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Refocusing the Past: Directing Judith Thompson's *Perfect Pie*

by

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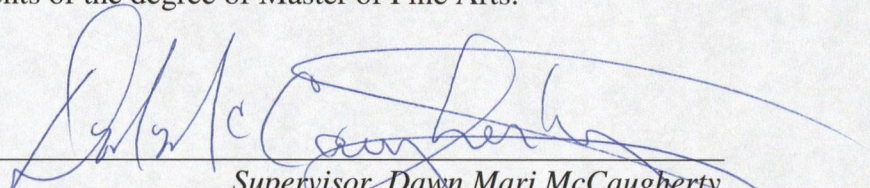
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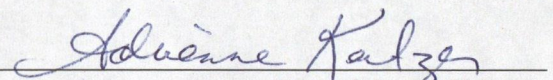
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "REFOCUSING THE PAST: DIRECTING JUDITH THOMPSON'S *PERFECT PIE*" submitted by HEIDI MALAZDREWICH in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



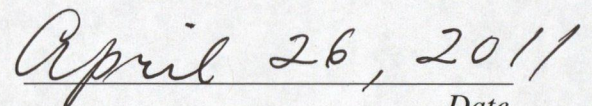
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Abstract

This artist's statement is an exploration of the creative process that culminated in the staging of Judith Thompson's *Perfect Pie* at the University of Calgary. The production ran from November 30th to December 11, 2010. The introduction focuses on the journey of the director's thought process and exposes the root of inspiration that guided the project. The first chapter includes a textual analysis of Thompson's play citing research that supports the director's understanding of the play. The second chapter draws attention to the creative process and the rehearsal practices that inspired the staging at the University of Calgary. The final chapter is dedicated to breaking down the methods of creation and examining the end result.

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I must thank my parents, Maureen and Terry, for always giving me the freedom to find my own way. Also many thanks to my gigantic family whose strange loveliness inspires me everyday. I would not be here if it weren't for you.

Lastly, thanks to Cullen for venturing into this crazy journey with me and wading through it all with creativity, courage and love.

Dedication

For my sisters,

Neely "Kristina" Silverman and Mandy Malazdrewich
for teaching me to wear my heart on my forehead
and to hold my head up high.

For our mother,

Dr. Maureen Patricia Flaherty
for teaching us to dance through the pain
and to sing above the tears.

For her mother,

"Sandy" Flaherty
for the strength of your shoulders
which we all stand upon,
and the sparkle in your eye
that winked in encouragement.

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Epigraph

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that is keeping the stars apart
i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

-E.E. Cummings

CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

‘the root of the root and the bud of the bud’: How To Begin

On the first day of rehearsals for *Perfect Pie* I read my cast E.E Cummings’ poem “i carry your heart with me”. It captured what I felt Thompson is exploring in the play; the experiences and the relationships we have leave physical imprints on our bodies.

Perfect Pie is the story of a woman who is beginning to come to terms with the first great loss she ever felt. Through an imagined conversation with a once-dear friend Thompson brings to life what Cummings so simply writes in his poem: we carry our aches and joys with us all of the time. Thompson, like Cummings, offers a physical metaphor for this seemingly internal and private affair. She begins with the statement, “I will never forget you, you are carved in the palm of my hand” (Thompson 407). Thompson has pushed this idea further through uses of a biblical quote (Isaiah 49:16). For her character, Patsy Willet, experience is not held in her heart but rather in her hand which is always by her side and works to feed both herself and her family. It is with this seemingly tainted appendage that she must learn to express and care for herself and others.

I know the Cummings poem because when I was fifteen years old, my sister Mandy gave me a copy of his selected poetry and read me this poem. I know about the biblical reference with which Thompson begins the play because as a child my mother would sit outside our bedroom singing and playing her guitar. She would often sing a Catholic hymn that includes this statement in its lyrics. In preparation to direct *Perfect Pie* I spent many hours researching and analysing the script and I value what I have discovered through this research. But, what guided my creative process the most (and

what is terrifying to admit) is that I worked from instinct on this project. I brought to the script what I knew through my personal history, my relationships with others, and my understanding of trauma.

One of my earliest insights about the play was born out of a conversation I had with Mandy about her passion for stereographic photography. Other ideas came from speaking with my sister Neely about caring for her three children, and mid-afternoon discussions with my mother about female friendship, feminism, and fear. In this document I write frequently about how Thompson's play seems to communicate a truth that as individuals we carry our pasts in our bodies. We become familiar with these various scars, bruises, and imperfections and it is that familiarity that determines how we choose to carry on and express ourselves in our imperfect skin. The experience of directing *Perfect Pie* was a lesson for me in trusting my instincts, while at the same time supporting them with ample research and reflection. The decision to work in this instinctive manner allowed for a creative journey that seemed to parallel that of the play's protagonist, Patsy Willet.

Patsy cannot escape her past. It will be marked on her body until she dies. Her journey throughout the play is not discovering the truth about her emotional and physical scars, but rather learning to confront and accept them, while continuing to live and create. Patsy builds a community for herself in her kitchen that is full of support and memories as a way of sorting through her traumatic past. She conjures up through memory the childhood versions of herself and her best friend, Marie, and these beings remind her of her capacity to experience both ecstasy and overwhelming sorrow. Patsy conjures through deep yearning an imagined personification of her dearest companion, Francesca,

who brings with her both encouragement and supportive criticism. It is through the combined voices of these four women that Patsy's story can begin to be told, and even better, understood. Patsy, along with her companions, works toward the acceptance of her friend's death that she begins to feel at the end of the play. Thompson ends the play with the same text that began it, "I will not forget you. 'You are carved in the palm of my hand'" (Thompson 490). With the repetition of this simple text Thompson illustrates that although Patsy may be returning to the same biblical reference her understanding of its meaning has changed. Patsy understands that she will forever carry her past with her, both the highs and the lows, but through revisiting her past she has learned to accept this truth. By confronting her memories she will now begin to express herself using her whole being. Through this journey she has uncovered the entirety of her emotional range. As the lights fade down on Patsy she is alone in her kitchen kneading dough as she begins to bake a pie.

It has been one of my greatest struggles as an artist, a daughter, and a woman to trust my perceptions of the world. This struggle has led me in the past to ignore my instincts and seek refuge in the opinions of various textbooks, experts, and in moments of extreme panic, anyone willing to provide an answer. As I began working on *Perfect Pie*, I made it one of my goals to rely on my own understanding first and foremost. This was a daunting task because it meant accepting that all of my experiences and ignorances would bare themselves in the work at some point or another. The world of the play would be centered around my understanding of it. Any shortcomings or oversights that were present in the production would be casualties of my understanding of the world. Any misunderstanding surrounding Thompson's writing would be made apparent to the

audience. As a director, it is my first priority to tell the story that the playwright intended as completely and as compellingly as possible. It may seem obvious to those reading that I cannot pretend to understand a script more than I do, because inevitably it will show up in the production. I have just learned this in the last two years. No amount of research or discussion will contribute to my understanding of a play unless I inherently feel it, somewhere in my body. An indication of understanding a story generally amounts to an empathetic physical response. It can be tears, uncontrollable laughter, or a day of stomach pain. When I first read *Perfect Pie*, I experienced all of the above and that is how I knew that I had the capacity to direct this play. In moments of self doubt I always returned to the memory of my initial reaction. I also relied heavily on my own imagined support group as I made the many decisions that ultimately culminated in the University of Calgary production.

