mission. Third, the company's incorporation of scientific data within the context of a theatrical performance empowers audiences with the desire to create change and, more significantly, the knowledge to do it.

In "Greening of the Theatre," May discusses two notable Green solo plays that also emerged in the 1990's: *In the Heart of the Wood* by Todd Moore (1994), and *Alligator Tales*, by Anne Galjour (1997). Historically significant as the forerunners to a body of later Green solo works, both *Wood* and *Alligator* were written and performed by their respective authors. Significantly, both also hold importance for their revolutionary and insightful examinations of ecological issues.

Based in Seattle, playwright Todd Moore immersed himself in the ferocious logging conflict in the Northwest Pacific territory and created *Wood* from interview material garnered from individuals on both sides of the debate. Those interviewed included loggers, members of the regional community, and environmental activists. Written and

performed by Moore, the play was produced early on by Seattle's New City Theatre, The Seattle Repertory Theatre, and the Tacoma Actor's Guild. *Wood* has since been performed over 150 times at theatres around the United States.

Moore's work is highly significant in that it enters a volatile ecological debate with reverence for both sides, an approach not common in previous Green works. Moore's methodology is successful in creating open dialogue and challenging the audience to fully investigate the issues at hand. A description of *Wood* on speakeasy.org reads:

Suppose you rejected all the media rhetoric about the fight of old growth forests. Suppose you headed out into the woods to find out what was really happening? Moore brings to life the actual words of men and women to cut through the morass of rhetoric and regulation and delve into the hearts of real people embroiled in this tempestuous debate. In the Heart of the Woods is a Northwest Story, but it is also a metaphor for what is happening all over America. It's a universal story about technological advancement, exhausted natural resources, unemployed workers, dislocated communities, big business, big politics, and the many individual struggles throughout the country to redefine oneself and one's community in the face of change. (Speakeasy)

May acknowledges the significance of *Wood* in "Greening."

She utilizes Moore's work as a springboard to facilitate the production of additional Green works. Positioning *Wood* as a positive example, she encourages playwrights to become more widely educated about ecological issues and the ecology of place so their stories will hold theatrically

viable regional identification. She also asserts the importance of "learning from those that work in the trenches of the environmental crisis" (May 16).

Moore's research, which culminated in *Heart of the Wood*, set a new precedent for Green Theatre. Many past Green Theatre events have fallen into the trap of taking on a critical demeanor that dismisses dialogue with non-Green entities. Mirroring Wilson's message in *Angels Fall*, Moore reminds us that the environment is a shared entity, regardless of our human diversity in culture, station, or belief. *Wood* demonstrates that change can be created through a dialogic vehicle. Importantly, it embraced the social diversity of its audience, and challenged them to enter the ecological debate in an informed and empathetic manner.

Three years after *Wood* first provided a theatrical examination of the Pacific logging issue, Anne Galjour's one-woman play *Alligator Tales* treated the volatile debate over oil drilling in the bayou country of Southern Louisiana. Galjour was born and raised in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana. Her play tells the story of a bayou community caught in the center of a socio-ecological crisis. As May describes, "In *Alligator Tales*, a so-called environmental preservation project has the Department of Fish and Game

playing middleman as an oil company scoops up drilling rights from unsuspecting locals" (May 17). Threatened by the oil company, characters Inez and Sherelle Dantin hold fast to their ecological heritage. Meanwhile, their neighbors sell property in order to purchase an alligator farm. Though told primarily through the lens of Inez and Sherelle, May asserts that the story is unique in the value it provides to all natural manifestations, whether they take the form of the ecologically concerned Dantins, their economically motivated neighbors, or the diverse wildlife in the surrounding ecosystem. As May points out in "Greening," the essence of *Alligator Tales* is derived from Galjour's creation of ecological place. Like *Wood*, *Alligator Tales* brings the audience into the heart of an ecological debate and encourages them to decide for themselves. The Green message inherent in the play is derived not from a stern delineation between what is ecologically right or wrong, but from Galjour's creation of a natural world so fantastical and engaging that it calls out to the Green impulses present in all of us.

Six years into the new millennium, noted Green Theatre works such as *Alligator Tales*, and *Heart of the Wood*, are helping the form take additional strides toward legitimacy as an independent genre. Importantly, we have witnessed

environmental issues surfacing in virtually all genres of contemporary Western theatre. Educational companies have experienced the most solid growth in numbers. Importantly, as ecological issues grow more critical in the public forum, we will witness an even greater theatrical response, most notably within the context of popular theatre (such as *Angels in America*).

In the six years since the "Y2K Bug," we have seen a growing body of proto-environmental theatre. A non-comprehensive internet count of educational theatre companies identifies more than 45 groups throughout the U.S that have treated environmental issues since 2000. This number is staggering when compared to the few that existed in the previous decade.

Two educational works holding historical consequence include Stage Kids: An Edu-Tainment Company's production of *Environmental Awareness: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* (2004), and the Playmakers of Baton Rouge production of *Habitat Cats: A Walk on the Wild Side* (2001). Both companies have made significant contributions to the evolution of the Green Theatre form.

Edu-Tainment was developed with a commercial mission that has allowed it to achieve popularity and economic success. Its success has reciprocally contributed to the

widespread promotion of its ecological agenda. Edu-Tainment's mission is historically consequential, marking an important move away from Green Theatre forms that renounce capitalist culture. Importantly, the company also helped set the stage for the creation of Green Theatre companies that, in the vein of Blue Man Group, advance their agenda through commercial vehicles.

Playmakers of Baton Rouge has contributed similar advancements to the Green Theatre genre. In 2001, the group made the decision to engage in a partnership with corporate energy giant Texaco, in order to create its production *Habitat Cats*. Fifteen years earlier, a partnership between a proto-environmental entity and a global oil company would have been unachievable, not to mention unthinkable. In the vein of Moore's *Heart of the Wood*, Playmakers has put aside the critical outlook, opting instead for the creation of a relationship that promotes dialogue for socio-environmental sustainability.

The contemporary history of proto-environmental performance shows that most practitioners have worked vehemently against tenets of consumerism and industrialism. However, both Edu-Tainment and Playmakers situated themselves as pioneers of Green Theatre by entering relationships with corporate entities often presumed to

oppose the ecological initiative. The non-traditional merging of these entities exemplifies the philosophy put forth by McKibbin, and has paved the road for future entities to follow suit. These types of Green initiatives will be examined at length in chapter five.

One of the most significant Green Theatre developments of the past five years, however, is an increase in theoretical analysis. The treatment of Green Theatre in published scholarship has moved far from its state of virtual non-existence (as was the case seven years ago when I first began doctoral study). The academic community has witnessed the publication of books like French's *Applied Theatre*, Clayton and Opatow's *Identity and the Natural Environment*, and Jonathan Bate's *The Song of the Earth*, as well notable articles such as May's "Earth Matters," Erika Rundle's "Performance and Evolution," Sue and Dave Holden's "The Green House Effect," Sue Welden and Bronislaw Szerszynski's "Between a Rock and a Hard Science," and Bill McKibbin's "Imagine That, What The World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art." The year 2000 saw Platform, a socio-arts collective, receive the Schumacher Society Award, followed by the Green Trust Theatre Company's nomination for the same award in 2003. The Schumacher Award honors people and organizations whose work contributes to sustainable

development. Another notable achievement came in 2004 when playwright Chris Balance was elected as the Green Party candidate to serve in the Scottish Parliament.

The current decade's increase in scholarship is best displayed by noting the inception of several international events. These include the Between Nature Conference held in 2000, the Earth Matter's on Stage Festival held in 2004, and Arts and Ecology, a year long series of symposia, commissions, and publications held in 2005.

Held at Lancaster University, UK, in July of 2000, *Between Nature: Explorations in Ecology and Performance*, was the first major international conference uniting performance and ecology. Hosted through a joint effort of the Lancaster's Department of Theatre Studies and Center for the Study of Environmental Change, the event "brought together original performances, installations, interactive workshops, with academic presentations, dialogues and seminars, all exploring the interface between ecological understanding and performance in order to seek fresh insights" (Lancaster). Described by the group's initiators as a "hybrid event," the conference brought together several hundred participants from diverse artistic, scientific, and activist backgrounds. Those attending included educators, practitioners, and citizens,

all invested in the relationship between scholarship, performance, and ecology. According to the *Between Nature* website:

By bringing together, in innovative ways, cutting-edge developments in the arts, sciences and cultural research, the event sought to reach beyond specialist audiences, to stimulate fresh ways of thinking about how we should live with environment and technology through collaborative projects and critical dialogues between academics, practitioners and other participants. (Lancaster)

The event's success is illustrated by the more than 100 performances, installations, and research articles that were generated, all working to fuse performance and scholarship with Green values. The most significant accomplishment of the *Between Nature* Conference, however, may be the value it holds as a first of its kind.

In 2004, Theresa May followed suit and developed *Earth Matter's on Stage: an Ecodrama Playwrights Festival*. May instituted the festival to encourage playwrights to explore ecological issues. She aimed at inspiring publication and production of much needed Green works. Asserting the unique power of theatre to induce socio-ecological change, May made clear her goals for developing the festival. She stated, "By calling for a diverse range of new works the festival hopes to "usher in a new era of ecodrama" that

"inspires us to explore the complex connection between people and place" (21).

Devoutly interested in works that are derived from a playwright's relationship to his or her own regional environment, May's call for new plays was highly successful. The festival inspired 147 entries from Canada and the United States. In "Greening," May identifies several important works that came about as a result of the festival, including David Edgar's *Continental Divide* and Robert Koon's *Odin's Horse*. Earth Matters assisted the Green Theatre genre in "ushering in a new era of ecodrama," and in inspiring the development of additional Green works (May 24).

Two events occurred in 2005 that have also philosophically and practically advanced the Green Theatre form. These include the Arts and Ecology Symposia in London, and Bill McKibben's "Imagine That: What the Warming World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art." The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts and the Arts Council of England co-sponsored Arts and Ecology, a year long series of symposia, commissions, and publications, seeking to unite the arts with other Green practices. In the vein of the Between Nature Conference, Arts and Ecology explored the power of the arts in promoting widespread changes in socio-

ecological behavior. Arts & Ecology began with debates seeking how art can be used as an agent for socio-environmental change. It also examined what artists were currently contributing to the field. According to the Ashden Directory website:

Arts & Ecology aims to encourage and support artists in addressing ecological concerns; act as a catalyst for new experimental work through residences, commissions and awards; foster links between artists and scientists; and generate new knowledge and a shared language between disciplines. (Ashden)

To date, Art's and Ecology has generated much needed socio-environmental dialogue and research in the arts and related sciences. Its success is a good indicator that additional publications will emerge in the upcoming years.

First "published" on the internet, Bill McKibben's "Imagine That: What the World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art" affirms the importance of fusing theatrical and theoretical Green practices. As discussed in the previous chapters, "Imagine" addresses Fichlander's concerns by calling for "playwrights, poets, and artists to create works which will place climate change deeply in the imagination" (4). Though concise and personal in content, "Imagine That" is a revolutionary step toward establishing Green theatre as a permanent and viable vehicle for creating socio-environmental change.

As an internationally noted theorist, McKibben has simultaneously acknowledged the social-political power of the arts and cleared the stage for the emergence of new Green works. McKibben's article marks an important step in the relationship between Green Theatre and its related theoretical disciplines. Green Theatre practitioners such as the Precipice Theatre have long depended upon data from scientific disciplines to advance their Green socio-theatrical agenda. However, "Imagine That" marks a call to the arts for reciprocal support. To the Green Theatre practitioner, the significance of McKibben's call cannot be overstated. In "Imagine That," McKibben writes:

Our species, ours, has by itself in the course of a couple of generations managed to powerfully raise the temperature of an entire planet, to knock its most basic systems out of kilter. But oddly, though we know about it, we don't know about it. It hasn't registered in our gut; it isn't part of our culture. Art, like religion, is one of the ways we digest what is happening to us, make sense out of it that proceeds to action. Otherwise the only role left to us—noble, but also engaging in its impotence—is simply to pay witness. (3)

McKibben has placed the metaphorical ball back in the court of Green Theatre artists, and provided an opportunity for the genre to assert its presence in the Western world. As environmental issues continue to rise in prominence on the socio-political stage, it is the responsibility of

Green Theatre practitioners to pick up the ball and paint it Green.

Now, in the year 2006, what is the next step for Green Theatre artists? The work of theorists such as McKibben and May have established the need for the creation of new and socially viable Green works. How do we define *viable*? How do Green Theatre practitioners embrace this initiative and meet the goals put before them? From a socio-ecological perspective, the need for the creation of Green works is significant. Given the state of ecological affairs, it is also immediate.

As noted at the outset of the chapter, a primary goal was unification of the major developments of the contemporary Green Theatre form in the Western world. I also noted several problems associated with the task, including the difficulty of accessing the genre's grass roots beginnings, the tendency it has of being contained within and alongside other disciplines, and the reluctance of many Green practitioners to engage in popular culture and forms of media documentation.

These elements complicate the compilation of contemporary Green Theatre history. They also, however, reciprocally demonstrate the importance of completing the task and forging a path for the future of the genre. It is

my sincere hope that by assembling even just the foundational outline of Green Theatre history, the noted difficulties will begin to be countered. Addressing these issues will ultimately benefit the genre by distinguishing Green Theatre as a distinct socio-theatrical entity. It will also provide the genre with a historical sense of self, and promote the legitimacy of Green Theatre's practice and purpose. Most importantly, it will assist in orienting the genre's historical successes, failures, and its goals for promoting ecological sustainability in the future.

What then, *is* the next step for Green Theatre? The answer lies within the means of addressing the three problems stated above. First, more work needs to be done to reconstruct Green Theatre's grass roots beginnings, a task that will continue to legitimize the form as an independent entity and provide it with a historical sense of self. The work accomplished here is only a small beginning, and hopefully one that will assist other practitioners in expanding the historical framework, recovering many of those lost events and voices.

Practitioners must also address the tendency for Green Theatre to be contained within and alongside other disciplines. The key to this issue is to stop viewing it as

a problem, and work to validate and fortify the notion of Green theatre as a multidisciplinary entity. The form must both utilize and embrace the diverse fields of its historical roots. As I have established, ecological problems are social problems with regard to both their cause and cure. Correspondingly, Green Theatre must continue to forge its own identity, but in a manner that recognizes its multidisciplinary history in the fields of activism, psychology, sociology, and biology, among others. Theatre as a social art form holds the power to unify these diverse fields in a manner that has direct consequences upon our socio-environmental behaviors.

Addressing the last problem, notably the reluctance of many Greens to engage in popular culture and forms of media documentation, will have the greatest impact in forging the future viability of Green Theatre. As I have maintained throughout the chapter, many of the genre's great advancements involved placing aside the critical demeanor of early Green events, and forging new ground in a manner that promotes the genre's presence as a dialogic forum. Playmakers serves as a prime example. By building a relationship with Texaco, Playmakers tucked away the historically separatist notions of "us and them" that often accompanies Green performance practices. As a result, the

company was able to attain underwriting for *Habitat Cats*, a production that created environmental dialogue among thousands of Louisiana children. The relationship also opened doors for communication between environmental and corporate entities.

The future of Green Theatre lies in breaking down non-productive barriers and creating new relationships that advance dialogue and contribute to the re-orientation of our socio-environmental behaviors. To facilitate its own future, and more importantly, to benefit the socio-environmental future of the Western world, Green Theatre must continue to develop new modes of application that open the way for widespread public engagement. This act will require a continued expansion of what we define as "the theatre," and the continued development of non-traditional Green performance modes that engage contemporary forms of popular media and technology.

These assertions will be examined at length in the following chapters. Chapter Four will examine the efficacy of Bread and Puppet Theatre in inspiring socio-environmental change in contemporary society. It will also facilitate an argument that supports the capabilities of technological and non-traditional agents of Green Theatre. Chapter Five will continue to assert the viability of new,

non-traditional, modes of Green Theatre in achieving its socio-ecological agenda, primarily as they orient the present and future development of Green Theatre theory and practice.

World history tells us that societies who don't learn from their mistakes ultimately face demise. This notion is especially relevant to the environmental crisis, a global problem with global consequences. All of us have an investment in our ecological future, and to forge a Greener path, we must first look to our past. It is vitally important for Green theatre artists, theorists, and historians, to continue to assemble our Green history, and work together on constructing a plan for a sustainable future.

CHAPTER FOUR
PAGEANT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL POSSIBILITARIANS:
PROTO-ENVIRONMENTALISM AND PETER SCHUMANN'S
BREAD AND PUPPET THEATRE

If indeed the environmental crisis is a crisis of perception, work in the arts can present us a vision, a new perception, and a new impulse to help guide us into the future. (Jim Nollman)

For more than 35 years Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre has utilized theatre, dance, music, art, and oversized puppetry in pageant style to challenge contemporary socio-techno-political ideals by bringing them into a natural performance setting. Although Bread and Puppet's mission holds a socio-political agenda that falls well within a Green philosophical construct, the group has rarely been examined through a proto-environmental lens. This fact necessitates a thorough examination of Bread and Puppet's Green initiative.

This chapter will examine the work and goals of Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, in order to evaluate its relevancy and success in propagating a contemporary proto-environmental agenda. My analysis will provide support that Bread and Puppet was, and continues to be, a significant contributor to the development of Green Theatre practices. It will also, however, argue that Bread and Puppet has become limited in its ability to reach and

engage contemporary audiences. As I will demonstrate, Bread and Puppet's limitations exemplify the need for additional Green Theatre forms that engage and participate with mainstream media culture.

In Chapter Three, I discussed McKibben's "Imagine That," which asserted two key notions. First, it acknowledged the power of the arts in inducing social change. Secondly, it established the need for contemporarily viable Green works. My argument in this chapter will mirror McKibben's assertions and unfold in two stages.

The first stage will investigate the key socio-theatrical advancements of Bread and Puppet. This task will establish the socio-historical importance of the company as an entity that has significantly contributed to the development of Green Theatre. The discussion will also fortify my argument for the viability of Green Theatre as a form that re-orientes socio-environmental mores. This stage will require a focused appraisal of Schumann's goals and successes as specifically relevant to the Green movement.

As a key contributor to the development of Green Theatre, Schumann's company has abandoned negative protest tactics and forged an optimistic philosophy not common in Green entities derived from the protest era. Amidst this upbeat philosophical approach, B&P revolutionized the

utilization of natural environment and audience participation in re-generating Green impulses and orienting audiences back to the natural. In the pursuit of its socio-theatrical agenda, B&P has successfully revived the forms of puppetry and pageantry, positioned itself as the longest surviving non-profit theatre in the United States, accomplished a wide host of artistic achievements, and become one of the most widely recognizable theatre groups in the Western world. As I will argue, two key developments in the company's philosophy contributed to its position as a Green pioneer. These developments include, Schumann's envisioning of Green Theatre as an entity that demands the presence of the natural environment in performance, and his outlook that situated the production of Green political theatre apart from popular culture and mainstream media forms.

I will utilize these same two tenets to enter the second stage of my argument, which will examine Bread and Puppet's limitations. This task will help establish the need for contemporarily viable Green theatre forms. Though inclusion of the natural environment and the shunning of media culture helped orient B&P's environmental philosophy, these notions will also illuminate a reciprocal decline in the company's contemporary viability. I will demonstrate how,

as the company has removed itself from the mainstream landscape, it has negated its own ability to reach audiences. Despite B&P's incorporation of topical issues, the company's continued refusal to engage in popular culture has re-positioned it beside other forms of historical pageantry, notably as a nostalgia work that audiences attend in order to re-generate a sense of the past. This discussion will initiate the argument that many Bread and Puppet audiences exit the experience without the desire to situate the content of the performance into their contemporary lives.

An examination of Peter Schumann's view of nature will contribute to this portion of my argument. Contemporary Greens have forged a definition of nature that fuses it with their conception of humanity. Correspondingly, all environmental problems are social problems with regard to both cause and cure. As argued, this view empowers agents for social change with the ability to re-orient our socio-ecological behavior. Despite Bread and Puppet's diligence in dramatizing Green concerns, the company has retained an older philosophical regard for nature that excludes the identity and behaviors of humankind. This perspective takes form in the company's theatrical message, which promotes idealistic, Thoreau-like notions of the natural that do not

accommodate "the end of nature." My argument will illuminate how this outlook has contributed to the decline in Bread and Puppet's Green viability.

As the oldest surviving not-for-profit theatre in the United States, Bread and Puppet's Domestic Resurrection Circuses are performed outdoors, require community involvement, and are followed by a communal eating of homemade sourdough bread. For example, in a 1997 performance, the company presented a morality play that set the "good of community gardening against the evil of political maneuvering to benefit corporate and political interests" (Jonas 2). Dramatizing an emotional land-struggle between New York corporations and community gardeners, the company used imposing 30' puppets to represent the New York mayor and his political contemporaries. Nine smaller tree-like puppets represented the threatened gardens. Midway through the performance, "the mayor" held a separate trial for each garden and sentenced them, one by one, to death by crucifixion. The audience of over 20,000 became awestruck. The overt religious symbolism was significant, offering a parallel to the well-known story of Jesus, held firm in the spiritual center of the Christian majority. Importantly, it was aimed at creating empathetic impulses for the environment in the

face of its unjust persecution. At the end of the performance came a rush of puppet flowers, puppet animals, and children, from the trees surrounding the playing area. As a unified force, they stopped the destruction of the gardens, not with violence, but with the strength and beauty of their spiritual presence (Jonas 3). The optimism contained in this ending reflects Bread and Puppet's belief that societal degradation of the environment can be stopped, and that theatrical performance can play an active role in socio-environmental change.

The natural environment is a key player in all of Bread and Puppet's circus-pageant performances. By bringing theatre outdoors to nature, instead of staging naturalism through complicated set designs, Schumann's company requires spectators to become active participants in their natural world. As quoted in *Landscape of Desire*, Schumann states:

The best thing we can get out of a pageant here is the clouds or the turning of light. If we succeed in getting an audience to be perceptive only to these elements, this would be perfect, we wouldn't have to do anything. (Bell 5)

B&P emphasizes this notion by encouraging significant community involvement in their performances, exemplified by the children who performed in the garden morality play.

Bread and Puppet pageants have been known to utilize over

200 volunteers. As Schumann ascertains in *Landscape*, it is unlikely that an individual could participate in a Bread and Puppet performance, either as spectator or participant, without acknowledging the significance of the natural environment (Bell 18). Bread and Puppet employs its natural surroundings to re-orient audience thinking to the natural.

The work of B&P is vital for serious examination, not only because of its socio-environmental agenda, but because of its combined utilization of the natural world and social community in its performances. Bread and Puppet theorist John Bell summarizes this notion in *Landscape and Desire*.

According to Bell:

Like more explicit or more easily reducible forms of theatre, The circus pageants are tied to specific events, but also exist for themselves, as shared experiences implying the reconstruction of life and the rebuilding of the world, the experience of participating in an event which is geographically huge and conceptually vast seems to me related to Schumann's audience coming to some sort of agreement about the greater grandeur of the landscape. (23)

It is important to note that the work of Bread and Puppet over the last 35 plus years encompasses an enormous and often elusive spectrum of social applications. Bell acknowledges this in his reference to "more easily reducible forms of theatre" (23). Reflecting upon a 1998 pageant performance, Tim Palmer-Bensen writes, "As usual the pageant was obtuse with much symbolism. Even the

members of a New York City based theatre company, who are regular participants, could not provide an overall interpretation" (3). By noting that the pageant was "obtuse with symbolism," Palmer-Bensen is pointing to the fact that it is often difficult to uncover the thematic through-line of a B&P performance. The complexity of the pageant format and the breadth of its philosophical content significantly contribute to the difficulty.

Peter Schumann openly addresses this issue in discussions regarding the company's mission and agenda. He notes that his works are thematically deceptive to audiences and researchers, and alludes to his complex re-envisioning of traditional pageantry as the cause. The enormous body of his company's work contributes to potential confusion, consisting of thousands of performances enacted within the context of protests, guerilla events, university residencies, community rallies, smaller touring pageants, and the company's circus events. It is difficult, in fact, to isolate a specific agenda of Schumann's mission, a point that he not only acknowledges, but promotes. Bell discusses Schumann's perspective in "Beyond the Cold War: Bread and Puppet Theatre and the New World Order." According to Bell:

Reluctant to explain with mere words the ambiguous juxtaposition of image and sound that characterize the Bread and Puppet shows, Schumann engages in rhetorical diversions. At times he portrays his work in high moral and political tones redolent of Brecht or Piscator, but if the rhetoric heats up Schumann is ready with a feint, it's only puppet theatre, he is just a baker. (Colleran 33)

These confounding factors are escalated by Schumann's reluctance to engage in media culture or subscribe to popular forms of historical documentation. The most significant record of Schumann's work is housed inside the isolated Bread and Puppet Museum, situated on the rural confines of the company's Vermont farm.

However, despite the topical diversity and ambiguous theoretical nature of their large body of work, Bread and Puppet holds an important place within the canon of Green performance. Importantly, the company has indirectly treated ecological issues in *all* of their works by addressing environmental degradation as a symptom within the context of the company's larger scope, a critique of the effects of capitalism in a techno-industrialized culture.

In 2002 I organized a trip for twelve students from Winthrop University in South Carolina to travel to Saint Mary's College of Maryland. The trip involved participation in a three-day workshop with Bread and Puppet. It also

provided the students the opportunity to perform with the company in a production of *Circus of the Possibilitarians*. The students participating were an eclectic group, including several young actors, a graphic artist, two dancers, a developing playwright, a director-in-training (and mother of two), a young man who coined himself as a "rapper-poetologist", an officer in the university Young Republicans organization, and a young woman who was a self-described "tree-hugger" (a descriptive term that she fulfilled in the literal sense). Despite the diversity of their interests and outlooks, all twelve students had been born and raised in South Carolina and were unified by a desire to expand their horizons. They were also bound by their heartfelt belief in the power of theatre arts, and a collective lack of reference for what to expect from their Bread and Puppet experience.

It became clear as we pulled out of the university drive that they had little notion of what lay ahead. There seemed to be minimal comprehension of the enormous magnitude of a B&P performance, or of the socio-political context which thrust the group into the cultural mainstream during the late 1960's and 1970's. So off we drove, due north, crammed tightly into a university van loaded with packs, sleeping gear, food, water bottles, and of course Luke, all of us

bound by a common love for the theatre and excitement for the experience that lay ahead.

Anecdotal remembrances aside, the students' collective lack of knowledge of B&P history and mission is quite telling. Any mention of Bread and Puppet in my university classes seems to conjure up images of the group's provocative peace demonstrations, far removed from a contemporary frame. I closely observed my students as they entered this experience, knowing that their reactions to Bread and Puppet would find form in this thesis. I formulated six questions on behalf of the students that would measure B&P's success in communicating its Green agenda:

1. Would the students identify an environmental message in a performance form so eclectic, so grand in size, and so philosophically and politically encompassing in approach?
2. Would a group of students fairly representative of suburban culture dismiss the group as a bunch of "crazy Yankee hippies" holding on to the 60's?
3. Would they, as representatives of a media generation have an appreciation of Schumann's revolutionary artistry and his profound reconstruction of a traditionally conservative and pro-system theatre form known as the pageant?
4. Would the experience create internal dialogue involving socio-environmental issues?
5. Would the experience create personal change in their socio-behavioral relationship to the natural world?
6. Would the experience inspire a level of passion for socio-environmental issues to the point where it would alter not only their personal relationship to the environment, but inspire them to take another step in

becoming proactive in the environmental movement with regard to the education of others?

Following the performance, I re-formatted these questions into interviews that I conducted with all twelve Winthrop students, as well as twelve non-performing audience members from Saint Mary's College. The results will be examined later in the chapter.

Twelve hours later we were in southern Maryland helping the Bread and Puppet company unload a 1970's revivalesque, hand-painted bus, in preparation for three days of rehearsal and performance. As the spectacular puppets and medieval-looking theatrical devices emerged from the bus, the significance of the event began to register with the students. In one telling moment, a female B&P company member stood by the back-door of the bus and passed a large washer-woman puppet head to one of the more suspicious students, also a female. The student held and inspected the giant head, enamored by its size and artistry. After a moment, the student looked up and asked the company member, "Seriously, so what is this Bread and Puppet show about exactly?" The reply that followed pointed to the title, *Circus of the Possibilitarians*. It also managed to capture the elusive breadth of Peter Schumann's mission. The company member replied, "It's about optimism, and it's

about possibilities." Perhaps not by accident, the same inquisitive Winthrop student would come to play the crucial role of washer woman in the final performance three days later.

The company member's response brought to mind a statement Chekhov made when two of his literary peers, Maxim Gorky and Ivan Bunin, challenged him to provide an accurate description of the sea. If memory serves me, Gorky gave a description recounting the ocean's imposing depth, unknown dangers, and potential for violence. Bunin countered with a flowery account that could only be attributed to an aristocratic Russian poet. After considering both of their perspectives, Chekhov put an abrupt end to the conversation by stating "The sea is huge." Chekhov's brief response simultaneously acknowledged both the internal complexity and aesthetic simplicity of the world's great oceans. The B&P company member's description of Schumann's mission did the same. She succinctly described a theatrical experience that many have found theoretically and theatrically indefinable. As a result, the student was provided with a succinct indication of Schumann's message. Importantly, she was provided an entranceway for accessing a theatre form that, in both theory and application, is often complex beyond the point

of literal interpretation. The company member's comment also delivered a concept vital to comprehending Schumann's Green message: *optimism*.

In response to current environmental data, many Green practitioners have resorted to what may be described as hellfire and brimstone tactics of disseminating a proto-environmental agenda. For example, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has achieved notoriety for their confrontational and well-documented guerilla theatre events. Schumann, on the other hand, rejects alienating and confrontational tactics in his pageants. Instead, he opts to embrace the audience in a manner that allows them to enjoy the performance. He also provides the opportunity for audiences to positively engage with the natural environment.

Schumann separates his form of Green activism far from the negative realm of heated debate and political posturing. This fact is exemplified by the optimistic representations of nature resurrected that conclude his pageants. An example is the rush of children, flower puppets, and animal puppets that concluded the 1998 community garden performance. Schumann chooses to dramatize the natural in a manner that, in line with Roger Rosenblatt's assertions, allows his audiences to "re-

connect with all things Green." Importantly, he does so in a fashion that also holds optimism for humanity's relationship to the natural. As my argument proceeds, I will uncover how Schumann's positive philosophy intersects with his idealistic, Thoreau-like view of the natural, and orients the viability of his company as an agenda for change.