While working on the play, I was frequently reminded of my personal experience and instead of pushing these memories away I wrote them down or incorporated elements of them into the process. This was reflected in all aspects of the production: costuming, music, actor-director relationships, and at times even what I brought to eat during rehearsal. I learned to embrace and incorporate what I already carried with me (both my strengths and weaknesses). Also, I brought what I knew from experience and more importantly what I did not. The result of this decision was not a director who reigned over the theatrical space. I did not hold command of the text, the rehearsal space, or the actors, but rather was a director who was trying to let all of these elements influence each other. I wanted to let the community that I carried in my body, which consisted of my life experience and my research, react and change as I introduced it to all of the other

elements of production. Like Patsy, I wanted the many voices of the people involved in the production to contribute to my understanding of the truth in Thompson's text.

This document dissects my creative process of directing the University of Calgary's production of *Perfect Pie* in the early winter of 2010. As I type, I am aware that the task of writing this document, although an excellent exercise in self-reflection, will not fully express or represent my creative process. I must admit that my entire life up to the point of completing the project affected the way I approached the script, and if I were to direct this play again today it would most likely be very different. This difference would not be because my intellectual understanding of the play would be changed but because I would be different. I would have heard a new song, or had another conversation with my sisters or mother that may have altered my perspective in some small way and that minor shift of focus would be reflected in the way I communicate.

In the following pages, I have separated parts of the creative process to best illustrate how I worked on this production. Although the next two chapters are titled "Textual Analysis" and "Process" I believe that these seemingly separate cognitive exercises occurred simultaneously and influenced each other constantly. The final chapter "Reflection" is a breakdown of how I have come to understand the project after its completion and assesses whether my experiment in staying true to my creative instincts led to an honest and earnest interpretation of Thompson's script.

CHAPTER TWO-TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

My initial reaction to Thompson's text was visceral and overwhelming. It sparked my passion for the play and ultimately framed my understanding of the text. As I began my research, I worried I would find information that would prove my instincts wrong. Every time I encountered a new article or cracked open another book I could feel my heartbeat quicken and my palms beginning to sweat from fear. What if my emotional response to the text was ill-founded or was born out of an inherent ignorance or misunderstanding of the text? How, as a director, could I lead a team of artists through their own discoveries with the work if mine could not be supported by existing scholarship? These questions repeated over and over in my mind as I plunged into research and textual analysis. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that I alluded to in the previous chapter. I must accept my understanding of the script for what it is and value it as my personal compass through which to guide the directorial process. The determining factor behind this decision was surprisingly concrete: I had to. My brain, and my body are all I have. I had to trust myself completely or not bother at all.

This chapter will explore how I came to understand Thompson's play. It focuses on the structure of the play (which weaves between the present and the past) and the various themes that Thompson explores such as the physical repercussions of repressed creativity and emotion, fragmentation of character, and the bond of female friendship. I will explain how I came to understand my initial reaction to the text. My analysis was comprised of several close readings of the play along with research relating to Thompson's many published pieces of writing including plays, essays and interviews. I also sought out scholarly articles that related to Thompson's body of work. The

culmination of what I found most valuable to my directorial process can be found in this chapter.

From a Solo to a Choir: Structure and *Perfect Pie*

Perfect Pie began as a monologue. Written in 1993 and performed by Thompson on CBC- TV, the story was not resurrected until 1999 (Deachman 9). The original monologue was written for the character Patsy. Like the play it begins with Patsy alone in her kitchen making a pie and reaching out for the first time to her long lost friend Marie (Thompson 163). In the monologue it is eventually revealed that Marie is dead and that Patsy is still grappling with feelings of guilt surrounding Marie's death. In an interview with Bruce Deachman Thompson explains the drive behind the writing of the original monologue:

I always wanted to bring that friend that (Patsy) talks about in the monologue back and see what happens,... I love it as a monologue, but it was a 20-minute monologue, so it's not going to be performed very much. But I thought. 'this means too much to me. I can't just let it disappear' (qtd. in Deachman 9).

It was the need to have Patsy's story performed that prompted the full length *Perfect Pie* to be born.

Perfect Pie begins in Patsy Willet's kitchen. As in the original monologue she is making a pie and talking to her absent friend Marie. As Patsy's opening speech progresses the world of the play is slowly revealed. Patsy's first confession into her tape recorder is that the reason she is "getting in touch with [Marie] after all this time, . . . this

thirty some years is [she has] been . . . yearning” (Thompson 407). The script calls for the lights to come up on the child versions of the two friends. Patsy continues her revealing admission into the recorder that when she is

very tired and it’s the end of the day and I’m makin supper or doin’ the dishes and the room fills with oh orange light and I hear the low whistle at the back of our property and I stare out the window and I see—just the glimpse of it, of the train speeding on to Montreal, the crash . . . does flash out, in my mind; like a sheet of lightning, and when the flash is over and all is dark again, I know you did not survive. I know in my heart you did not survive, Marie. So how is it? How is it that I see you there, out there, in the world? (Thompson 407).

It is Patsy’s “yearning” that brings on the world of the play (Thompson 497). During this opening monologue the audience is introduced to the women seated in the shadows of Patsy’s slowly decomposing kitchen (fig. 1). The young girls and Francesca emerge from the recesses of Patsy imagination and begin to infiltrate her kitchen. It is through this pleading testimonial that the voice of one grieving Patsy becomes a chorus of four exuberant women.

From the opening monologue the play becomes a series of conversations between two characters. Sometimes they are children and sometimes they are adults. Sometimes these conversations take place in the present and sometimes in the past. During this transition from the singular to the plural, from the solo to the choir, Thompson provides a bridge to connect the two periods of past and present with the hymn “Abide With Me” (Thompson 408). The iconic Christian hymn adds ceremony to Patsy’s conjuring, letting

the audience know that we are no longer solely in Patsy's contemporary kitchen nor are we in the past. With this transition Thompson creates a space in between past and present where both can exist simultaneously. We have entered the imagination of Patsy Willet, and it is while we are in this space that we uncover her deepest needs and most repressed memories.

After this moment of interlude as the audience is introduced to this new world of the play, the plot follows a simple pattern moving back and forth between the women and the girls. Throughout the play the script flirts with moments of direct collision of the two worlds. The first time that this happens is in the middle of act I. This is the only moment in the script where Marie is depicted at an age out of sequence with the plot line of the younger duo. The depiction of Marie "sending [her] letter by thought" to Patsy soon after the train crash is a jarring moment because it takes place half way through the first act, disrupting the rhythm alternating between the two parallel plot lines (Thompson 423). It is a wake up call to the audience and solidifies the understanding that the world of *Perfect Pie* is neither in the present nor the past. It is a space where the past is constantly triggering the present and vice versa. It is clear that Thompson has created a world on stage that must be both present and past simultaneously. The world of the play is made up of moments in between time and it is this transitional space that allows for Patsy to explore her pain both safely and privately.

The climax of the play occurs in the second act when the two plot lines merge at the train tracks. The older pair is reliving the train crash and the younger is experiencing it for the first time. This is the only time in the play where the two Patsys work together to tell the story. The older takes on the role of narrator, while the younger acts out the

scene. Like the railings of a train track that appear to touch at the vanishing point in perspective painting so too do the experiences of the older and younger pairs. Between adult Patsy's words and young Patsy's actions the audience is given multiple perspectives from a single character's experience. The layering of perspectives for this singular event provides adult Patsy with the knowledge she needs to fully digest the events of the tragedy. By dividing her perspective of the accident into two, Patsy is able to gain insight into why she chose to hold her friend on the train tracks. The fracturing of character that Thompson has brought forward throughout the play has finally exposed its purpose. In this brief moment adult Patsy is able to benefit from the raw emotion expressed in her younger self and can begin to feel her present emotions as they relate to the tragedy. In the collision of the past and the present, the young and the old, Thompson has provided her protagonist with the catalyst she needed to begin to understand her past, and through this discovery, her present.

In the final moments of the crash with all four women on stage together the audience is provided with the reason that they have all been kept apart (fig. 2). Patsy's newfound understanding of the events of the crash clarify for both the character and the audience what became of Marie Begg. In the quick seconds of the crash the audience is shown what was clearly stated in the opening monologue. Marie did not survive, although throughout the majority of the play the audience, like Patsy, experiences Francesca as a character existing in flesh and bone. Thompson has created an elegant structure to manipulate her audience into completely aligning with Patsy's denial. It is not until we are presented with the whole picture of the memory and the 'present'

understanding of the memory, that we are able to begin to grieve, just like our protagonist, Patsy Willet.

Physical Repercussions of Repressed Emotion/ Creativity

Patsy has lost the ability to feel the extremes of her emotional range. She has not felt ecstasy nor been able to cry since the train crash. During their conversation at the kitchen table in the first act Francesca asks Patsy where she finds ecstasy and Patsy responds: "I don't know. Here and there. (*pause*) Where do you find it?" (Thompson 44). In the second act, Patsy reveals to Francesca that along with the ataxia she experiences in her left hand and her inability to run, she "can't cry" and that she has not "cried since before the crash" (Thompson 457). Patsy cannot feel the sublime joy of ecstasy nor can she express the desperation of sorrow. Patsy's journey is to uncover the truth behind the guilt relating to the accident by reliving it through multiple perspectives, and by doing so uncover the depths of her emotional capacity.

In her essay "Epilepsy & the Snake: Fear in the Creative Process", Thompson describes how repression in her childhood and early adulthood is connected to the seizures she experienced in her youth. It was written in 1996 just three years after she wrote the original monologue "Perfect Pie", and four years prior to the completion of the full-length play. Thompson connects her ability to express herself creatively to being free of seizures. She uses the example of herself as a younger woman attempting to be more palatable to the world around her:

Many girls cover their mouths when they laugh. Because laughter fills a space. All the physical mannerisms associated with girlishness are about

repression and inhibition. Whatever encouragement our parents gave us, the culture hands us our pink girly masks at a very young age, and good, well-behaved girls wear them, as the self inside crumbles into dust or asserts itself in bizarre ways. My self asserted itself as a kind of quiet Lucille Ball, clumsy and absent-minded. At least this gave me an identity, and was a small act of sabotage. The next assertion was an act of unconscious revolution, the grand mal seizure that almost killed me. And the next was *The Crackwalker*, my first play. And this is how I raged against the mask, and took up space in the world. And, now not surprisingly, I am seizure free. (Thompson 81).

Thompson equates seizures with personal rebellion. She sees them as a way of lashing out against the expected gendered behaviour that is thrust upon North American women. Patsy's seizure at the end of act I is a lashing out of the painful emotions that she has repressed for so long. Her inability to express herself has led to her body taking over and to move through the fear and the pain surrounding the accident on her behalf.

Thompson uses a stream of consciousness style of writing for Patsy's first act stalker monologue, the Annabel Lee and Bon bon McFee scene and the final description of the train crash in the second act. These heightened dramatic moments are written in a style that expresses a sense of unfiltered thinking. They are moments in the script where the practical elements of conversation are lifted briefly and the characters' voices are unleashed on the audience without any constructed social filter. For example, Patsy's seizure in act one is a moment where unfiltered language is used to help the characters escape the realistic dialogue of the scene and express themselves in a direct and reckless

manner. In these sections where the characters are speaking from an unfiltered place quite often words are repeated to illustrate a fixation on a particular image or to create a sense of momentum leading up to a private admission. As Patsy explains to Francesca what it feels like for her to have a seizure she begins to speak as though she is reliving the moment of the attack and is narrating as the event occurs:

he holds me so close like constricting, and crushing and I'm trying to yell
but they can't hear my voice because he's over my face and he is pulling
and pullin me closer ... can't breathe ... can't breathe now and the people
are so far away it's like he is moving me under the floor, the linoleum-
marble floor and under the mall and the people and into the dark pipes and
the loneliness ...(Thompson 454)

In the speech, Patsy exists in a space between her created world of the kitchen with Francesca and the memory of her seizure in the Kingston shopping mall. Like the seizure, which provided a physical reprieve from Patsy's self-inflicted repression, the monologue begins to explore the possibility of an emotional take over. Once she begins to talk about her experience there is no turning back. The story must be told and, in doing so, experienced.

The first time Thompson uses this style of free associative writing is in act I, scene 25 when the two girls play their make-believe game of Annabel Lee and Bon bon McFee. By working off of each other's ideas the girls make up a story while acting it out for a pretend audience. The stage directions for this scene are "Girls run out both holding either end of a white sheet. Pretending to be in a sleigh" (Thompson 444). The scene takes place directly following adult Patsy and Francesca's discussion about ecstasy.

Thompson positions the scenes one following the other which offers the audience a comparison between the ecstasy found by the women as creative children and grown women who are no longer able to feel ecstasy. The young girls use the white sheet as the only resource in their vibrant and joyous story-telling. With this image of creativity sparked by a simple bed sheet Thompson is commenting on the narrow perspective that the women have of ecstasy. The adult pair speak of ecstasy in a confined way relating it solely to sexual relationships and private moments, whereas their younger incarnations are free to explore the ecstasy found in creative expression. This comparison illustrates the importance of self expression as a means of not only physical health or lack thereof, as demonstrated through Patsy's seizures, but also as a way of leading a fulfilling and honest life. Directly following this exchange adult Patsy begins to experience her pre-seizure aura. The memory of the freedom of expression she felt as a child and her inability to express herself in the present appears to have brought on an epileptic episode.