Aligning with Schumann's approach, Alan AtKisson advances similar notions in *Believing Cassandra: An Optimist Looks at a Pessimists World*. The work provides theoretical grounding for Bread and Puppet's dramatic treatment of environmental issues. Importantly, it supports Schumann's notion that the best way to re-direct humanity's environmental behavior is to avoid hellfire tactics in favor of a methodology that encourages optimism and a direct interaction with the natural world. In *Cassandra*, AtKisson utilizes the well-known Greek figure to examine the plight of the Green agenda. As the myth goes, Cassandra was "doomed to a life of despair by the god Apollo," endowed with the ability to see the dangers threatening humanity, but unable to prevent them (22). Despite her desperate pleas, Cassandra went unheeded, the horrific visions came to pass, and those who ignored her ultimately met their demise. AtKisson likens the role of contemporary

activists, such as Schumann, to that of Cassandra; they are endowed with the vision to prevent global catastrophe, yet cursed with the inability to inspire others to action. He states:

To understand that humanity is on a collision course with the laws of nature is to be stuck in what I call Cassandra's dilemma. You can see the most likely outcome of current trends. You can warn people about what is happening, and underscore the need for a change in course. Some people can understand you, and a few may not even believe you and try to take action- but the vast majority can not, or will not, respond. Later, if catastrophe occurs, they may even blame you, as if your prediction set in motion the process that resulted in disaster (self-fulfilling prophets are the most reviled). If, however, the world manages to avoid the potential catastrophe, thanks in part to those who were motivated to action by your warning, many will point to that escape from danger as evidence of your incompetence as a prophet. The role of Cassandra, issuing unpopular warnings of avoidable danger, is a no-win situation. (23)

Despite the aura of doom evoked by his metaphor, AtKisson, like Schumann, exhibits a keen optimism in his goal of re-directing western socio-environmental behavior. He proposes that the foremost task for environmentalists is to escape from "Cassandra's Dilemma." The escape, in his view, involves two primary steps. The first step is discovering what causes the "Dilemma" (one that is clearly not a result of Apollo's jealousy but more indicative of Western socio-environmental behavior). The second step involves ensuring that the horrific predictions of environmental "Cassandras" will turn out wrong.

As he weaves his argument, AtKisson gives expression to the Bread & Puppet philosophy, namely a strong emphasis on optimism. According to AtKisson, his work calls for "a commitment of full passion and energy to the betterment of the World, and the preservation of what is precious and beautiful in Nature" (24). He continues, "Though the word is rarely mentioned, this book is fundamentally about love, the practical kind, the kind that undergirds visions, and ambitious initiatives, and hope itself" (24).

AtKisson's words of love and optimism seem to reflect a 1960's idealism. This facet is also observable in Schumann's circus pageants, a fact that some critics have utilized to suggest that B&P no longer creates viable social works. A writer on a Bread and Puppet fan website discusses elements of 1960's idealism present at the circuses:

There's a strong element of stepping backing time to the heady sixties, the rolling hay fields that surround the site become suddenly filled with tents, RV's, and Volkswagen Micro-buses. Tie-dye flags flap in front of many tents. The sixties generation is always well represented. On fellow, a lawyer, tells of how he flies up from Pennsylvania, lands his plane in nearby Newport, then sets up camp and dons a sackcloth to participate. Young people are here too. Both sexes dress in long pants and skirts. They sport strange hats and wear tie dye shirts. (Bread 98)

Whereas Schumann chooses to disengage from theoretical

dialogue, AtKisson enters the debate with rigorous argumentation. AtKisson's theoretical work advocates Schumann's outlook, inferring that by using the right social mediums, an optimistic philosophical approach can inspire socio-environmental change.

To understand the development of Schumann's socio-environmental mission, we must look toward a few key Green developments in his craft and theoretical assumptions. The task will demonstrate how idealism contained in Schumann's work actually traces back prior to the 1960's, holding a developmental connection to the histories of both puppetry and historical American pageantry. By briefly examining these influences, we will also be provided with historical reference for Schumann's idealistic concept of nature. The foundation created by this investigation will help legitimize B&P's place as a Green pioneer, and reciprocally aid in demonstrating the company's limitations in contemporary society.

In the most foundational sense, a pageant is a procession traditionally associated with both secular and religious festivals, often following a narrative theatrical structure. Historically, Pageants have deep roots in the traditions of medieval festivals, most notably Corpus Christi. Historical American pageantry embraced the

construct of its early predecessors, but utilized the form to insert a distinct sense of Americana. Naima Prevots discusses historical American pageantry in *American*

Pageantry: A Movement for Art and Democracy. She States:

The American pageant was a visual experience with many facets. It was a work of art, conceived on an enormous scale, and called either pageant or masque. It was an evening or afternoon of entertainment; an educational and moral vehicle for change. Performances most often took place out of doors on a site that was in itself a symbol of the even being celebrated. The broad participatory aspect of the pageant production helped define its nature as drama "of the people, by the people, and for the people." (3)

Schumann has absorbed and reconstructed vital elements of both medieval and traditional American pageantry in his art form. Bell examines Schumann's 1960's style re-orientation of pageant traditions in *Landscape and Desire*:

In United States culture the Bread and Puppet pageants are an anomaly; an odd, un-electrified, countercultural spectacle which certainly isn't summer stock theatre, nor a classical music festival, nor an outdoor rock extravaganza. The relatively narrow limits of theatre as defined by American culture are routinely exploded by the works of groups such as Bread and Puppet, often with the result that writers are ill-prepared to understand what it is. If it's not a politically-correct/counter-culture/retro-hippie/love-in/happening with puppets left over from the Sixties, what is it? (6)

In *Landscape*, Bell also asserts the important historical presence of pageantry. He states, "Pageants have long been part of the world landscape, helping every culture in the

world define itself and its people in public, participatory, spectacles" (6).

The first historical American pageant, titled *The Gods and the Golden Bowl*, was produced in New Hampshire in 1905, not far from Bread and Puppet's current home in Glover, VT. A large-scale historical commemoration work, *Bowl* inspired the creation of numerous pageants in the northeast region, inspiring the development of a theatrical genre that commemorated local history. The form utilized heavy doses of folk tale idealism in maintaining and promoting regional identity. A key component of the form, these idealistic accounts of local lore, appear to have been a significant influence upon the development of Schumann's craft. Some representative early pageants include *The Perfect City* (Boston, 1915), and the *The Historical Pageant of Bennington* (VT, 1911) (Radical). Manifestations of these early pageants are still prevalent in the northeast region, taking form in the shape of popular outdoor dramas such as *Blue Jacket* that recant lore and maintain local identity.

By reflecting upon these early pageants, we discover a key inspiration for Schumann's pageant style. We are provided important insight regarding his use of Christian metaphor, and, importantly, his upbeat and idealistic philosophical outlook.

Schumann's inspirations for pageantry as a form of social commentary, is equally grounded in the more historically subversive genre of puppetry. With a lineage deep in the history of Europe and North America, puppetry has often been looked upon as immoral and/or criminal behavior. Historically, social regard for puppetry often fell below that of traveling players, making puppet artists ripe for ridicule (Radical). However, society's downward view of puppetry also positioned the artists perfectly for the engagement of politically and socially subversive topics. Alfred Jarry capitalized upon the subversive roots of the genre as he developed early puppet versions of *Ubu Roi*, his attack upon the Bourgeois (Radical). According to Kerry Mogg, the "anti-militaristic tone of Jarry's work is quite evident" in his puppetry, "as is the anti-establishment primitivism, a popular strategy among dissidents, artists, and anarchists," and one that has found new form in the large-scale pageant puppetry of Peter Schumann (3).

Combining the elements he reconstructed from early pageantry, Schumann was stimulated by puppetry's rich and subversive history of engaging in social commentary. With these inspirations, he began to develop the Bread and Puppet mission amidst the backdrop of the late 1960's social

movements. Though Schumann resists a pinpointing of his company's conceptual framework, two events appear to have been monumental influences upon the development of his Green mission. These events include the Vietnam War, and the company's permanent move from New York to rural Vermont.

Schumann moved from West Germany to New York City in 1962, taking with him his vision for a new art form that unified puppetry, pageantry, sculpture, music, and bread-making. Importantly, he had envisioned a form that held an optimistic stance, reinforced notions of community, and encouraged audiences to examine destructive capitalist behavior. Schumann took his work to the streets of New York, creating outdoor performances, giving theatrical life to neighborhood issues, and engaging in pageant-style peace demonstrations. Anti-war activism also became a powerful influence in B&P's Green development, inspiring Schumann to ground his company's mission as an agent for social change. Importantly, developed his form a manner that retained puppetry's social commentary, but heartily rejected negative protest tactics. He set forth with aspirations of inspiring hope and optimism.

In the late sixties, Bread and Puppet's large scale pageants became an enormously popular and identifiable part of socio-cultural landscape. In the summer of 1970 Bread

and Puppet accepted a residency at Goddard College that necessitated a move from New York to rural Vermont. The company remained in residence at Goddard until 1974. During those four years B&P developed and presented its first Domestic Resurrection Circus. The move from an urban environment to rural Vermont inspired significant developments in Schumann's philosophy. Stimulated by his new ecological surroundings, Schumann began to develop pageants that interacted with the natural landscape. This development that would ultimately come to define the company's Green outlook. In New York, the city was a backdrop for his pageantry. In Vermont, the landscape would become the primary player. In 1974, Schumann permanently moved the company to rural Glover, Vermont, and continued to develop pageant performances with a philosophy that required the inclusion of the natural environment and social community. Schumann's vision was to merge the performance with the landscape, so that both "performed" and behaved as a uniform entity. By creating a performance community in an eco-theatrical context, he was requiring participants to form an active relationship with the ecological surroundings. Through this union, B&P sought to re-orient the relationship between humanity and nature. These aims echo Bell's analysis in *Landscape* that "the

experience of participating in an event which is geographically huge and conceptually vast seems to me related to Schumann's audience coming to some sort of agreement about the greater Grandeur of the landscape" (23).

Schumann's permanent move to Vermont provided a clear indication of his developing interests in a Greener form of activist theatre. It also placed him at the forefront of the postwar back-to-the-land movement. In another telling move, Schumann shunned the media attention that had delivered his message to a worldwide audience. These developments marked his conversion to the position etched by Rosenblatt. In Rosenblatt's view, the power of Green Theatre comes when audiences are provided the opportunity to reconnect with nature. This corresponds to Schumann's belief that an audience's connection to the natural environment holds priority over its relationship to, and comprehension of, the theatrical work at hand.

Two key tenets of the Bread and Puppet philosophy are illuminated by Schumann's move to rural Vermont:

1. The production of Green socio-political theatre necessitated a Thoreau-like relationship to the natural, where audiences have the opportunity to convene with their ecological surroundings.

2. The production of Green political theatre necessitated a removal from popular culture and mainstream media forms.

It is important to note that these developments in the Bread and Puppet outlook run counter to that of contemporary Greens, who assert the importance of fusing our conceptions of humanity and nature.

Ultimately, Schumann's move to Vermont facilitated the development of the annual Domestic Resurrection Circus that had begun at Goddard, an event described as "one of the most extraordinary cultural happenings of our time," and one that has become a foundation for the development of Green Theatre forms in the Western world (Bread).

Schumann's vision for the yearly circus involved the re-birth of traditions once held by the carnival form. As described on a Bread and Puppet fan website:

The circus was a puppet pageant set in the magnificent landscape of Northern Vermont, which adapted the paradise/fall/resurrection structure of old religious plays to a contemporary political setting. The circus eventually attracted 30,000-40,000 people each summer. (Bread)

Bell's portrayal of the circus-event in *Landscape*

contributes to this description. He writes:

In Vermont, Schumann's image-based theatre productions began to reflect the powerful visual impact of the rural environment. In its initial year there, Bread and Puppet inaugurated Our Domestic Resurrection Circus, a day long

outdoor festival of puppet shows, circus, and pageant combining political theatre with a celebration of nature, an event that has developed into the theatre's major annual production. (36)

In *Bread and Puppet: Stories of Struggle and Faith*,

Schumann provides a rare glimpse into the environmental inspirations that led to the development of the Domestic Resurrection Circus. Schumann states:

When we moved from New York City to Vermont in 1970, it became necessary to see and learn and listen in a new way, to invent animals and to understand how to move in a landscape in order to become part of it. We thought that we could produce a cyclic event that would be representative of life in general and of our distinct political environment in particular. We called this event our Domestic Resurrection Circus and have performed it almost every year since then. These presentations with tree-sized puppets and herds of wild and domesticated papier-mâché' beasts depend entirely upon good will; volunteers come from many towns in Vermont and from many states of the Union; some come from Canada, Eastern and Western Europe, and Central America. Up to 200 women, men, and children perform the Pageant. Scores of hard-working students, artists, farmers, professors, mothers, bicyclists, hardhats, grandfathers, typists, and bakers, do the daily chores of clay-kneading, armature building, papier-mâché' molding, flag-printing and costume-sewing. Every summer hundreds of masks, figures, and props, are made, and the biggest puppets that get built are burned in the great bonfire which ends the Pageant. (Schumann 12)

An understanding of the circus' aim and structure is essential to accessing Bread and Puppet's Green message. However, the circus has rarely been examined through a proto-environmental lens. This may be the result of the group's broad philosophical treatments, which have been

described as "obtuse" and "conceptually vast." However, it may also be a consequence of the circus' intricate and complex theatrical structure. As a result, I find it important to provide a framework of the circus event that exposes B&P's Green initiatives.

Schumann's audiences often give varying descriptions of the Bread and Puppet circus events. Attending one is a feast of stimuli, less like a theatrical performance than an amalgamation of a 1960's concert festival, an outdoor circus, and a county fair. The circus is comprised of three primary components:

1. The Sideshows- A variety of short performances and guerilla events that begin in the early afternoon. As Bell describes in *Landscape*, they are "small-scale, repeatable, and arrayed all over the circus grounds, directed to establish and retain a sensibility of story, meaning, and material" (4).
2. The Puppet Circus- A more unified spectacle that brings together the focus of the day (prior to the pageant). It takes form as a series of acts underscored by a brass band, mimicking the structure of mainstream circus performances.

3. The Pageant- The main event of the day, it unifies the audience's focus and the socio-political message of the circus at large.

As the concluding event of the day, the pageant is as close as Bread and Puppet comes to providing a theatrical narrative. It condenses the themes of the side shows and the puppet circus into a large scale puppet pageant. Importantly, it utilizes the natural environment as both backdrop and key player in its attempt to unify the audience's theatrical and environmental sensibilities. As Bell reflects in *Landscape*, "First, it takes place at a moment of real change, when daylight fades into twilight and then darkness. Second, the scale of the pageant is as large as the experience of that setting sun" (5). A review of a 1998 pageant is described on *pbpub.com*:

The Godface, from the beginning of the pageant, is saved by children in the midst of hell. All around them are large red faces convulsing from their meal of the butcher's horses, and the butchers themselves often unable to stand upright. It is an eerie juxtaposition once again of the sacred and the profane. This is highlighted at the end of the pageant as the cow is picked up by its almost butcher, cradled carefully by a suddenly repentant man. Together they light the torch in the right arm of Mother Earth, the torch which then sets fire to the construct of words [representing industry] looming over the scene. The sacred is profane, the profane is sacred. (Crevoshay)

In the pageant we are able to more clearly identify Bread and Puppet's tools for evoking Green thought. As derived

from research, observation, and participation in Bread and Puppet pageants, it is my determination that Schumann engages several theatrical tactics to initiate Greener social behavior, or at the very least, to inspire audiences toward a temporary reconnection with the natural world.

These tools include:

1. The tri-fold structure of the pageant, which holds both religious and natural symbolism in its attempt to reconnect audiences with their natural environment.
2. The larger than life pageant style that merges with the "grandeur of the landscape" (Bell 23).
3. Religious metaphor, which assists in assimilating the Western religious identity with the natural identity.
4. The creation of human community within a natural context.
5. The fusion of the theatrical performance with the natural environment.