In the monologue that closes the first act, Patsy tries to explain to Francesca what it feels like to have a seizure. She describes the pre-seizure aura as a male stalker who is coming to get her. In the few minutes after she has recovered from the seizure and changed her clothes she responds to Francesca's question:

What are they like what are they like I would like to say they're like going to sleep in fact that is what I tell people, don't want to worry them, but Marie I live in fear. I live in fear of the next seizure it's like there's a stalker. And he's always there, parked in the driveway, in his old car, waiting. I come down to turn out the lights his face in the window, his

eyes, goin through me, I am out in the fields on the tractor, there he is,
behind the tree, with his knife and his dirty long fingernails all for me,
waiting, and sometimes, if I've had too much wine, or not enough sleep,
he will walk towards me. (Thompson 453)

In Patsy's recounting of where and when she has seen the stalker it is clear that he is with her wherever she goes. Like the metaphor that Thompson offers for Patsy's friendship with Marie as being carved in the palm her hand, the same is true of her relationship with the stalker. He is with her always and ready to pounce at any moment. Along with the joyful memories Patsy has of her time with Marie she also carries with her the trauma that the two women share. In order for Patsy to regain her ability to consciously experience joy she must also face the pain she carries from the accident. Until she is able to confront her past she will forever be stalked by the threat of her body rebelling.

The pinnacle of Patsy's confrontation with her repressed emotions occurs near the end of the play when the women act out the events leading up to the train crash. Like a train moving at full speed, the women begin this journey by re-visiting the site of the crash. By doing so, they set in motion the incident while confronting their own memories of the traumatic sequence of events without any ability to stop the momentum of the discoveries. As the characters move through the series of events escalating to the moment of the crash, adult Patsy becomes less and less verbally expressive in the text. In the final scenes leading up to the crash, adult Patsy does not participate in the story telling, instead she takes on the role of observer while Francesca recounts the circumstances of the

assault. It is through this distance, this budding perspective, that Patsy is able to finally confront her role in the tragedy.

Patsy is catapulted out of her role of observer by her need to feel the power and ecstasy she felt when standing in front of the moving train with Marie. Patsy takes over the storytelling while she watches her younger self and her dearest friend on the train tracks. She explains what is driving her decision to not let go and to stay on the train tracks:

‘We are gonna die beautiful, we are gonna get crashed by the train and then fly through the sky.’ And I felt this yearning, Marie this yearning for for for nothing I could ever name, you know? Because there is just no name for it and and I held your hand so cool and sweaty and we are holding hands together and we will become the TRAIN and the smell of the pie, and the pie is burning and oh orange light! And YOU are pullin on me pullin away but I am not gonna let you go I am stronger than you farm strong. I am going to stay on this track then I feel it I feel it in my feet and your fingernails diggin in I am the train I am big I am metal! I am moving so fast I am— (Thompson 488)

In the moments before the train crash, unable to let go, Patsy makes an attempt to save her friendship with Marie. She knows that after what her friend has survived Marie will leave Marmora. Through her decision to hold on to Marie, Patsy feels the ecstasy of being in control. She expresses this need by aligning herself with the power of the train. Patsy experiences joy knowing that she will forever be with her dearest friend Marie. At the same time, the adult Patsy feels the guilt of her decision to hold her friend on the train

tracks. The crash ultimately kills Marie and leaves Patsy permanently wounded. By confronting her past decision to stay on the tracks and creating a space where she is surrounded with support, Patsy finally accepts that her friend is dead. No matter how much she tries to repress the emotions triggered by the traumatic event they will always be with her, just as Marie will forever be “carved in the palm of [her] hand” (Thompson 490).

In the speech that describes what was going on in her mind as she stood on the tracks Patsy talks about the burning pie. It is as a result of this decision to leave behind the burning pies and the domestic tasks of the farm that she realizes that she cannot have both the freedom of fleeing with Marie and the family life on the farm. It is also revealed in the brief exchange between the two women on the tracks that Patsy is responsible for Marie’s death. Patsy’s inability to let go of Marie and continue her life without her is what led to Marie’s demise. Patsy cannot let Marie go because she does not want to go through life without her. Marie does not want to give up on Patsy so she continues to try to pull Patsy off the train tracks. The girls are in a gridlock unable to let each other go. It is the strong bond which holds them together that ultimately ends their friendship and Marie’s life.

Fragmentation of Character

In rehearsal, I quite frequently would blurt out “One becomes two, two becomes four, four becomes two, two becomes one...”. This little mantra helped to remind me that the play is always from adult Patsy’s perspective. Everything we see is a creation of her imagination, including the other characters. In the beginning, I felt this instinctively

but as I progressed through my research on Thompson and dove more into the text I was able to find proof to support my hunch. In a 2002 interview Thompson discussed with Bruce Deachman of the Ottawa Citizen the motivation behind Patsy's need to imagine or conjure up her dead friend. She stated "The whole concept of present and past interests me." Quoting a Sarah Harmer song she continues

'Why do they call the past the past?' Because if someone's been very important to you in your past, and you run into them, it slams into the present. It's unnerving. We would all like to re-invent or change things that happened in the past... Make them better and have little fantasies of seeing someone who was important. Maybe they didn't die... I used to have dreams after my dad died when I was in my twenties, that, years later, I find him in a closet upstairs. 'Oh dad! You didn't die! In a way I think it is a sense of release bringing (Francesca) back and making it OK (qtd. in Deachman 9).

Thompson's personal experience of losing her father and dreaming that she found him years later is exactly the same impulse that breathes air into Patsy's creation of Francesca.

Patsy's pastry-driven conjuring of Francesca and the two children creates a safe environment in which to confront her past grief. She is then able to reacquaint herself with elements of her personality that she had repressed and lost. Patsy gains a benefit from each of the three women that she beckons to her side. She finds a freedom of expression in the younger, more assertive Patsy, her truest friend in Marie, and her wishes and fantasies in the make-believe Francesca. It is the combination of these

elements that allow for Patsy to come to terms with her grief. In a 1991 interview with Eleanor Wachtel, Thompson discussed how the voices of her characters seemed to come to her:

I don't know, that's just a shot in the dark, but I thought maybe the reason I can draw on these images fairly easily—it's not difficult for me. My little metaphor about the storm windows is that something is loose. . . I sometimes think that the firing goes on—the electrical storms they talk about—is what results in this gush of language that I'll stand back from after I've written it and say wow, where did that come from? Not to be immodest but I sometimes don't know myself how I could put it together with the emotions and everything that's going on. I don't know if it's a musical instinct. (qtd. in Wachtel 46)

Thompson describes her writing process in this interview as though she is the channel that her characters and stories are funnelled through. This image of one persona acting as a filter by which other beings can commune is directly comparable to Patsy Willet's need and ability to surround herself with the spirits she summons. Like Thompson, Patsy acts as a medium through which her repressed memories can be channelled. She pulls together the ingredients for the community she needs to help her heal. She thus provides herself with the tools required to re-enact her past trauma in order to make sense of her present. The activity of making pies (a skill she has practiced since her childhood and that she is able to complete without even thinking) enables Patsy's instinct and allows her to sort her emotional baggage. By taking stock of her memories Patsy is able to mourn the teenage fantasy that will never be a reality.