Like the day-long circus, the pageant's structure is comprised of three performance units. These include a creation work, a topical socio-political segment, and the final resurrection piece. In its attempt to merge with the landscape, the pageant's cyclic form consciously resonates the life cycle of the event's natural surroundings. It also references the religious symbolism housed in medieval

cycles, implying notions of rebirth as contained in the Christian Father-Son-Holy Ghost relationship. Alluding to the seasonal re-birth of nature, the pageant begins with creation and ends with death, then is followed by a resurrection driven finale'. The inference is that regeneration will occur if preceded by death. In the B&P mission, it points to the regeneration of ecological life that would follow the demise of destructive socio-environmental behaviors.

As exemplified in Crevoshay's description, Schumann's pageants provide a heavy dose of secular symbolism. The religious metaphor takes many forms. Mimicking the Medieval cycles, Schumann's pageants employ the climactic regeneration of the natural (resonating the rebirth of Jesus). Following the "re-birth," the audience is invited to the communal eating of bread. Schumann's utilization of familiar spiritual icons, however, does more than give credence to the history of medieval pageantry. It also employs the Christian ethic of his audience to create empathy for the unjust destruction of the natural. The Bread and Puppet audiences witness the unification of human and non-human elements of creationism amidst an Eden-like environment. To the largely Christian audience, the union asserts the inseparable relationship between man and

nature, and gives credence to the importance of ecology in sustaining the western world.

The insertion of theo-ecological ethics is reinforced at the bread distribution. It would be difficult to participate in this final act of the day without giving consideration to Christian history and practice. However, it serves a purpose more important than the inference of religious metaphor. It also facilitates the development of a human community existing in harmony amidst the "grandeur of the landscape" (Bell Landscape 23). In *Landscape*, Bell reflects upon Schumann's metaphorical utilization of Christian structure and practices:

This is a spiritual function, in fact, but not one connected to organized religions (despite Schumann's use of the traditions of religious theatricality in his shows). Instead, I think, the desire to offer the audience and performers the chance to be influenced by a change of light or the movement of a cloud is connected to the specific personification of Nature in Schumann's Puppets as an active and powerful agent. This is a kind of spiritualism that resists codification into religion, and leads back to the political import of the Bread and Puppet Pageants implicit in Schumann's desire to allow the landscape to "persuade by itself." (22)

However, Bread and Puppet's Green mission is contained most prominently within the resurrection segment, the final third of the cycle. The pageant performance closes with a burning of the large-scale puppets (many of which are human representations), followed by the spectacular rush of

smaller and colorful animal puppets, flower puppets, and children. Combined, these elements represent the rebirth of natural life, and new hope for humanity and its relationship to the natural world. In the construction of his finale', Schumann is reminding the audience that nature has the power for regeneration. It also implies that a release of capitalist addictions as symbolized in the iconic puppetry (such as a 25' George Bush looking figure clad in suit and bloody gloves), will elicit a brighter future. Most importantly, it is in this final moment of the performance where both humanity and nature are revitalized as one entity, and where Schumann seeks to capitalize upon our sense of natural identification. The audience watches the larger puppets burn (signifiers of industry and capitalism), while natural representations re-generate.

At the end of the pageant, the enormous scale of the performance decreases, giving focus back to the surrounding landscape. As a result, the cognitive and imaginative focus of the audience drifts away from the theatrical performance, back to the landscape, and then back toward the individual in a moment of self-reflection. Importantly, this moment of self-reflection occurs amidst the grandeur of the natural landscape. The process is highly reminiscent of Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*. However, in

Schumann's Green variation, "the effekt" occurs during a moment of natural spectacle in which he strives to re-orient the audience back toward its Green impulses.

Schumann has consistently acknowledged the landscape as the primary player in the outdoor Bread and Puppet circus pageants. In an interview with Bell in "The End of Our Domestic Resurrection Circus," Schumann stated:

When you [Bell] started your sentence, you said 'use the environment.' I [Schumann] would say more you approach the environment, you think of it as something that's important as words, or as your other persuasions. When you allow it to do something, it pervades by itself. When you get to see the landscape for a minute stripped of its purposes all of the sudden it has its own meaning" (5).

Schumann's proposal that the environment be "approached" and not "used" gives additional provides access to his environmental sensibility. Importantly, it re-asserts the notion that Schumann's view of the natural does not house the contemporary Green concept regarding "the death of nature."

However, even amidst his reluctance to commit to any specific socio-ecological agenda, Schumann's Green ethic has placed the Bread and Puppet family among the pioneering Green Theatre entities. As discussed in Chapter Two, gauging the success of activist theatre with statistical measures is an impossible task. Reflecting upon this survey

and discussion, we can, however, look at the history of Bread and Puppet's work and conclude that the company has been extraordinarily successful on a number of fronts. B&P is still the longest surviving non-profit theatre in the United States. In itself a remarkable feat, it has been achieved in large part by the company's lack of dependence upon corporate culture for financial backing. The artistry of Schumann's puppets is also astonishing, having garnered the group numerous awards and inspired the formation of countless theatre groups that incorporate large scale puppetry into their productions. Schumann's artistic impact has even reached the commercial theatre industry, showing its influence in popular works such as Broadway's *The Lion King*.

Schumann has also been successful in his attempts to merge the distinct disciplines of puppetry and pageantry, providing new life to both aging genres. Additionally, his incorporation of topical events into the pageant (a style previously limited to the retelling of regional history), has been crucial in revitalizing the pageant form.

Two goals that Schumann set forth to accomplish included the creation of a performance community, and the participation of that community within the context of production. Both goals have been achieved, and continue to

operate at the forefront of the company's philosophy. As argued, audience participation within the performances has become a vital element in all Bread and Puppet productions (on-site pageants and traveling university residencies included). A traveling production such as *Possibilitarians* may demand forty community performers, whereas an on-site pageant may incorporate several hundred. The heavy utilization of children leads to the additional participation of adult family and friends. The end result is demonstrative of Schumann's success in these areas. He has created a performance form that is largely volunteer driven within the body of large scale *communitas*. Within this context, Schumann has also been successful in his aim of forgoing negative protest tactics. He has created a community event that creates community, while promoting notions of sixties positivism.

Perhaps most significantly, Bread and Puppet Theatre has served as a model for the creation of other forms of social theatre in the Western world. The group's influence can be seen in the context of traditional theatre, guerilla events, parades, community fairs, protests, and political rallies. It can be argued that no other contemporary theatre company has had such an impact upon the development of new socio-theatrical styles in the United States. The

company's influence upon American socio-political culture at large is equally impressive. Bread and Puppet emerged amidst the dialogue of an era that continues to define Western culture. With regard to the Green agenda, Schumann has forged a successful path in creating a theatre form that holds the potential to invigorate the relationship between spectators and the surrounding environment. We can definitively ascertain that by bringing theatre to nature, Schumann requires spectators be active participants in their natural world.

Bread and Puppet's socio-theatrical accomplishments duly acknowledged, I wish to now turn to second goal of this chapter in examining the group's relevance and success in propagating a contemporary proto-environmental agenda. Despite an acknowledgement of Schumann's influence upon the development of social theatre forms, the company is currently meeting limitations in its ability to reach and engage contemporary audiences. Schumann acknowledged these constraints in a discussion with Marc Estrin:

Marc: What have you learned in thirty years of dealing with crowds and big level political messages?

Peter: Well, you take a look at the landscape and the culture in America, we have probably very well succeeded to be invisible more than anything.

Marc: I completely disagree. I've seen puppets all over the world that are imitating Bread and Puppet. When people do any parades, any kind...

Peter: The good thing about imitation is that they don't even know anymore that they are imitating, that's fine (Estrin 5).

Schumann's reply to Estrin is highly significant in gauging the group's contemporary relevance. By noting that *Bread and Puppet* imitators "don't know anymore that they are imitating," Schumann is acknowledging a key issue, primarily, that B&P is no longer part of the mainstream cultural landscape. He also implies that *B&P* imitators no longer have a conscious awareness of origins of the form they are drawing from. Schumann's statement that Bread and Puppet has "become invisible" seems astonishing, especially voiced by the founder and director of a company that has received global media attention, documentation in U.S. history books, and still has the capacity to draw 40,000 audience members to a one day theatre event. However, Schumann's comments are telling. They illuminate the likelihood that, as the company has removed itself from the mainstream landscape, its ability to reach audiences has become limited to those who exhibited prior interest in the group's mission and agenda.

Despite B&P's incorporation of topical issues, the company's continued reluctance to engage in popular culture

has relegated it closer to other forms of pageantry, as a nostalgia event that audiences attend to re-gain a sense of the past. As I will demonstrate, many audiences emerge from the production without the desire to situate Bread and Puppet's message into their contemporary lives. This scenario also fits within criticisms of Green Theatre at large, notably that it often falls into the trap of "preaching to the converted." As I will argue, these notions necessitate the development of additional Green Theatre styles that engage and participate with mainstream media culture.

I recently received an e-mail from a former student who had participated in the Bread and Puppet *Possibilitarians* workshop/performance at Saint Mary's College. A portion of the e-mail from the student read: "Hey, those crazy Yankee Bread and Puppet hippies just did a workshop here. I still don't get it. Ok I'll admit it, actually I have no idea what the hell it's about, but its fun anyway." Despite my pleasure that the experience has remained so potent in the mind of this particular individual, the e-mail's inherent message isolated a few key issues regarding Bread and Puppet's contemporary relevance (especially when viewed alongside Schumann's belief that the company has become invisible). Consider the following:

1. The potential that Bread and Puppet is "preaching to the converted."
2. The possibility that many audience members are viewing participation as a nostalgia exercise with little contemporary relevance.
3. The possibility that contemporary audiences simply "aren't getting it," focusing more on the experience of the event and less upon the socio-theatrical message contained within.
4. The likelihood that the presentation method of *Bread and Puppet's* message may simply no longer be as viable in promoting a Green agenda.

After receiving the student's e-mail I returned to the notes I had made following the trip, which included responses from the interviews with all 12 workshop participants, as well as the 12 non-participating audience members. Because collegiate culture provides a good barometer for measuring the development of social and cultural trends, all 24 interviews were all conducted with college-age students. The interview process also included follow-up discussions I had with the participants during the two years that followed.

My primary aim was to gain a sense of how successful Bread and Puppet was in conveying its message to these particular individuals. The interviews and follow up discussions proved to be enormously relevant and telling. The questions and numerical results responses are as follows:

1. Were you able to isolate a clear social or environmental message in the performance?

	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	3	7	2
Non-Participants	2	8	2
2. Is the group's message applicable in present society?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	2	4	6
Non-Participants	2	8	2
3. Do you feel the performance could be perceived primarily as a 60's nostalgia event?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	7	2	3
Non-Participants	9	1	2
4. Did you develop an appreciation of Schumann's artistry and reconstruction of the pageant style?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	12	0	0
Non-Participants	11	0	1
5. Did the experience create individual internal dialogue about socio-environmental issues?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	3	6	3
Non-Participants	2	9	1
6. Did the experience inspire personal change in your socio-environmental behavior?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	2	7	3
Non-Participants	1	10	1
7. Did the experience inspire you toward becoming more socially proactive?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	3	7	2
Non-Participants	1	10	1
8. Was the experience theatrically rewarding?			
	Yes	No	Somewhat
Participants	12	0	0
Non-Participants	11	0	1
9. Were you familiar with <i>Bread and Puppet</i> prior to the performance?			
	Yes	No	Not Sure
Participants	1	10	1
Non-Participants	1	11	0
10. Was this your first live <i>Bread and Puppet</i> experience?			
	Yes	No	
Participants	12	0	
Non-Participants	12	0	

The responses note the profound artistry and theatrical invigoration found in a Bread and Puppet event. However, they also illuminate B&P's limitations in inspiring change in contemporary society. Demanding the most attention are the responses to questions involving the isolation of a social message (5Y,15N,4S), contemporary applicability (4Y,12N,8S), the events perception as a nostalgia event (16Y,3N,5S), creation of internal dialogue (5Y,15N,4S), inspiration toward personal change (3Y,17N,4S), and inspiration toward increasing social pro-activity (4Y,17N,3S). These responses, while not conclusive, do provide a telling glimpse into how the B&P experience, and its inherent social agenda, was perceived by a relative sample of future decision-makers.

Regarding the notion of "preaching to the converted," certainly Bread and Puppet, like all forms of social theatre, has the potential to be more attractive to those who already conform to the group's mores (a notion that would actually make the interview outcome more alarming). A PETA guerilla protest is more likely to draw sympathizers with the group's cause, just as a production of *Alligator Tales* may be more likely to draw audiences concerned with the ecological crisis occurring in Louisiana's bayou country. Schumann expounds on this notion in *Stories of*

Struggle and Faith. He writes, "Political theatre tends to be a slogan theatre that bores the equally minded and offends those customers whose hearts it wants to win. Our Bread and Puppet Shows are not above that" (12). Schumann's statement provides an entranceway for discussion regarding company's decision not to combat "boring the equally minded," or "offending those it wants to win," by creating new forms that engage with contemporary media culture. The decision, according to John Bell, is at the heart of the matter regarding B&P's relative success in spreading its message. Discussing Schumann's hesitation to engage in a radio interview, Bell states:

Schumann has been reluctant to do the interview, a bit weary of fitting in too finely with the gears of the typical mechanisms of culture promotion. But, this is important. Bread and Puppet is not only trying to get an audience, but is in fact trying to get volunteers to perform in the show. The situation is emblematic, both of Bread and Puppet Theatre's role as one of the oldest avant-garde political theatres in the United States and of Peter Schumann's ambivalent identity as a politically engaged theatre artist-opposed to, but inevitably part of, the American society that has nurtured his work since he emigrated to the United States in the early 1960's. (Colleran 32)

Bell's analysis illuminates a paradoxical quality that has become indicative of Bread and Puppet's presence in contemporary America. This quality is demonstrated by the group's work on several fronts. First, Schumann has positioned the company as a pioneer of social theatre in

the United States, yet historically evaded pinpointing a specific social agenda. The structure of circus pageants also demonstrates a definitive paradox by implying the presence a simplistic methodology for achieving social change, ironically dramatized in a format that often defies literal interpretation. A third paradox is present in Schumann's view that his company has become invisible, despite a presence as one of the most widely recognizable theatre entities in contemporary America. All three of these issues point to a complication highly relevant to B&P's challenges as a contemporary Green entity, notably the group's theatrical utilization of the natural environment despite a philosophy that demonstrates historically separatist notions of humanity and nature.

Bell, however, pinpoints B&P's most significant paradox in his determination that Schumann is a "politically engaged theatre artist-opposed to, but inevitably part of, the American society that has nurtured his work" (32). Importantly, Bell's reflection is telling, indicating an issue at the forefront of the company's long-term success as well as its reciprocal decline in reaching contemporary audiences. Correspondingly, the most significant problem for B&P, with regard to the Green initiative, concerns the company's lack of participation with media culture. This

tenet of their philosophy has gradually reduced the company's scope, ultimately confining it within a community of revivalesque, subversive, subculture. This quandary is illuminated by the *Possibilitarians* interview responses, which indicate audience's lack of familiarity with the company, limited ability to identify a socio-political message, a breakdown in perception of that message, and an overall inability to find current social relevance in the work. A follow up e-mail discussion with one of the Winthrop students elicited the following response:

My mother said she had seen them [B&P] in New York during the war and that they were an amazing source of inspiration for people protesting Vietnam. I enjoyed it a lot because it was so different and beautiful but I didn't get that. I wouldn't call it socially inspiring. I wasn't even sure what it was really about. A lot of things I guess. Actually, I couldn't believe that a company member changed her costume in full view of the audience. No pun intended but she should have jumped behind a bush or something. The audience on that side looked shocked and some seemed pissed because they had kids there. They [B&P] still seemed sort of caught in that sixties mentality and I guess now that that things are different it doesn't have the same weight. Very cool nonetheless, but they need to have a better grasp of their audience and maybe their message would come across clearer.