The youthful version of Patsy that is presented in *Perfect Pie* is more assertive than the adult Patsy. In the early scenes she is the driving force in the conversations with Marie. The first six interactions between the two young girls begin with probing questions all initiated by Patsy. Thompson uses the young Patsy to show the audience the curiosity that drives the budding friendship between these two very different youngsters. As the plot moves forward, we are able to see the compassion that Patsy feels for her new friend Marie. This is apparent in act 1, scene 11 when Patsy seeks out a cowering Marie and encourages her to go back into the classroom by telling her that she will look out for her:

You go back in with me and they won't dare say nothing more. They say something? I report them to Mr. Eaves. You know the principle? With the glass eye? He's really really nice. *(pause)* And if I report them? They'll get the strap. Cause Mr. Eaves comes to our house for Christmas dinner. Always has seconds of stuffing. (Thompson 419)

It is clear through this early exchange that Patsy feels the need to protect her new friend Marie, but it is her initial curiosity about Marie's difference that intrigues her.

Thompson has expressed that as adults we carry our childhood selves around with us and that our truest impulses come from this child center. She explains:

so often when I've read writers that have touched me I know that I've related to something from the child in them, or in their protagonist, which has touched the child in me. I think it's because I see growing up in this culture as a process of throwing great coats of civilization over true

responses. So when I say “carry our childhood with us” I mean still
express true emotional responses. (qtd. in Zimmerman 14)

Adult Patsy admits to Francesca that she has not been able to cry since “before the crash” (Thompson 457). By bringing her younger ‘pre-crash’ self back to life Patsy is able to slowly begin to express her emotions more honestly. In *Perfect Pie*, Thompson has pushed the idea that in order to connect with our “true responses” we need to not only connect with our inner child, but also we need to be aware that we carry our whole history with us. This includes the close friendships we form as children and the dreams we had for these friendships (Thompson 14). Patsy Willet carries with herself not only Young Patsy, but the spirit of Marie, and the mythical Francesca.

Francesca is represented for the audience as the personification of all that Patsy wanted for her dear friend. She is beautiful, sophisticated, poised and perhaps most importantly, a socially acceptable contemporary woman. Francesca is entirely Patsy’s creation and it is clear that the qualities that Francesca embodies represent aspects of Patsy’s own repressed personality. Patsy has separated the parts of herself that she deemed inappropriate for her life in Marmora and attributed these qualities to her fictional friend. She creates an external persona to confront her most devastating life experiences: the loss of both her parents, the birth of her still born child and her best friend’s death. Patsy brings alive a multi-perspective dialogue. The unleashing of her bound creativity allows for the examination of her life and choices. The multiple perspectives she has constructed ultimately lead to her coming to terms with her childhood trauma. Patsy’s creative fabrications function to enrich her understanding of

her present self and to accept the artist that has lain dormant within her since she played the childhood game of Annabel Lee and Bon bon McFee.

Female Friendship: An Unbreakable Bond

The action of *Perfect Pie* relies completely on the friendship between Patsy and Marie/Francesca being believable. The protagonist's journey is dependent on the strength of the connection between herself and her long lost friend. In order for Patsy to recover from the trauma she experienced as a teen she creates a world where she is supported by her childhood friend. Although the friendship is the basis for the hurt that Patsy experiences, it is also what leads her to a point of healing. It was this close connection that I wanted my audience to feel the most while watching the University of Calgary production. It is the foundation on which the entire action of the play stands and without an honest portrayal of the closeness between the women in the production Patsy's story would not be clearly relayed and understood.

Thompson's script provides ample room to discover moments of kinship between the actors. The first time this closeness is revealed in its raw glory is during act 1, scene 5 when the women seem to transport themselves in time and space to relive a childhood memory of playing in the snow together:

Patsy: We woke up.

Francesca: when you wake up . . .

Patsy: We were both in these softy soft flannel pajamees and you
woke me up and you said, "look" and I look out the
window and I saw all this . . .

Francesca: Ice.

Patsy: Glistening, shimmering, crystalline—

Francesca: Ice.

Patsy: Glazing the trees, the bushes, the barn roof, and the fields
all the way down to the dark blue lake. (Thompson 410)

This scene, acted out by the two adult characters, occurs at the beginning of the play. It relies on the actors' abilities to convince the audience that these two women, who appear vastly different, are able to finish each other's thoughts and play so freely with one another after decades of estrangement.

It is precisely these earnest moments of friendship on stage that drew me towards this play and became one of the driving motivations behind my directorial process.

Perfect Pie is a play about healing through community, whether it is real or imagined.

The success of Patsy's journey to confront her guilt and grief relies greatly on her ability to conjure the support she needs to begin her healing process. This support is made up of a combination of the world she creates, the memories she has, the physical reminders she carries with her and the bond she still feels to her friend. This world of the imagined community is what supports Thompson's narrative and Patsy's recovery.

CHAPTER 2: PROCESS

‘the deepest secret nobody knows’: Finding our *Perfect Pie*

My directorial preparation for *Perfect Pie* began with my first reading of the play in the fall of 2009. I had not intended on reading the play cover to cover in one sitting, but once I began reading I could not put it down. When I finished I wept and immediately called my sister. What struck me was my gut reaction to the play. I had not analysed the script, but I knew on some level what the play was about even if I did not have the words to express it yet. Since that initial read-through I have read the script more times than I care to count and have gained much insight into the text, but I always hold my initial response as the most valuable guideline to directing the play. The average audience member at the University of Calgary production did not read the script before attending. For them this production was their first encounter with it. My goal was to stay true to the text and the way I understood it in the first place, in a very private and surprisingly magical way. I wanted to try to present the root beneath Thompson’s text which is a truth so personal that I thought somehow Judith Thompson had snuck into one of the dark recesses of my mind and written down my most private thoughts. I wanted my audience to feel that same type of personal exposure, both the pain and relief of it. I knew that to achieve this I must start with myself (my own reaction to the play) and then slowly work my way outward from my designer, stage manager, cast, crew, and ultimately the audience.

This chapter will focus on my directorial process and the steps I took with a team of artists to create the production at the University of Calgary. I will discuss my initial inspiration for the production, the design process, concept, and my collaboration with the

actors and stage management team. Chronologically, these processes occurred in the order stated above, however throughout the preparation and rehearsal process they influenced each other greatly. Once rehearsals began, the discoveries made in the studio would change or confirm my discussions with the production designer depending on the day and vice versa. My own comprehension of my primary response to the play would also change and evolve as I became more familiar with my cast and the script. What I am documenting in this chapter is how I understand the process now in the weeks following the completed production.

Blurring the boundaries and Understanding Perspective: Stereographs, *Perfect Pie*, My Sister and I.

On a trip home to Winnipeg over the Christmas break in 2009 I was introduced to Stereographic photography by my sister who is a student of Photographic Preservation and Collections Management Studies at Ryerson University, Mandy Malazdrewich. At the time, Mandy was showing me her latest school project which was to construct and process a stereographic image using the traditional methods of photographic processing. We must have looked ridiculous on that cold Winnipeg evening huddled around a tiny table at a busy Starbucks, my two sisters, my mother, and I. Being the youngest of four girls, I have learned to become a great listener and student of their teachings. On this particular evening, Mandy was describing an article she had read explaining how the eye reads these dual images to form one three-dimensional image. The photographer, in this case Mandy, takes two photos of the same exact scenario only six inches apart. The two images are then printed on the same piece of paper side by side. When the photographs

are printed in the exact same proportions and then looked at through a stereographic viewer, a simple piece of technology resembling a pair of wooden binoculars, the two photographs merge to form one three dimensional image. It was at that moment I learned that two images of the same event taken from slightly different perspectives could join forces to create a fuller understanding of that event. I realized that this way of seeing was directly related to how I understood Patsy Willet's journey in Thompson's *Perfect Pie*. It was even more of a meaningful connection that this visual inspiration was brought to me by none other than my own most personal confidante, my older sister.