The issues introduced in this e-mail are highly relevant to B&P's success, or lack there-of, in purporting a Green agenda. Importantly, the e-mail identifies the perception of Bread and Puppet performances as nostalgia events "with little contemporary relevance," and notes the possibility

that audiences simply are no longer "getting it" (the message). The e-mail also infers the tendency for B&P audiences to focus more on the experience of the event and less upon the socio-theatrical message contained within.

The most telling indicator of B&P's decline was seen in August of 1998, when Schumann permanently cancelled the annual circus event. The cancellation immediately followed the beating death of man at a nearby campground. The man had come to participate in the circus. Schumann announced:

I want to thank all of our friends and neighbors for years of help and very rewarding collaborations, and announce publicly that this was our last Domestic Resurrection Circus. The culmination of our troubles was the death of Michael Sarazin on August 8, which makes continuation of the event impossible. To our neighbors who know the Circus only from the traffic jams and the extended weekends, we apologize for the inconvenience. To our friends and guests we want to say: We are not going away, we will do other smaller forms of theatre during the summer months here on the Bread and Puppet Farm. (Bread 98)

Aside from the tragic circumstances of a beating death at an event sponsored by a company noted for promoting peace, the experience brought to light many issues regarding the wider perception of the group's message, and the performance experience as a whole. The most prominent issue, as argued, involved a large portion of the audiences not "getting it." Many were attending the event to experience a sense of 1960's era nostalgia. This perception

of the circus ultimately resulted in widespread drug use, violence, and other issues that may seem more akin to a concert festival. Despite Schumann's attempts to address the issues in the years preceding Sarazin's death, the circus continued to gain recognition as a 1960's nostalgia event until it was cancelled in 1998.

Despite B&P's longtime presence as a peaceful entity, and Schumann's attempts to alter misconceptions regarding the group's mission, tragedy struck, and the company was obligated to examine its perception in the public eye. Consequentially, Bread and Puppet was ultimately forced to re-orient its production initiatives.

Bread and Puppet had not changed over the years, but its audience had, a fact that is at the heart of the matter. Although its audiences retained size and interest, B&P's message may have in some part "succeeded in becoming invisible," ultimately contributing to its current limitations.

One must also be careful, however, not to admonish Bread and Puppet for neglecting to further engage widespread contemporary audiences. It must be acknowledged that Schumann has consistently avoided dialogue that upholds a specific socio-environmental agenda. This fact, in some respect, has undermined his ultimate socio-theatrical

mission. It also contributes to the difficulty of critically evaluating the group's efficiency as an agent for social change. However, in some regard, Schumann's elusiveness has also protected B&P from critical evaluation because, in large part, a clear agenda has not been made available for critical analysis.

We can clearly deduce that Bread and Puppet is most successful in "preaching to the converted." Though this notion was apparent in the heyday of the company's social recognition, at the time, B&P also sustained more viability by engaging media culture. As a result, it held a greater capability to provoke widespread thought toward the issues at hand. We can also conclude that B&P productions have, to some extent, succumbed to being perceived as nostalgia events, providing a liminal experience for aging baby boomers and youth culture with an attraction to the 1960's outlook. As a result, many audience members exit the performance experience with no real access to the issues presented.

So where does this leave us in our attempt to evaluate Bread and Puppet's efficiency in inspiring contemporary socio-environmental change? Ironically, the answer lies in a return to the noted facets that first oriented the group's philosophy. First, that the production of Green

political theatre requires a Thoreau-like relationship to the natural world. Secondly, that the production of Green political theatre necessitates a removal from popular culture and mainstream media forms.

Although these concepts defined the efforts of emerging Green Theatre in the 1970's, the necessity of a Thoreau-like relationship to the natural world and a resistance to media culture are, simply put, notions that are no longer viable nor achievable in a world forever altered by technology and global warming. This fact undermines Schumann's philosophy that "when you allow it [nature] to do something it pervades by itself." This assertion, though aesthetically and morally engaging from a Green perspective, is idealistic in that it theoretically positions the natural as an entity independent from humanity. It is no longer enough to offer the audience the chance to be "influenced by a change of light" or "to allow the landscape to "persuade by itself." As ascertained from my earlier discussion of McKibben and the inseparability of nature and humanity, I have established that ecological change demands a re-evaluation of what we define as the natural. Importantly, the definition must envelop both humankind and its socio-environmental behavior. Importantly, we must acknowledge of the role of media

culture and technology in re-defining our relationship to the natural world, and ultimately, in re-defining nature itself. To positively orient social behavior in a Greener direction, it is essential that agents for socio-environmental change, Bread and Puppet included, adopt the contemporary Green philosophy. By maintaining a Thoreau-like view of the natural, and by avoiding the vehicles of media and technology, Bread and Puppet has severely limited the range and effectiveness of its message. It has also positioned itself as somewhat backward in a culture that continues to forge ahead, a culture that must now befriend technology in its fight for an ecologically sound planet. For better or worse, in order to positively engage audiences in the re-orientation of Green values, we must now participate with existing and developing modes of media and technology.

Bill McKibben addressed these issues in a recent e-mail interview:

Q: Historically speaking, artists and theatre groups that carry an environmental initiative have often been labeled as "fringe groups" and placed outside of the mainstream of popular art culture. Do you feel it's important for groups carrying an environmental agenda to participate in mainstream social dialogue?

A: Clearly. In fact, I'm not sure an environmental theatre troupe is such a great idea. It perpetuates the idea that this is one more on the list of special causes, instead of a lens through which the world must

now be viewed.

Q: The recent history of theatre and art groups that carry an ecological initiative tells us that these groups sometimes carry a tendency, often conscious, to remove themselves from popular culture and the utilization of technology such as the internet. What role, if any, do you feel technology and the internet can play in helping arts groups in accomplishing their socio-ecological goals?

A: For better or worse, it is the tool for organizing in our age. And I think it's getting more useful, not less, because people are starting to use it as a way to leverage real world interaction. (McKibben Interview)

McKibben is again pointing the way for artists to address ecological issues. His responses succinctly delineate the limitations of "environmental theatre groups" in promoting change. He also acknowledges the necessity, "for better or worse," in utilizing technology and the internet as tools for organization in re-orienting social mores. From a theoretical perspective, McKibben's assertions are essential. Certainly not to undermine the valuable presence of companies such as B&P, but in again calling for new, contemporarily viable forms of Green Theatre that engage modes of technology as a resource, rather than an opposition.

Earlier in the chapter I referred to AtKisson's *Believing Cassandra*, a work that supports of Schumann's optimistic philosophy regarding the re-generation of our relationship to the natural world. AtKisson also provided

two parallels that the environmental movement shares with "Cassandra's dilemma." AtKisson's two assertions included first, discovering the cause of "the dilemma," then, secondly, taking the steps to ensure that "Cassandra's" predictions turn out wrong. Our discussion of Bread and Puppet, while acknowledging the company's immeasurable value, also draws attention to some significant limitations in their ability to advance a widespread socio-ecological message.

AtKisson's theory provides a new path for Green Theatre. It leads the way for artists to first embrace B&P's optimistic outlook, then engage contemporary audiences in a manner that holds more relevancy to their contemporary lives. By retaining an idealistic view of the natural (one that does not incorporate notions of human behavior in its definition), many Green Theatre practitioners may actually be contributing to "the dilemma." McKibben's statements support this, noting that "it [traditional environmental theatre troupes] perpetuates the idea that this is one more on the list of special causes" (McKibben Interview). To take the proper steps to ensure that Cassandra's predictions don't come to fruition, Green Theatre artists have no choice but to adopt McKibben's philosophy, and

engage media culture and new modes of technology in the struggle for eco-human sustainability.

On a last and somewhat more personal note, I entered this dissertation several years ago determined to succeed, perhaps somewhat naively, in promoting B&P's continued success in achieving a Green agenda. However, I found the task increasingly difficult because it demanded more than a theoretical examination of Schumann's work; it also called for a re-evaluation of my personal and socio-theatrical development vis-à-vis the current environmental crisis. I had been exposed to and inspired by the work of Bread and Puppet during my college years. As a result, I sometimes found it challenging to maintain perspective in appraising the company's success in purporting a Green agenda. Bread and Puppet's work continues to uphold notions of a Thoreau-like relationship to the natural. It implies that by placing aside our capitalistic drives, and giving attention to what Rosenblatt would define as our "Green impulses," the relations between nature and human society may return to a more idyllic form. However, as I have discussed in previous chapters, the consequences of global warming are too severe and far too vast. They have buried any hope of returning to the idealistic visions that once governed what we think of as nature.

However, *Bread and Puppet* still manages to serve the Green movement with energy and vision, continuing to inspire theatrical activism and promote ecological thought. Does creating theatrical solutions to the ecological crisis demand new, contemporarily relevant, technological modes of performance? Yes. Without question. However, though not the most efficient model for reaching vast audiences, *Bread and Puppet* serves another purpose vital to the Green movement. Notably, by holding fast to its ideals. Simply put, nostalgic and idyllic visions of the natural must continue to be re-generated in the collective mind of Western culture. Furthermore, connections must continue to be made that deliver those idyllic visions to our children. Once they forever slip from mainstream consciousness, we lose the potential to joust our imaginations toward the fight for a Greener planet.

CHAPTER FIVE
TRANSFORMING GREEN THEATRE:
THE POST-NATURAL WORLD OF THE BLUE MAN, "GORILLA THEATRE,"
AND
CHUCK AND L. WAYNE'S WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

A living art immediately subject to social change,
theatre possesses a unique capacity to generate new
stories that can root us in a sustainable future.

(May 21)

In Chapter Three I cited Theresa May's 1999 interview with Zelda Fichlander, where the Arena Stage Artistic Director replied "I'd love to do pieces about ecology, but where are they?" (13) In her article "Greening the Theatre," May provides a response to Fichlander's quandary, simultaneously acknowledging a scarcity of Green theatre works and the power theatre has for inspiring socio-ecological change. Ultimately, her article serves as a call to theatrical practitioners to address the deficit and create new and socially viable works that hold a proto-environmental sensibility. In her conclusion of "Greening," May states:

Theatre can help us examine our own ecological identities: where we draw our boundaries and how permeable or fixed are our notions of self, culture, and humanness? When playwrights and eco-critical scholars engage in a deep ecological inquiry of the theatre they can together forge a green dramaturgy, an ecological theatre, which will not only tap the power of performance to shape culture but also revive and transform the art of theatre. Green dramaturgy asks us to reconstitute the world, to re-conceive our notions of

community in such a way that the very boundaries between nature and culture, self and other, begin to dissolve. As theatre participated in our human ecological situatedness, it reclaims its ancient roots as a site of ritual celebration of the reciprocity between people and the natural world. Thus theatre emerges not only as a means by which to investigate the long standing humanist question "who are we?" but also the current ecological question "where are we?" For the former cannot be answered fully without including the latter (May 25).

May's article echoes McKibben's contemporary Green philosophical outlook, demanding a merger of our definitions of self and nature in order to sustain the survival of each (re-discovered as a unified entity). Importantly, she strives to demonstrate the idea of community as relevant to and, defined by, the theatre. May promotes the vitality of that theatrical community in achieving a more ecologically sound re-definition of societal self. She concludes by asserting that without fully understanding "where we are," we will never have the ability to address the humanist question of "who we are." In the vein of McKibben, May acknowledges that our humanist attempts at self-definition are inextricably and eternally tied to our notions of ecological place. According to May, this union empowers the theatre, highlighting its ability to reshape that relationship, notably by appealing to the sense of human community in a manner that actively includes addressing ecological issues.

May's call for ecological attention from playwrights and dramaturges also incorporates Fichlander's concern of "where are they?" As demonstrated in Chapter Three, there is a limited canon of Green theatre works such as Moore's *In the Heart of the Wood*, *Drink the Mercury*, and Galjour's *Alligator Tales*. However, these plays lose impact as contained within an art form that has not facilitated a more widespread and viable treatment of Green issues, especially amidst the context of the current socio-ecological crisis. This concern, and May's call to theatre practitioners to address it, echoes McKibben's plea for Green works in "Imagine That: What the World Needs Now is Art Sweet Art." May and McKibben present a valid concern. Why *hasn't* the theatre community responded in a timely fashion to the current state of ecological affairs, especially given the potential decline in visibility and viability of a historically Green theatre company such as Bread and Puppet? In a recent e-mail interview, I put forth a similar question to Bill McKibben:

Question: Because of its historical roots in responding to social issues, theatre has been described as the "reactionary art." Why do you feel artists and theatre practitioners have been so slow to take on issues regarding the environment and climate change?

McKibben: Because they're not as easily dramatized as the conflicts between people. Because the villains are all of us. Because for a long time people on the left

viewed environmentalism as a kind of a luxury item, not as important as the various forms of human liberation.
(McKibben Interview)

McKibben isolates several factors negatively impacting the creation of new Green works. First, he notes society's tardiness in equating environmental problems with socio-humanist problems. Secondly, he acknowledges the difficulty of dramatizing environmental issues, especially in a format that has traditionally come to define its genre by giving form to human vs. human conflict. If we accept McKibben's assertion that environmental conflicts are "not as easily dramatized," we are again pushed toward an evaluation of the theatrical treatment of these concerns.

This issue was also addressed by Jonathon Porrit, playwright and Chair of the U.K. Sustainable Development Committee. In an interview posted on The Ashden Directory, Porrit was asked, "Why is there no environmental drama? Looking at theatre as a means of communication, how would you answer that?" Porrit responded, suggesting that a traditional theatrical treatment of environmental problems often becomes "preachy" and "unattractive to people." He advanced his point by stating, "and it doesn't work actually" (Ashden Interview). Highly relevant to my agenda set forth at the end of Chapter Four, both McKibben's and Porrit's positions force us further away from dependence

upon traditional theatrical forms for engaging Green issues. In line with my discussion of Bread and Puppet, their views also insert the importance of finding alternative means for theatrically treating socio-ecological concerns in contemporary society.

May gives credence to this notion in her conclusion to "Greening." Although she presents a call to playwrights (as chief agents of traditional theatrical practice), she opens a door to re-defining Green Theatre in her simultaneous appeal to "eco-scholars." With its broad implications, the term "eco-scholars" serves to challenge limited historical perceptions and applications of Green Theatre practice.

This discussion supports our examination of Bread and Puppet and the overall aim of Chapter Four, to explore the need for the development of more contemporarily viable Green theatrical approaches. All signs again point to the importance of discovering "new ways for artists, theatrical practitioners included, to address ecological issues in their work" (Ashden). These notions re-illuminate the limitations of environmental theatre groups in inspiring culturally viable notions of socio-ecological change. Correspondingly, they underline the necessity, "for better or worse," in utilizing technology and the internet as

tools for organization in our process of re-orienting socio-ecological values (McKibben Interview).

Ultimately, to successfully address the demands of the current ecological crisis, the Green Theatre community must re-define itself to encompass non-traditional, technological, more contemporarily viable modes of performance. "For better or worse," positively engaging audiences toward a re-orientation of Green values now necessitates participation in existing and developing modes of media and technology.

By opening our lens of Green Theatre performance to include practices that engage technology and media culture, we discover a broader canon of forms that are currently treating ecological issues through "alternative" modes of performance. Three of these entities include Blue Man Group's production of *Tubes*, the performances of Project Koko as sponsored by The Gorilla Foundation (TGF), and the Playmakers of Baton Rouge production of *Habitat Cats*.

Supporting the overall aim of this dissertation, the philosophical outlook of these three entities reflects my assertions from Chapter One, that socio-environmental change must occur through a re-definition of nature that includes the notions of humanity.

Supporting my assertions in Chapter Three and Chapter Four (and following the call of May and McKibben), all three groups have also set new precedents for Green Theatre practice via their utilization of non-traditional and/or technological modes of performance in encouraging eco-education and socio-ecological dialogue. Furthermore, each entity has forged its own distinct practical and theoretical path in its treatment of ecological issues. As a performance form widely recognized in North America, Blue Man Group has simultaneously deconstructed and revolutionized techno-theatrical practice in its examination of humanism in a techno-obsessed postmodern culture. As an internationally recognized organization, Project Koko has legitimized internet performance in its mission for worldwide ecological education. Playmakers, demonstrating the power of regional applications, has successfully collocated environmental education with techno-industry in its quest to create ecological awareness among the children of Louisiana.

In contrast to Bread and Puppet's use of the natural environment, Blue Man Group utilizes the confines of the concrete jungle to examine eco-humanism in their production of *Tubes*. It is important to note that, to date, there is very limited scholarship on the group. The lack of

scholastic investigation may be a result of the group's eclectic and non-traditional mode of performance, as well as the corresponding difficulty of categorizing *Tubes* by theatrical style or genre. The group's commercial success may also lend to the lack of published scholarship. The popularity of *Tubes* among American audiences has garnered BMG significant media attention, a fact that may encourage scholars to dismiss its value for critical evaluation. Correspondingly, the performances of Blue Man Group have not been examined from a proto-environmental lens. These facts affirm the significance of a discussion of proto-environmental issues as contained within Blue Man Group's *Tubes*.

Created and originally performed by Matt Goldman, Chris Wink, and Phil Stanton, Blue Man Group was inspired by, and conceived amidst, the high-brow pretense and techno-obsession of 1980's New York City art-culture. In *The Actor Speaks*, Janet Sonenberg states:

In the tradition of the 19th and early 20th centuries, Blue Man Group holds salons. Dissatisfied with the intense career absorption of the 1980's and its exclusionary intellectual nature, they met to discuss ideas. While they didn't necessarily understand these ideas, they allowed them to spark their creativity and imagination. Undaunted by what they failed to understand they made art. This inclusionary attitude goes beyond ideas and material; a significant part of their agenda is the creation of a live theatre ritual in

which the audience plays an integral part in the tribal community. (47)

With inspiration derived from the salon-style meetings, Goldman, Wink, and Stanton initiated development of the Blue Man character and began to make guerilla appearances on the streets of Manhattan. Shortly thereafter, these performances were followed by demonstrations in art spaces around the city. The founders explored numerous alternatives for the character, including his color, the number of Blue Men, and the means by which to establish his emotional development. Finally arriving at the color blue (they wanted him to seem "like a painting come to life"), the number three (because "three puts you where community and isolation meet"), and a non-speaking character ("because suddenly our personalities went away and this other character showed up who was more profound"), the group merged with musicians to create a production at Café La Mama (Avins 6). The culmination of that performance led to the fully developed production of *Tubes* currently housed at the Astor Place Theatre. Ultimately, it contributed to the rise of the economic and cultural force now known as Blue Man Productions.

As a sort of postmodern, virtualesque, collage of music, theatre, media, and performance art, *Tubes* defies the

boundaries of pre-existing theatrical genres. Isolating a specific socio-theatrical agenda within the production can also prove difficult, given the quick and continuously evolving cinematic structure of the performance. In an interview with Regis Philbin, Goldman stated, "I firmly believe the reason people would come to the show six or eight times is they'd try to describe it to their friends and they couldn't, so they'd just bring them" (Avins 76).

Refusing to be limited by definition and genre classification, *Tubes* incorporates many technological and Dadaistic elements in a non-confrontational, audience-friendly format. A review posted on the *BMG* website stated that "Blue Man Group is interactive performance art in which three blue performers, backed by a rock band, make music on steel drums and day-glo PVC pipes, splash paint, explore chaos theory and share banquets of twinkies" (Blue Continues). In a review of the Las Vegas production, *Los Angeles Times* critic Michael Phillips referred to it as a "postmodern vaudeville routine" (Avins 77). A concise and poignant description of *Tubes* was posted by an external source on the *BMG* website. It stated that *Tubes* illustrates "the insanity of contemporary postmodern industrial society by emitting incessant cultural signifiers toward the

audience in a seemingly irrelevant context" (Blue Continues).

Despite the difficulty of providing clear descriptive terminology, several thematic elements can be isolated in *Tubes*, all relevant to the three founders' loathsome view of self-absorbed and techno-obsessed 1980's culture. Also highly relevant to the contemporary Green initiative the themes include:

1. An examination of postmodern techno-culture.
2. An examination of humanism as re-defined in the context of an anthropocentric culture eradicating its ties to the natural.

In *Tubes'* visually engaging and playful MTV-style Vaudeville format, Wink, Goldman, and Stanton present an entertaining, yet highly legitimate, inquiry into Western man's anthropocentrism, the natural environment, and the difficulty of defining humanity as an entity Rosenblatt described as being caught between our impulses for things Green, and our "civilized, industrialized impulses" (Rosenblatt 32). The creation of a techno-theatrical environment is paramount in *Tubes*. With performances running daily in New York City, Boston, Toronto, and Las Vegas, BMG relies upon the aura of capitalist urban America to present their critical examination of humanity in the

technological world. The theatrical space is also demonstrative of their agenda. In all of their performance venues, BMG has designed both the lobby and stage to resemble an imaginary, futuristic, non-descript, technological setting. Additionally, both spaces are void of any sense of the natural.

During the performance, the three indistinguishable Blue Man characters encourage BMG's exploration by radiating a sense of lost humanity. Emphasizing this notion is their loss of individual identity. BMG has created three identical blue characters, uniformly lost in a world of incessant stimuli, and in search of some sort of natural grounding. This is a provocative statement by BMG regarding America's obsession with self, its corresponding departure from the natural world, and the consequent loss of human identity.

To emphasize the notion of identity loss as related to the loss of the natural, all three Blue Men are incapable of speaking. Importantly, they are forced to communicate via a language of actions and performance art gestures that are heavily responsive to the host of technological and cultural signifiers the characters encounter during the performance. Blue Man is the embodiment of Baudrillard's vision. He is caught in a postmodern vacuum, incapable of

regaining any true sense of self, with no viable hope for re-connection to the natural world. At one poignant moment in the performance a Blue Man holds up a canvas with the skeleton of a fish glued to it. He displays it to the audience and the other two Blue Men. In Blue Man's world, the only surviving elements of the natural are those that indicate its demise. One of the two observing Blue Men responds to the skeleton by holding up a sign saying "I think it has something to do with censorship." His act simultaneously demonstrates humanity's self-absorption and its inability to measure the consequences of "the end of nature." The "fish art" is a clear reminder to audiences that Blue Man now exists in a world that holds little hope for a re-connection to the natural. As a result, he must continue to forage for self in an "environment" that consists of non-stop, erratic, reminders of humanity's anthropocentrism.

Perhaps most importantly with regard to a proto-environmental initiative, BMG's presentation does not free Blue Man from responsibility for the creation of his plight. It is here that we discover the most poignant avowal regarding mankind's relationship to the natural. eerily mirroring the predicament of humanity in contemporary society, curious Blue Man is a living

contradiction of himself, having created and fueled his own socio-environmental disaster. Caught in his fast and furious world, he innately craves the natural, but simultaneously destroys any hope for a rekindled relationship with the environment because of his uncontrollable addiction to the techno-cultural signifiers that have come to define his existence. In response to the non-stop stimuli that come his way, Blue Man plays with sounds, media, food, and a host of technological indicators, progressing through the performance without will or power to address his plight. Blue Man's situation exemplifies McKibben's theory that nature as a force independent of humankind is dead, and that any remaining hope requires a re-definition of humanity and nature that unifies the two. Blue Man's state also re-illuminates Rosenblatt's assertion, that a paramount tension is created between our immediate and innate impulse toward all things Green and our "civilized industrialized impulses."

After the performance of *Tubes* concludes, audiences leave the world of the Blue Man, pass through a lobby riddled with technological signifiers, then step onto the streets of urban America. Their exit experience serves as a chorus to the assertions of Rosenblatt and May, notably that like Blue Man, we are currently destroying a

fundamental agent of our humanity, notably the natural world that defines "who" and "where" we are.

Some traditional Green Theatre practitioners would view *Blue Man Group* and note the overwhelming economic success of *Tubes* as suspect. They may question the group's decision to perform in "nature free zones" such as Manhattan, Toronto, Boston, and Las Vegas, as well as BMG's participation in a host of Pentium television spots. In an older, traditional Green view, these factors would seem to remove BMG from classification as a socio-ecological group, labeling them as an entity that demonstrates capitalistic determinism. In her article "True Blue to and Artistic Vision," Mimi Avins presented this issue to the BMG founders. She asked, "How to you achieve global commercial domination and not lose your soul?"

It is my assertion that the group's interaction with technology and media culture, especially as relevant to our examination of *Bread and Puppet*, positions Blue Man Group as an unlikely forerunner for the much needed development of contemporary Green theatre works. Goldman, Stanton, and Wink, have avoided the problems experienced by *Bread and Puppet* by becoming successful players on the techno-cultural stage they critically examine. In the vein of McKibben and Gore, participation with contemporary modes of

technology is precisely the approach needed. Importantly, it will facilitate proto-environmental dialogue among audiences, and help maneuver the re-orientation of socio-ecological behavior. Blue Man Group has escaped the aforementioned limitations experienced by traditional forms of Green Theatre. Consequently, they have also avoided the concerns expressed by Porrit regarding Green Theatre being "preachy" and "unattractive to people." Additionally, Blue Man Group has imaginatively addressed McKibben's comments regarding the difficulty of staging ecological issues. By engaging media culture, technology, and by playing an active role in a capitalist marketplace, BMG has emerged as a significant socio-theatrical entity, also becoming one of the most successful and recognizable stage productions in American theatre history. Their success can be attributed to a tri-fold theatrical application that includes:

1. A non-alienating mode of presentation.
2. Their participation in technology and media culture (in both the presentation and promotion of their initiative).
3. Their success in negotiating the capitalist marketplace that facilitates the permeation of their message throughout the Western world.

Importantly, Stanton, Goldman, and Wink have underlined the need for social theatre forms that engage technology and media culture. Blue Man Group has become a primary player in deconstructing the practices of traditional contemporary theatre. In doing so, they have demonstrated the potential of technological forms of Green performance, and advanced May's demand for additional dialogue and experimentation. Ultimately, Blue Man Group has advanced my assertions that contemporary society, with all of its technological agents, must redefine itself and its relationship to nature to enable the survival of each. It also demonstrates that performance can play an active role in facilitating that process.

The May 2006 edition of *Wired* magazine featured a cover photo of Al Gore accompanied by the title, "Climate Crisis: The Pro-Growth, Pro-Tech Fight to Stop Global Warming." The edition was packed with articles theorizing that the most efficient way to fight global warming is through the utilization of technology. Promoting its argument, the article cited technological applications that create environmental education and facilitate economic growth. In another article titled, "The Next Green Revolution: How Technology is Leading Environmentalism Out of the Anti-Business Anti-Consumer Wilderness," Alex Steffen stated:

With climate change hard upon us, a new green movement is taking shape, one that embraces environmentalists concerns but rejects its worn out answers. Technology can be a font of endlessly creative solutions. You don't change the world by hiding in the woods, wearing a hair shirt, or buying indulgences in the form of Save The Earth bumper stickers. You do it by articulating a vision for the future and pursuing it with all the ingenuity can muster. (139)

Steffen's article provides support for our discussion of BMG. Steffen proposes a tri-fold attack upon ecological degradation, utilizing education, technology, and economic sensibility as socio-environmental weapons. "The Next Green Revolution" was preceded in *Wired* by an article titled "The Resurrection of Al Gore." Written by Karen Breslau, "The Resurrection" discusses the former Vice President's initiative to curb global warming utilizing these same principles proposed by Steffen. Amidst discussion illustrating Gore's push for change via technology, Breslau writes, "Gore is bent on fixing what he calls the climate crisis through a combination of public awareness, federal action, and good old old-fashioned capitalism" (144). In a telling sign that the environmental left is stepping on board with the contemporary Green approach to technology, *The Sierra Club Magazine* featured a cover in August of 2005 that read, "Can Technology Save the Planet?" Additionally, environmental journalist Christopher Taylor recently posted

an article online titled, "Why Mother Nature Should Love Cyberspace."

The techno-environmental initiatives proposed by these respective articles exemplify a global Green mission to integrate notions of humanity and nature in order to promote the sustainability of both. Additionally, they identify the course of action exemplified by The Gorilla Foundation's world-wide mission for conservation. As noted, Green Theatre practitioners have been slow to respond to the contemporary Green initiative called for by Gore, Taylor, and McKibben. However, one unlikely "guerilla" performer has emerged as a pioneer in unifying the tenets of education and technology in the struggle for environmental awareness, Koko the signing lowland gorilla.

In November 2000, *Newsweek* printed an article in its science and technology section titled "Silence of the Wood: Human's Closest Relatives are Fighting Extinction." In "Silence," Erika Check examines the wild gorilla's alarming state of affairs, and the socio-ecological crisis that is pressing our "closest living relatives" toward genocide (62). Check cites deforestation as the primary threat to gorilla survival. Compounded by the growing presence of logging roads which "are opening access to huge tracts of once pristine forest," deforestation is making previously

secure gorilla populations vulnerable to the bushmeat [gorilla meat] industry (64). The Bushmeat Crisis Task Force estimates that the gorilla meat trade is worth one-billion in West and Central Africa alone. This market significantly fuels the onset of gorilla hunting in impoverished regions. According to Check, "Hunting hits gorillas especially hard because they have few babies over their long life spans, so killing just a few can have tremendous impact"(65). According to Marilyn Matevia:

It is impossible, even revolting, for some of us to eat a non-human primate, but in some other cultures it is common and widespread, and in simpler times, probably sustainable. Modernity has scrapped the rulebook. Lumber companies are carving access roads deep into the primitive African forests. Hunters can now ride in on jeeps and trucks, Instead of carrying out one chimp or gorilla, they take as many as they can drive out and sell. (Matevia Bushmeat)

According to Bushmeat Task Force Project Director Anthony Rose, an army of hunters provided access by the African timber industry illegally kills over 3,000 gorillas and 4,000 chimpanzees a year (Bushmeat 1). The tremendous loss of life is pushing both species quickly toward extinction in the wild. Most research estimates predict that without serious intervention, gorilla extinction could occur within the next 15-25 years, with the demise of wild chimpanzees not far behind. However, despite the harrowing statistics, primate activist groups such as The Bushmeat

Project, The International Gorilla Conservation Program, and The Gorilla Foundation (Project Koko), remain optimistic that the fate of these primates can be reversed. Bringing gorillas and chimpanzees "back from the brink," however, will involve creating more protected parks, funding understaffed ones, and a concerted global effort to educate humans about the nature and plight of their closest relatives (Check 65). The Gorilla Language Project, also known as Project Koko, is an initiative housed within the structure of The Gorilla Foundation. Project Koko is a leader the fight for conservation through global education.