The stereographs came to have a large influence over my understanding of Thompson's play. They provided a basic concept on which I could hang my ideas and they worked as a visual aid for the themes of perspective, fragmentation, and duality that kept appearing in the script. In Rosalind Krauss's article "Photography's Discursive Spaces: Landscape/View" she describes the sense of individual perspective that viewing a stereographic image provides:

Stereographic space is perspectival space raised to a higher power.

Organized as a kind of tunnel vision, the experience of deep recession is insistent and inescapable. This experience is all the more heightened by the fact that the viewer's own ambient space is masked out by the optical instrument he must hold before his eyes. As he views the image in an ideal isolation his own surrounds, with their walls and floors, are banished from sight. (Krauss 314)

While engaging with the photographs viewers must enter a different mindscape in which her external surroundings are completely blocked from view. She is left alone in the

created world of the photograph to see the three-dimensionality of an image that when witnessed without the imposed distancing apparatus appear merely as two independent flat images. Patsy Willet engages with her past in a similar way. She creates a world for herself where she can approach the events of her life through dual perspectives. Adult Patsy, Young Patsy, Marie, and Francesca work together to create multiple perspectives of the same events. This serves to contribute to Patsy's coming to terms with her past trauma and gaining some perspective on the train crash that changed her life.

When a viewer looks at a stereographic image she is projected into a space between the photograph and the external world outside of the stereoscope apparatus. Krauss explains this phenomenon using the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes:

When Holmes characterizes this special modality of viewing, where 'the mind feels its way into the very depths of the picture,' he has recourse to extreme mental states like hypnotism, 'half-magnetic effects,' and dream. 'At least the shutting out of surrounding objects, and concentration of the whole attention which is a consequence of this, produce a dream-like exaltation,' he writes, 'in which we seem to leave the body behind us and sail away into a strange scene after another, like disembodied spirits.'

(Krauss 314)

Holmes' sdescription of the experience of looking through a stereoscope aligns directly with how I understand Patsy Willet's created world in *Perfect Pie*. Patsy, like the imagined spectator that Holmes describes, is in a world between the everyday reality of her kitchen and her memories. It is while she moves through this third created space with

the ‘disembodied spirits’ that she is able to come to terms with her past trauma and her present situation (Krauss 314).

In the spring following the confirmation that I would be directing *Perfect Pie*, Mandy and I held a photo shoot to create stereo cards inspired by the play. Originally the plan was to make four cards: two representing the adult women and two representing the younger women. After looking at the proofs from the initial shoot, I decided that I was only really pleased with the images of the younger pair. I made the decision to exhibit the stereographs in the lobby of the theatre so that as the patrons entered the space they would look at the images through the viewers and experience the phenomenon that Holmes described. My theory was that by exposing my audience to this way of seeing prior to watching the play they would be more affected by the visual language of the production. The world of the play, which teeters between past and present to create a single whole, would be communicated on several different levels. I did not want my production to literally resemble a stereographic image, but instead leave the audience with the feeling one has when looking through the viewer. I was hoping to achieve feelings of isolation and community, perspective and detail all at once, just as Patsy Willet does in her kitchen.

Designing the Space: A Lesson in Communication and Visual Language

The visual metaphor of the stereographic images provided much fodder for myself and the production designer, April Vizcko, in our early meetings for *Perfect Pie*. The first design meeting occurred over Skype video conference in August of 2010. In this meeting we discussed what I wanted the audience to feel when they left the theatre. It

was important that they left with a feeling of attachment to the women on stage, and the journey that Patsy Willet takes. I would quite frequently visualise people leaving the theatre weeping. Ultimately, I wanted the audience to feel what I felt when I first read the play: slightly gutted, relieved, and a little hopeful. Initially, there was some confusion between the pair of us about the role that stereographs would play in the design. I did not want the set to resemble the black and white photographs in a literal way, but instead wanted to channel the feelings one has when looking at them. Once I clarified this with the designer the communication between us became more effective.

My goal to have the audience feel and see from multiple perspectives led to the decision to stage the play in a thrust seating configuration. Although the set design went through many incarnations, we always worked under the assumption that there would be audience seating on three sides of the stage. It was important that the set support blocking that allowed the audience to see all four actresses from various perspectives simultaneously. I knew multiple visual perspectives of the characters would contribute to Thompson's storytelling technique. The effect I was looking for depended upon the audience developing an earnest bond with the characters, in particular the younger duo. It was also in these early discussions about the seating configuration that I began to think about how the women would move within the space.

From the very beginning, I wanted the kitchen and the train tracks to be always present on stage (fig. 3). The kitchen needed to be fully functional in our production of *Perfect Pie*. Adult Patsy and Francesca spend the entire first act of the play sitting and eating in the kitchen. April and I knew that in order for these scenes to work the kitchen had to be at least somewhat functional. I wanted the intimate conversation that is

depicted in the script to come from an easy and natural place. This required actual food, a running faucet, and a working kettle so that the familiarity of the farm kitchen could be translated to even the most urban of audience members, myself included.

The working faucet was important for the scene in act two when Marie comes into the kitchen after she has been sexually assaulted. In my readings of the play I had begun to attach together the idea of tactility and memory. I related this to the first line of the play: "I will never forget you, you are carved in the palm of my hand" (Thompson 407). I was forever linking my directorial decisions back to the idea of carrying our history in the body, a place that is tangible and concrete. The sense memory that Francesca describes in act two (when she comments about the smell of the train tracks) was an indicator that the characters in the play were sensitive to both the olfactory and tactile senses. The image of Marie frantically washing herself in the sink after the assault then became a critical visual cue in the language of movement in the production. I filled it with imagery of the two Patsys cleaning (fig. 4). The older Patsy is depicted in the first act constantly cleaning as she makes lunch for Francesca. The younger Patsy is seen cleaning Marie's hair of lice as well as preparing her for the dance. The visual of Marie cleansing herself on stage and standing alone dripping wet then became a part of the visual motif of cleaning. The sight of Marie standing in Patsy's family kitchen foreshadowed what would later happen on the train tracks. Patsy's inability to let go of Marie kills Marie. All of the cleaning and efforts to wipe away the past cannot clear away Marie's death.

The train tracks played a large role in the early design discussions. It was important that the tracks were always available to the audience's eyes, yet were not the

main focus of the set. Like the metaphor of Francesca being carved into Patsy's hand, I wanted the train tracks built into the fabric of the play. When April came up with the idea to inlay the train tracks into the wooden deck of the stage it was very clear to me that we had a solution. I was thrilled when I heard audience members say that they didn't notice the tracks until the women mentioned going to them in act two. The train tracks are a physical marker of the accident the women endured. I wanted them to be always present and a part of the structure of the story, but also to slightly prohibit the movement of the actors on stage. The end of the train tracks protruded from the large wooden deck by a few feet. This forced the actors to mind the tracks that stood out from the rest of the stage flooring. Similar to how the train crash had left Patsy emotional and physically trapped, so too did the representation of the train tracks inhibit actor movement on an otherwise very open stage plan.