Gorilla Language Project facilitators Francine Patterson and Eugene Linden acknowledge that protected park land is essential for gorilla survival. However, they also place their emphasis firmly on illustrating the distinct similarities between humans and gorillas, notably in order to create a greater sense of human identification with the primate. By increasing human identification, Linden and Patterson assert that they are inducing a greater sense of social awareness, empathy, and consequently, the need to place the gorilla's survival above humanity's short term needs on the list of global priorities. Their initiative reflects our earlier discussion of Kellert, whose work, as supported by Rosenblatt, Clayton, and Opatow, endows the

Green mission by demonstrating the socio-transformative power housed in the link between personal identity and nature. Project Koko's emphasizes these notions in their mission for global eco-education, inspiring the group to adopt the phrase "Conservation through Communication" as a mission statement. A Project Koko membership brochure reads:

We are not alone. We share this planet with gentle beings who love, feel grief, empathy, jealousy, joy, and much, much more. Koko pleaded until I got her a kitten. When her beloved pet was struck by a car a year later, she grieved, repeatedly signing, "Frown, sad." Michael's painting of a vase of flowers looked very much like a Matisse. He even invented a new technique to depict the spikes on a dinosaur. After the 7.1 California earthquake, Koko was very worried that a volunteer's son was home alone and might be threatened by fire. She exclaimed "Darn floor, bad bite." These beings have a wonderful sense of yesterday, today and tomorrow. They carefully paint wonderful pictures. They also lie, play pretend, dream, speak sign language and can read a little. They are gorillas. We now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that they're sentient, like us. And we are eating them. Into oblivion.

As the most prominent inter-species project in the world, Project Koko has spent the past 30 years teaching sign-language to Koko and Michael, two lowland gorillas. Though Michael passed away in 2000 from natural causes, Koko has continued to develop a working vocabulary of over 1,300 signs. Additionally, she comprehends over 2500 English words, and has scored over 95 on the Stanford Binet intelligence scale (on which a human score of 100 is considered "normal"). The Project Koko website states, "By

demonstrating the intelligence of gorillas we can more effectively lobby for the humane treatment of captive animals and increased conservation for those that are free living" (Project). Patterson and Linden maintain the project demonstrates that gorillas possess qualities that were formerly considered exclusively human, including cognitive intangibles such as thought processes, imagination, and feelings. Reinforcing these sentiments, Koko has referred to herself in sign language as a "fine gorilla-person." Permeation of these developments throughout the globe is a cornerstone to the GLP mission.

In *The Case for Personhood of Gorillas*, Patterson and Gordon discuss Koko's "human" qualities as illustrated by means of her use of language and her visual art creations. By engaging in traditional means of human communication, human language, Koko has allowed researchers and the general populous alike to access her emotional and psychological make-up. News of her skills is spread exponentially by her widespread presence on the world-wide web. According to Patterson, "through our website *Koko.org*, Koko touches people all over the world" (Patterson Membership 2).

A visitor to *Koko.org* will encounter many artistic works created by Koko, creations that demonstrate her

comprehension for the craft of painting. They also illuminate her high level of intelligence and complex emotional make-up. Serving TGF's mission to "bring interspecies communication to the public in order to save gorillas and inspire our children to create a better future for all species," Koko and Michael's paintings offer an unprecedented view into their psychological make-up (Project). The paintings also illuminate complex feelings and intelligence that has even surprised primate specialists.

The paintings are subdivided into several categories including still-life, emotional representations, portraits, and abstract art. All four groupings demonstrate the possession of "human qualities," which Linden and Patterson are bringing to global through internet and media technology. The most astonishing works are the portraits, which contain a striking resemblance to their subjects and display a clear understanding of the artistic process on the part of the creator. Additionally, they highlight Koko and Michael's ability to read the personality traits of their subjects, a notion that points to their sensitive and nurturing emotional demeanors. According to Patterson, one of the most astounding examples was created by Michael

prior to his death, a work that he self-titled "Apple Chase" (named after his pet dog Apple). Patterson states:

Michael used to love to play chase with his longtime companion Apple, a black and white setter who also resided at The Gorilla Foundation. The colors he selected and the image portrayed are all very touching, and all the more powerful because he created this portrait of Apple from memory. Apple was not in the room. (Project)

Researchers have also assigned Koko and Michael the creative task of titling their own works. This responsibility re-affirms their comprehension of the artistic process and facilitates the argument that these portraits have been thoughtfully created to represent the subject a hand. The GLP mission, to bring Koko's achievements to public attention, is exemplified by the success of gallery showings throughout the continental United States. Both Koko and Michael's paintings have been bought for prices that rival leading human artists, and numerous reproductions are sold daily at the TGP website for more than \$475.00 each.

Just as important as TGP's Green mission is the means by which it communicates Koko's conservationist message to audiences across the world. Project Koko has revolutionized the use of internet technology, or webcasts, as their performance space in purveying "Koko Theatre" throughout the globe. With the world-wide web as a stage, TGP is

utilizing Koko's communication skills and her talent for art to position the gorilla as a leading player.

As Marilyn Matevia states in "Super Gorilla's," "the more people Koko can reach-through scientific documentaries or through popular media-the more who can be motivated to care and act" (Matevia Super 2).

Theatre traditionalists may resist the promotion of Koko's webcasts as theatre, but Project Koko's construction of internet events provide all the definitive elements of a theatrical experience including a live audience, a live performance mode, a pre-conceived theatrical structure, and an awareness by the performer (Koko) of the event's perception as a public performance. An argument that may be provided against assigning "Koko Theatre" a theatrical label involves notions of physical space, primarily that the performer and audience are not in physical proximity. To counter this argument, I refer back to my established definition of "theatre," and call upon McKibben's assertions in "Imagine That." In Chapter One, I established an understanding of theatre that incorporated electronic forms. Additionally, I inserted Lee's concept that, "when a performance is acted out," it provides the potential for us to "see something about ourselves" (Lee xi). In line with the TGP philosophy, it is my contention that by engaging in

a "Koko Theatre" webcast, audiences have a definitive opportunity to "see something" about themselves. In Chapter Two, I incorporated Bill McKibben's concept of the imagination in creating Green impulses in theatrical environments void of the natural. It is my assertion that, via that same imaginative process, the imagination holds the capability to overcome the physical separation incurred by electronic communication. As a result, the identity relationship formed in the context of internet performance maintains its validity as a theatrical entity.

It is not my intent to undermine the traditional theatre experience via substitution of technological alternatives. It is, however, crucial to relay the success of technological theatrical variations, such as Project Koko, in order to re-energize and legitimize the powerful medium of Green theatre performance in contemporary Western society.

There are significant public access limitations to Koko's rural living quarters, and a relative need to provide her with a secure and controlled environment. As a result, Patterson was forced to find other means of bringing Koko's message to the public. Patterson's ultimate challenge echoed followed the assertions of Rosenblatt, involving the difficulty of creating human

identification with, and empathy for Koko, without first hand "tactile" contact. She found the solution in the form of the live webcasts on the world-wide web, which provided vast audiences an opportunity to interact with Koko first hand in a fashion that provided a live visual theatre format. Importantly, because the web is a language based-communication form, it also illuminated Koko's considerable intelligence and verbal skills. Because the webcasts could serve as a live, "in the moment," visual medium, Koko's internet performances also provided a perfect forum for the demonstration of her artistic capabilities. The experience also facilitated Patterson's goals for garnering audience "empathy" and "identification" toward Koko. For Koko's audiences, her live internet performances provide a unique opportunity to engage with her "first hand" and witness just how "human" our closet living relatives truly are.

In an interview held prior to a 1998 Earth Day webcast, Patterson discussed the power of Koko's form of theatrical conservation:

Interviewer: How do webcasts help Koko's ability to communicate?

Patterson: The chat format and telecast is great because it extends to a mass audience around the world the rare privilege that I have of engaging, interacting and communicating with Koko, the only signing gorilla in the world. At our core, our project is about connection with another species, sharing knowledge and this facilitated

by our ability to communicate with each other and to me this is what the internet is all about, communicating and connecting. Not just between machines, but connecting people and sharing our knowledge and insights. With this webcast, we are communicating and connecting on the most profound level with each other and with another intelligent being, who we share this planet with—we are sharing this new and great technological innovation of our species via our shared gastrula language, our original and oldest method of communication. (Patterson Project, FAQ)

Since the implementation of this media initiative in TGF's repertoire of education tools, Project Koko has produced a large body of webcasts which continue to grow in popularity. The webcasts have gained legitimacy as an effective socio-ecological theatrical vehicle, while simultaneously exemplifying the contemporary Green technological initiative. The ultimate success of Koko's internet performances has been extraordinary. It has transmitted her message to millions of audience members and brought Koko household recognition across the globe. A conservationist milestone in the utilization of technology for education, Koko's performances demonstrate the power of a live theatrical experience as unified with education through technological communication. With regard to the developing medium of Green theatre, Koko's web performances remind us of the vital need for continued exploration of viable and timely modes of proto-environmental performance. Additionally, they support Steffan's assertion that

“technology can be a font of endlessly creative solutions” (139).

TGF has demonstrated Koko’s appeal to humans of all ages, but their educational mission holds particular efficiency among younger audiences. In recent years, the Koko webcasts have become enormously successful in teaching and learning settings, prompting an increase in TGF’s dialogue with formalized educational institutions. This fact is highlighted by a recent Project Koko mission brochure that notes the importance of bringing “interspecies communication to the public in order to save gorillas and inspire our children to create a better future for all species” (Project Brochure).

Koko’s educational initiative illuminates tenets crucial to practitioners of children’s educational theatre. It also forms a theoretical bridge into our discussion of Playmakers of Baton Rouge. By orienting a branch of their educational focus specifically upon youth, both Project Koko and Playmakers are generating socio-ecological dialogue for our children. Simply put, both groups understand that children, when embraced in the formative stages of their social and emotional development, are an audience particularly receptive to socio-ecological works. A number of important factors contribute to this. In

Chapter Two, I identified several traits of Green theatre that make it particularly viable as an eco-educational entity, primarily its ability to engage the imagination. This notion is supported by McKibben's assertion that "Imagination is what counts. Changing the way we think is at the heart of the question" (Ashden). Again, I note the capacity of performance to initiate a dialogue with the human identity and our innate connection to all things Green. This notion is particularly relevant with respect to younger audiences. Children, still "green" with respect to their socio-cognitive development, hold a particularly strong connection to the natural environment. This facet of their make-up is made exponentially more consequential because of their corresponding ability to engage in imaginative play and role playing.

Groups such as Project Koko and Playmakers are dependent upon an additional element. Human children, unlike the Blue Man character, have not yet come to fruition as primary players in the capitalist system that defines many of society's ecologically destructive addictions. In short, Green theatre can capitalize upon the particular qualities of our youth to orient their behavior in an ecologically sound direction.

In 1997, my dog Luke won a PR initiated search for the next canine to appear in the Broadway revival of *Annie*. *The New York Post* featured an article titled "Cool Hound Luke Lands on Broadway." I found myself on opening night watching from stage right as Luke made his Broadway debut playing "The Mutt," a nameless street pooch discovered at the top of the show. As the actor playing the policeman carried Luke onstage and delivered his line about finding "this mutt in the alley," the audience responded to the first sight of a canine in the play with an enormous "Aaawww." The response gave Luke just the temptation he needed to go about stealing the moment. He turned his head downstage, as if about to begin a soliloquy, activated his soon-to-be signature crazy-eye and floppy-ear, and demonstrated his formidable acting chops by letting out a high pitiful whimper. The enamored audience, comprised of adults and children alike, cooed and applauded as Luke's brief portrayal of "The Mutt" won its way into their hearts. For Luke there was no "method," and there was clearly no fourth wall, only an in-the-moment response to a stimulus that, when unified with his beastly cuteness, provided the audience with a few seconds of spontaneity and honesty rarely seen onstage.

After the performance I exited the stage door with Luke and stood by as he "sat" for pictures with several children. After the photos I began to lead Luke away when a young girl shrieked in distress. She bellowed, "The dogcatcher is going to hurt the puppy," then broke into a fit of cries and gyrations. It took several minutes and a kiss from Luke to convince the girl that I was not "a bad policeman" and that Luke would be just fine. However, despite attempts to explain that "it was only a play" and that "Luke was just acting," the girl left discontent and unable to accept the notion that what she had seen on stage was "just pretend".

This anecdotal experience serves to demonstrate the enormous potential that theatre performance holds as an educational agent for our youth. Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson support these notions in "Playing a Part: The Impact of Youth Theatre on Young People's Personal and Social Development." Hughes and Wilson State:

It [theatre] has a number of important functions for young people, positively contributing to their personal and social development. These findings are placed in the context of youth transitions research that identifies the skills, capacities, and resources that help young people make successful transitions in the current social and economic climate. (1)

Importantly, Hughes and Wilson contend that theatrical experiences hold the capacity to guide youth through

transitions that come to define their social behavior as adults. As an audience member with a child's imaginative ability, the young girl by the stage door had formed an honest, heartfelt, relationship with Luke during that brief onstage moment. Furthermore, his presence managed to touch a part of her identity construct and stir a profound sense of empathy. It touched it so deep in fact, that it caused her to reach out and become an activist on behalf of Luke during that brief stage door encounter. In reflecting upon the event, I came to a few key questions. What if the experience had been utilized to inspire long term activism on her part? What if, we as adults, had utilized her moment of imaginative identification to positively educate her about the realities of the homeless animal crisis? Could it have played a part in inspiring her toward long term activism on behalf of "real" homeless animals? As *The Giving Tree* had done, could it initiate a sense of activism that profoundly directed her adult life?

Move forward three years. On February 2nd, 2001, The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana held its annual corporate luncheon to acknowledge outstanding employees, volunteers, and regional corporations that have made a strong contribution toward preserving Louisiana's wildlife and diminishing marshlands. The event proceeded as it typically

had in previous years until Dr. Keith Ouchley took the stand and made a surprise announcement, that The Nature Conservancy would join forces with Playmakers of Baton Rouge, a local educational theatre group, in creating a play that would tour the state and bring ecological awareness into Louisiana's classrooms. The most significant surprise was that the tour would be underwritten by Louisiana oil giant Texaco. Texaco, to put it gently, has not historically been embraced by the ecological left. The newfound partnership, announced Dr. Ouchley, was vital to the Green cause because, "An environmental organization would join hands with a professional theatre company to help bring current environmental issues to the children of our state" (Ouchley). In addition to supporting the power of the theatre as a tool for socio-ecological change, Ouchley's initiative had even broader significance. His announcement, noting the unification of an energy corporation, an environmental organization, and a children's theatre company, created a new precedent for conservationist relationships in Louisiana. Importantly, it would also lead the way for similar partnerships on a broader scale.

First performed at the luncheon, the new play was titled *Habitat Cats: Chuck and L'Wayne's Walk on the Wild Side*.

The play follows two "north Louisiana Redneck boys" on a road trip to New Orleans, where they have been invited to compete in a battle of the bands competition. The two boys, Chuck and L'Wayne, show no signs of environmental awareness as they litter and throw broken car parts along the state highway. The two boys are confronted by a host of characters that help educate them along the way, including Buck from Bunkie, a black bear/sheriff with a mean Elvis impersonation, a "red-neck" pheasant on the run from an uneducated hunter, and a very hip weasel with a mean case of the Delta blues. As the boys sing and dance their way to environmental awareness, they also struggle to find the perfect name for their band, whose membership envelops all the personified wildlife characters they meet along the way. As they finally drive into the Louisiana Superdome for the beginning of the competition, the ecologically eclectic rock band is simultaneously struck by a great name. As a unified force, the boys and their animal friends yell out, "Habitat Cats!" Armed with a "great new name for their band", Chuck, L'Wayne, Buck from Bunkie, the pheasant, and the weasel, vanquish the competition at the battle of the bands. The win signifies victory and a fresh environmental outlook for the two boys. For their "wild" new friends, it means a chance for survival. It must be acknowledged that,

in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the Superdome has clearly taken on different connotations regarding humanity and its relationship to the environment. In 2001, however, the boys' arrival at the Superdome (a symbol of humanity's achievements), marked their success in a humanly constructed world. Importantly, the success was a direct consequence of a newly formed relationship with the natural environment of Louisiana. By thematically unifying humanity and nature in order to achieve sustainability, the finale' of *Habit Cats* provided theatrical form to contemporary Green assertions.

A Walk on the Wild Side toured daily in the spring of 2001. It was ultimately performed before thousands of children throughout the state. With the play's colorful characters, local flavor, engaging music, and utilization of audience participation, the tour was extremely well received among the always honest and discriminating young audiences. However, the most telling and measurable facet of the tour's success at promoting a Green initiative actually occurred after the final curtain. After the play, the audience of children had the opportunity to sit with the company for a question-answer session. Without fail, questions from the children illuminated the fact their imaginations had been engaged. In relation, it became clear

that, in many children, the production had struck a chord with their personal identity. In short, they believed in what they had seen, identified with the characters, related them to their own lives, and developed a genuine sense of empathy and concern for both human and non-human representations. Additionally, the children's questions illustrated a sincere desire to become ecologically proactive in "real life," with specific regard to the issues presented in the play. Among hundreds of relevant responses, a few samples include: "How can we help more?"; "What can our class do to stop more degradation?" (degradation was a word the student learned from the play); "What can we learn about people by studying animals who are going extinct?" (notice the humanization of animals with the phrase "who are" as opposed to "that are"); and the enormously insightful "how can I get my family to help out too?".

The answer session proved to be the final step in the production's Green initiative. It endowed the children with more than the ability to imagine, identify, and empathize. Significantly, it also provided them with the answers needed to turn thought to action in altering their socio-environmental behavior, and consequentially, inspiring change in those around them. The positive socio-ecological

developments that arose as part of the question-answer session also address the inquiries concerning my discussion of Luke and the crying girl. I asked, "What if, we as adults, had utilized her moment of imaginative identification to positively educate her about the realities of the homeless animal crisis?" By gauging the children's responses to *Habitat Cats*, we discover a clear answer. When armed with an imaginative commitment that engages their identity, children are perfectly poised to address our degradation of the environment. This notion reasserts the noted power of Green Theatre as an eco-educational tool for our youth. As Hughes and Wilson state in "Playing a Part," theatre has the power to "positively contribute to their personal and social development." (1)

Habitat Cats was followed in 2002 by another successful Playmakers tour entitled *Mac the Bear*. The tour promoted similar goals on the part of Playmakers, Texaco, and the Nature Conservancy. By utilizing the theatrical tools of imagination and identification, the success of *Habitat Cats* and *Mac the Bear* strongly supports the overall eco-educational initiative of Green Theatre. As argued in Chapter Two, when combined with the innate need by humans to connect with "all things Green," (a factor compounded in children who have not yet experienced an eco-distancing

effect), identification and imagination facilitate Green Theatre's success in re-orienting socio-environmental behavior.

The success of Playmakers in achieving a contemporary Green initiative has set new standards for a collaborative future. The group's noted relationship with environmental and energy organizations is still opening doors for communication in the Louisiana region. The creation of this triad signifies an important development in Green Theatre practice. Importantly, it demonstrates that proto-environmental performance is shaking off the perceptions of being "too avante garde," or "preaching to the converted," and beginning to engage in productive dialogue with the entities whose environmental outlook it historically protested. In addition to supporting the initiatives of Gore and McKibben, the collocation of these historically divergent entities brings us back to the dialogic environmental philosophical outlook promoted by Todd Moore's *In the Heart of the Wood*.

As discussed, Moore entrenched himself inside the ferocious logging conflict in the Northwest Pacific territory and created *Wood* from interview material garnered from individuals on both sides of the debate. His work is highly significant in that it entered a volatile ecological

debate with reverence for both sides, an approach not common in previous Green works. His methodology was successful in creating dialogue and challenging audiences to fully investigate the issues. Like *Wood*, the triad formed to produce *Habitat Cats* serves as a model for Green Theatre practitioners, demonstrating that change is most effectively created through a socially dialogic vehicle.

In relation, it is important to briefly acknowledge the notion of complicity in Playmaker's relationship with Texaco. Given the irresponsible and destructive environmental history of corporate oil giants in the United States, it would be idealistic to view the partnership without a third eye upon its potential for corporate-style PR on the part of Texaco. It is quite feasible that Texaco entered the relationship with a PR objective, and a mission to repair its relationship with the growing body of environmental sympathizers in Louisiana. It is my sincere belief, however, that despite the possibility that Texaco was initially motivated by non-Green interests, the relationship between the oil company, Playmakers, and the Nature Conservancy, has built a bridge for constructive dialogue. With constructive dialogue comes positive relationships, and with positive relationships comes

endless possibilities for the creation of environmental change.

This chapter's discussion of Blue Man Group, Project Koko, and Playmakers was situated, in part, as an examination of each entity's contribution to advancing notions of traditional Green Theatre. Through my analysis of Bread and Puppet in Chapter Four, I illustrated the importance of finding alternative means of treating socio-ecological concerns, notably in an effort to connect with audiences living in our media and techno-obsessed culture. Correspondingly, BMG, Project Koko, and Playmakers, has each forged a unique and important path. As a popular theatrical presence in North America, Blue Man Group has utilized its examination of techno-humanism to advance the presence of non-traditional Green Theatre forms. Project Koko has demonstrated the power of internet performance in its agenda for global education and conservation. Through its presence on a smaller regional scale, Playmakers, has demonstrated the enormous potential held by collaborative and non-traditional eco-corporate relationships. Importantly, all three entities have, within their own construct, responded to the call from May and McKibben for contemporarily viable forms of Green Theatre. Importantly, each of these groups has also demonstrated the power of

engaging technology and media as a resource, rather than an opposition.

Though significantly diverse with regard to form and content, Blue Man Group, Project Koko, and Playmakers of Baton Rouge share an important bond. All three entities are engaged in the epic struggle to re-orient our socio-environmental behavior toward a sustainable future. Additionally, all three have challenged and extended the boundaries of traditional Green Theatre, while forging a more viable path to the future.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION

Before the end of the day, everything came to pass exactly as Cassandra had foreseen-but in the long run, it all turned out far better than anyone had imagined.
(AtKisson xviii)

I began Chapter One by detailing a transformative theatrical experience I had encountered as a child. I stated: "On the most basic level, that production of *The Giving Tree* appealed to some innate connection I had to the natural world, a connection inseparably intertwined with my identity. With personal identification came empathy, and from empathy emerged the need to take action on behalf of the environment." I acknowledged that the aim of this study would hold a strong personal, theoretical, and practical relationship to that childhood encounter, notably, by extending an examination of *The Giving Tree* experience to demonstrate the capacity live theatre holds for initiating positive socio-environmental change.

With the *Giving Tree* encounter at hand, I set forth to illustrate the purpose and potential of theatre as a social tool in promoting a Green agenda. I centered my argument on the "efficacy of theatrical practice, as merged with environmental philosophy in the form of Green Theatre, in

its ability to re-orient Western society toward more ecologically sound socio-environmental behaviors.”

I proceeded to lay out the steps needed for accomplishing this task, with an underlying super-objective to demonstrate why and how Green Theatre endows humanity with a particularly powerful tool for the facilitation of environmental betterment. These steps included:

1. Solidifying a clear understanding of “Green.”
2. Asserting the importance of granting moral status to our natural world, and correspondingly, establish the need for an immediate response to the environmental crisis.
3. Demonstrating that all environmental problems are rooted in social problems, thereby justifying the notion that environmental betterment must occur through social change.
4. Arguing that the granting of moral status to nature must include the concept that our human identity, and the identification of what we consider Green, are now intertwined and forever dependent upon one another.
5. Establishing the particular efficacy of theatre in promoting socio-environmental change by connecting with the Green identity construct, notably in the form of Green Theatre.

6. Examining the development and success of relevant proto-environmental theatre practices.
7. Examining the proficiency of several contemporary Green Theatre works in inspiring socio-environmental change.
8. And lastly, purporting the need for new and contemporarily viable forms of Green Theatre in successfully promoting an ecological agenda.

In order to clarify varying theoretical and linguistic notions of Green, in Chapter One I developed a definition of the term derived from contemporary Green philosophy. Importantly, the definition included the notion that *our human identity, and the identification of what we refer to as nature, are now forever intertwined and dependent upon one another*. This definition necessitated the inclusion of two of the other steps put forth including establishing the need for an immediate response to the environmental crisis, and demonstrating that "all environmental problems are social problems regarding both their causes and effects" (Schnaiberg 17).

McKibben's assertions in *The End of Nature* both supported and expanded upon these notions. Maintaining that "It is the contrast between the pace at which the physical world is changing and the pace at which human society is

reacting that constitutes the key environmental fact of our time" (xvi), McKibben utilizes *Nature* to underline the unproductive historical disconnect between our concepts of humanity and the natural. Correspondingly, I argued that *Nature* provides a crucial link for contemporary Green philosophy and practice by creating a bridge in the relationship between agents for change and environmental betterment. Aligning with McKibben's theory regarding the "end of nature," I maintained that ecological sustainability would require a re-evaluation of approaches that have historically separated the practices and definitions of humanity and nature. I illuminated how, in an effort to protect "untouched nature" from degradation, early Green theorists drew hard definitive lines between these entities. Correspondingly, I engaged the task of unifying the definition of "humanity" with that of "the natural." This process, as argued, illustrated the inseparability of humanity's behavior from ecological consequence, and provided greater moral status to nature (as an entity fused with humankind). Importantly, it also facilitated my argument demonstrating how a unification of "humanity" and "nature" empowers both entities in regard to sustainability, and provides legitimacy to practices of socio-ecological reform such as Green theatre.

Just over a year ago, an event occurred that forever impacted the way we view these issues. It clearly demonstrated how all environmental problems are indeed social problems, and also re-established the need for a collective and immediate social response. That event is Hurricane Katrina. For the past year, I have avoided examining the hurricane in this dissertation. My hesitance, in part, resulted from the whirlwind of socio-political finger pointing that surrounded the catastrophe. The intense blame-game made relevant facts hard to isolate for argument. Now, a year later, facts involving the hurricane have emerged that provide clear support for Green philosophy, notably that the entities of humanity and nature are forever entwined, and that the sustainability of both requires a large-scale re-orientation of socio-environmental behaviors.

Interestingly, Bill McKibben brought up the topic of Hurricane Katrina in our recent e-mail interview. Curious to gain the Green theorist's insights upon performance, I asked him how he felt "artists and theatre practitioners could manage to treat the issue of climate change without alienating audiences?" McKibben responded, "I don't know. That's why I'm not a theatre artist. But I'd start with Katrina somehow" (McKibben Interview). McKibben's succinct

response implies several important notions. First, that the hurricane exemplified the need for socio-environmental action. Second, it illustrated the demand for remedies that unify our collective humanity instead of "alienating it."

McKibben states:

Consider this for just a minute. No single hurricane is "the result" of global warming, but a month before Katrina hit, MIT hurricane specialist Kerry Emanuel published a landmark paper in Nature showing that tropical storms were now lasting half as long and spinning winds 50 percent more powerful than just a few decades before. The only plausible cause: the ever warming tropical seas on which these storms thrive. In the last century we've seen changes in human societies speed up to an almost unimaginable level, one that has stressed every part of our civilization. In this century we're going to see the natural world change at the same kind of rate. That's what happens when you increase the amount of heat trapped in the atmosphere. That extra energy expresses itself in every way you can imagine. Katrina marks year one of our new calendar. (McKibben Meet)

McKibben's remarks reflect current scientific developments that display a connection between human behavior, global warming, and environmental catastrophe in form of Katrina.

The World Watch Institute supports McKibben's assertions.

The WWI website states:

Alteration of the Mississippi River and the destruction of wetlands at its mouth have left the area around New Orleans abnormally vulnerable to forces of nature. According to many scientists, the early results of global warming have exacerbated the destructive power of Katrina. The catastrophe now unfolding along the Gulf Coast is a wake-up call for decision makers around the globe. (Unnatural)

Katrina has demonstrated to the Western world that our relationship to the natural demands serious examination. Katrina struck the U.S. Gulf Coast in late August of 2005. Regardless of the disorienting political finger-pointing, the facts tell us that at least 1,836 people lost their lives, and the storm is estimated to have been responsible for over \$100 billion dollars in damage, making it the costliest disaster in U.S. History. Discussing Hurricane Katrina at a national Sierra Club convention, Al Gore quoted Abraham Lincoln. Gore stated:

Abraham Lincoln said, "The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, we must think anew and act anew." We must disenthral ourselves with the sound and light show that has diverted the attentions of our great democracy from the important issues and challenges of our day. (Gore On)

As indicated by McKibben and The World Watch Institute, Katrina has demonstrated an immediate need for socio-political response to the world's ecological issues. As Al Gore quoted Lincoln, "we must think anew and act anew." The dilemma, as indicated in Chapter Two of the dissertation, is discovering the means to facilitate our response. I addressed this quandary in the same chapter, seeking to demonstrate the power Green Theatre holds in addressing our socio-environmental issues. Through an examination of theatrical and psycho-sociological studies,

I asserted the presence of a causal relationship between Green performance, its ability to create "those moments" that engage the Green component of the human identity, and its consequent potential to inspire positive changes in socio-environmental behavior. An important development in my argument involved the ability of Green theatre to appeal to our Green impulses in the absence of the natural. This feat, as I argued, was directly relevant to the power of our imaginative capabilities. Though dealing with admittedly elusive and immeasurable concepts such as "innate Green impulses" and "identity," it is my assertion that socio-psychological studies demonstrate a legitimate cause-and-effect relationship between theatrical performance and changes in human social behavior. Furthermore, I propose that, as a form that appeals to our Green identity, Green Theatre holds acute power to facilitate ecological betterment.

I developed these assertions further in my discussion of Peter Schumann's Bread and Puppet Theatre, which examined the efficacy of the company in inspiring Green values among contemporary audiences. Additionally, the chapter took on the reciprocal task of establishing the need for more contemporarily viable Green works. Through my examination of Bread and Puppet, I concluded that Schumann's company

has been extremely successful in advancing the form of Green Theatre. However, it has also met with distinct limitations that necessitated the creation of forms which engage current media culture and technology. This conclusion directed my Chapter Five examination of Blue Man Group, Project Koko, and Playmakers.

Chapter Five was situated as an examination of each group's contribution to advancing notions of traditional Green Theatre. Correspondingly, I proposed that BMG, Project Koko, and Playmakers, each forged a unique and important Green path. Blue Man Group utilized its examination of techno-humanism to advance the presence of non-traditional Green Theatre forms. Project Koko illustrated the power of internet performance in its agenda for global education and conservation. Playmakers demonstrated the enormous potential held by collaborative and non-traditional eco-corporate relationships.

As exemplified by these groups, it is my conclusion that the future of Green Theatre lies in breaking down non-productive barriers and continuing to engage new and non-traditional relationships. To facilitate its own future, and more importantly, to benefit the socio-environmental future of our planet, Green Theatre must continue to develop new modes of application that open the way for

widespread public engagement. This act will require a continued expansion of what we define as "the theatre," and the consistent development of non-traditional Green performance modes that engage contemporary forms of popular media and technology.

In sum, my distinct aim for this study was the construction of a logical theoretical map supporting argumentation that Green Theatre can, and does, hold the power to positively contribute to the orientation of socio-environmental behavior. Through its ability to re-orient behavior, it is my sincere conclusion that the form ultimately holds the power to help contribute to the mutual sustainability of nature and humanity.

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VITA

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