There are many locations referred to in Thompson's script and it was our goal to create a theatre space that allowed for the entire set (except for the kitchen) to morph into various locations. The wooden deck consisted of three separate platforms that were made of large planks resembling barn board. The kitchen was located at the back of the central platform out of which the train tracks appeared to emerge. The two other platforms were placed on either side of it. One was a foot and a half above the main platform and the other one six inches below. To call attention to the fact that the play exists in a world between past and present, I did not want to encourage a realistic representation of either time. Instead, I tried to bring forward snippets of familiarity into the various scenes so the audience was able to place themselves within the story without fixating on the details of the space. This was achieved through props and set pieces that suggested location. In

the scenes where the younger duo is in Patsy's bedroom the actors would bring on a comforter and in the scenes where the girls are playing at the park a single tire swing was dropped momentarily from the lighting grid (fig. 5).

Crossing the Time Barrier: Combining Past and Present

During early rehearsals, I was always looking for ways to achieve a subtle crossover between the two time lines of the play, but every time I thought of something it felt too contrived. I made a decision to let the idea float around in the back of my mind as I moved forward in the staging process. Eventually, out of necessity, I found a way to play with collapsing the two worlds through visual metaphor. The opportunity arose when I was working on how we could safely burn the note Marie reads in act two. My stage manager and I were meandering about the rehearsal hall brainstorming when I realized that it would be easier and just as effective if the actress did not burn the note but instead tore it up and left the remains scattered across the stage. My stage manager was pleased because this meant no meetings with the fire marshal and I was thrilled because I had found a way to begin playing with the collapsing of the two time periods by having them share props. In the scene following Marie's interaction with the note, Francesca would walk in and begin entertaining Patsy with her dreams about the future using the pieces of the note as a prop in her storytelling as if they were leaves on the ground. The image of Francesca taking the painful note and making it a part of her joyous fabrication to entertain her friend seemed to support the larger message in the play of creating art and community out of old pain. I also just really loved the way it looked when the pieces of

white paper were thrown in the air and floated down on the actors like incredibly thick snow.

The other instances of crossover in the play—the moment when Young Patsy steals a cookie from adult Patsy and when adult Patsy cleans up after Young Patsy—came out of a discussion I had with my supervisor, Dawn McCaugherty. She suggested that in order for the note moment to work there needed to be other moments of crossover. I agreed. I then went through the text and came up with moments I thought might work. They were remarkably obvious after I looked at the text with fresh eyes and once I told the actors about the changes, we never looked back. In retrospect, I think these little moments where the worlds seemed to collide became some of the most magical moments of the production. Part of the magic came from the similarities between these moments and how I understood the stereographs. It felt like the instances where time converged in the play were similar to the experience of looking through the stereo-viewer for the first time and when my eyes finally give in to the illusion. It was a moment of physical surrender. I had to allow my eyes to relax so that I was able to see the full image. I entered a space between the photograph and myself where my mind could wander in the transitional world of the three dimensional image. In the space between my eye and the photographs my imagination had room to play.

Costuming the Characters: Finding Similarity in Difference

When I first imagined directing this play, costumes did not concern me as being an important part of the storytelling, but as we moved through the process of mounting *Perfect Pie* I quickly realized how much of an oversight that had been. The costumes

became an indispensable indicator of time in the maturing of Patsy and Marie from young girls into teenaged women. The costumes also became a clear marker of the class distinctions between the two girls and helped to justify some of the early tension between them. Considering that Thompson had firmly situated the past sections of the play in the sixties the costumes also implied a particular type of movement and behaviour from the child characters. When they were shown playing in the school yard in little dresses their clothing implied a particular type of behaviour. If the characters acted out against the expected type of social behaviour it provided insight into the level of importance the character placed on the rules of decorum (fig. 6). In the case of Marie, her inability to comply with the rules dictated by her clothing and the setting illustrated her ignorance of these particular social constructs.

Once we settled on a practical working timeline of the story, April and I were able to decide on the links between costumes for both the older and younger duo as well as find a visual narrative that suited the transition of the girls into teenagers. We not only had to illustrate likeness between actors playing the same character, but also show a believable development in each young girl as she traveled within the timeline of the past. This delineation was done through use of colour and ornamentation. I wanted Patsy to be associated with cool tones and in particular the colour blue. This then led to discussion of Marie's association with browns and earth tones. The earthy hues provided a feeling of downtrodden simplicity that related to how Marie felt about her home life. It was also important to the story that Marie appears sickly and unkempt. This suggested colour combinations that were inherently unflattering to a pale skin tone such as yellow and brown which highlighted an ill looking complexion.

The older version of Francesca was dressed in black and grey. In early talks I would quite frequently describe how I saw Francesca as “Alfred Sung-y circa 1999”. What I meant by this statement was that Francesca bore a sort of easy sophistication that was exemplified by clean lines and flattering no-nonsense silhouettes. It was important that Francesca’s costume represent all of the glamour that Marie longed for but could not attain. It was also significant that there should be an ease to Francesca’s sophisticated style as if she achieved her gracefulness effortlessly and without much fuss. It was important that when entering Patsy’s kitchen she seemed out of place, but as time wore on she would manage to fit in. I wanted this sense of assimilation to the space to come from the actor playing Francesca and not from the costume itself.

I never wanted the women playing the younger versions of Patsy and Francesca to look like we had tried to match them according to physical type. As mentioned earlier I saw the younger pair as adult Patsy’s fabrication and not a carbon copy of the past. I was more interested in the way the women were different from one another than in how they were similar. Eventually, throughout the rehearsal process, I would find ways to link the actors to one another through movement and blocking choices, but the story I was trying to tell was about Patsy and how she had changed. I thought that to try to achieve a verisimilitude between the actresses would be a waste of time and would not serve the telling of the story. It was also a sheer fact of logistics. I was aware of the casting pool at the University and which actresses would most suited to performing in a Judith Thompson play. None of the actors that I was interested in had any resemblance to one another. I found it funny that after the show opened audience members would tell me

how much the actresses looked alike. I take that as a compliment to the actors abilities to bond with one another and as a credit to the entire production.

Working with the Actors: Playtime for the Emotionally Repressed

As a fledgling director every project I enter into begins very differently. I find myself searching for new ways to commence a creative process with a group of artists and wondering if this will be the time that I find the secret of flawless directing. I understand that this is a futile goal, but there is something about striving for a formula when there clearly will never be one. It provides ample room to fail and fail wonderfully. I think it is in these moments of knowing that there will be many failures along the way that I am able to free myself up long enough to create a space for my actors to do their best work. This space is specific, safe, and most importantly a place where failures and mistakes, bad choices and foibles are likely to happen. In the case of *Perfect Pie*, I had a hunch that in order for the rehearsal space to have that type of feeling I must include my stage management staff in many of the early exercises that I did with the cast. I wanted the early rehearsals to seem exploratory and not performative. To make that happen I had to eliminate any existing semblance of an audience in the space.

Holding the Container: Creating a Safe Space for Exploration

My first attempt at putting together an ensemble that included the stage management team began on the first day of rehearsal. Before beginning rehearsal, I held many meetings with my stage manager. In these meetings, I asked her if she would feel comfortable participating in the preliminary rehearsal exercises as well as asking her

assistant stage managers to do the same. She agreed and from then on I felt at liberty to include the stage management team in several of my more experimental rehearsal techniques.

My first foray into creating a rehearsal space that felt inclusive and safe was basic and remarkably simple. After introducing myself to the cast and relaying my basic concepts for the production to the team, I told them about my dearest childhood friend. This included telling them a story about one of my many memories with her. I then asked them to do the same as they introduced themselves to the group. This exercise was much richer than I expected. As the women shared their stories, it became evident that the simple act of speaking their memories to the group brought forward many outward expressions of emotion. By the time we reached the last person at the table many eyes were blurry with tears, and laughter filled the space. I discovered after this first rehearsal that I had opened a can of emotional worms. If I wanted the participants to continue to bring themselves to this production with the same amount of candour, I would have to work hard to maintain a safe space for them. I also realized that I would have to make sure to allow the actors time at the end of rehearsal to leave on stage the emotions that arose from the material. I decided that my role was now both director and keeper of the space. I knew that I must maintain the container until the cast and production team was ready for an audience and it was my job to slowly bring them there.

Dance ‘til You Draw: Connecting to the Text through Physical Instinct

In a meeting with my supervisor, Dawn McCaugherty, before beginning rehearsal, we talked about how I wanted the actors to approach the script. In my research,

I came across an article in which Thompson explained how she felt actors should approach her plays. The article in question was an interview with Sandra Tomc in 1989. In it Thompson explains that approaching her texts through an intellectual lens may not be the most convenient for a production team:

I remember one incident when a group of actors became infuriated—they were trying to analyze one of my plays intellectually. I kept insisting that although I could supply them with fifteen interpretations now—because I’d finished writing the play—when I wrote it I didn’t know what I was doing. And neither should you, I told them. I think they should just let it happen to them as it happened to me. (qtd. in Tomc 7)

The idea that the actor should let the text “happen to them” appealed to me (qtd. in Tomc 7). I have experienced times in rehearsal on previous projects as both an actor and a director when making the transition from table work to working up on feet has been disappointing. All of the seemingly rich discussion that occurred at the table translated into a feeling of paralysis in the body. My decision was to start the textual exploration with physical work. I wanted the actors to begin forming their individual characters through acts of artistic creation or play. Ideally, this would connect them to feelings and experiences related to childhood, and also encourage them to think about funnelling their characters into their bodies. Dawn suggested an exercise involving painting and this became the catalyst for my entire rehearsal process. I liked her idea of linking the physical reactions to the text to a creative and external process that could be reflected upon afterwards by engaging with the paintings. My next step was working out how the painting could be incorporated into rehearsal by relating it to actor movement.

Dance has always been a large part of my life and my understanding of story telling. I began taking ballet classes at age three and did not stop until I was twenty years old. In my teens, I would spend around fifteen hours a week in the studio. I was never an incredibly strong dancer, but I was dedicated. My first experiences on stage were as a dancer. Although I would never call myself a dancer now, if I think about the way I understand movement on stage, I am sure it is largely influenced by my years of dance training. I do not want my work as a director to look “dance-y”, but I think that due to my time spent dancing I will always gravitate towards telling stories with the movement of individual performers in the forefront of my conscious.

I was taught at a young age that dance and physical expression is a very important part of being an active participant in the world. For years, my mother wore a pin everywhere she went that had a statement on it that was inspired by Emma Goldman’s writing in *Living My Life*. It read “If I can’t dance I don’t want to be a part of your revolution” (Goldman 56). As a child I was not quite sure what this meant, but I eventually understood that even when you are part of a large political movement, something as world changing as a revolution, it is still of upmost importance that you maintain your physical freedom and your ability to express yourself through your body; no revolution or uprising, no matter how large, is worth losing your individuality. The individual’s need to dance and express herself is more important than any political or social gain.

As I worked with the *Perfect Pie* script in my early days of textual analysis I often thought of my mother, her pin, and Emma Goldman. Patsy’s inability to cry or feel ecstasy and its connection to the idea of repression and seemed to ring true to

Thompson's intentions. Once Patsy is able to move through her memories of a time when she did have complete freedom in her body and confronts her trauma, she begins to understand the role that her body has played in her attempt to silence herself. When she is having trouble living with the muscle memories in her body, her wounded hand and her frequent seizures are a constant reminder of the physical freedom that she has exchanged for her emotional silence.

Given that physical self expression was such an important aspect of Thompson's play, I needed to seek out actors who were connected to their bodies. I also wanted to enhance their existing physical awareness and transitioning into script work (what I would normally call table work) by working with the body. I included dancing exercises because of my personal connection with the medium, and the link between improvised dance and self expression. My concern was that the actors may try to dance in a "correct" or in a practiced or choreographed way. I wanted to make it clear to them that this was not an audition and that they need not look slick or even feel like they were performing in this environment. This was merely a game of self-driven and self-fulfilling dance.

In preparation for my thesis, I attended Canada's National Voice Intensive in the spring of 2010. It was there that I had the honour of taking several classes from the marvellous and inspiring Gerry Trentham. In one of Trentham's classes he introduced us to an exercise he calls "Bad Dancing". He gave us very few rules, but the ones he did give were to be strictly adhered to. The first rule was that we had to dance as we did when we were very young children. The idea was to satisfy our bodies' needs through dancing. The second rule was that we were not allowed to dance using any existing choreographed moves (this meant no disco fingers or any other famously bad dance

moves). He then would play music and let us go. Usually, the music was somewhat anthem like or recognizable. From time to time Trentham would coach us from the middle of the room as he danced, reminding us to satisfy our impulses and not to let ourselves get caught in learned moves. I found that when I worked after doing this exercise, I was always more aware of what my physical impulses were and more likely to respond quickly to them. After returning from the Voice Intensive I would bad dance with myself at home for fun, enjoying my own personal mini-revolutions.

On the second day of rehearsal I introduced my cast and stage management team to Trentham's "Bad Dancing", but with a twist. I wanted to use the dance exercise to enter into an exploration of the individual characters. Before the actors arrived, I prepared the rehearsal space with four separate painting stations on two walls of the room. At each station, there were three pieces of large blank paper taped to the floor and two more pieces of paper taped to the walls. On the floor of each station was a make-shift palette with primary coloured finger paints on it and a small box of crayons. The first exercise that we did was as follows: I would put on music and everyone would dance; when I could tell that the actors were getting a little tired and responding to their physical impulses I would stop the music and have them finger paint either the beginning, middle, or end of their respective character's journey on one of the three blank pieces of paper located on the floor. I would often interrupt the painting and go back to dancing. I would sometimes jump back to the dancing when I saw that the actors were painting with less fervour and more thought. The goal was to see what they instinctively knew, saw, or felt were their characters' journeys and not what they thought about it.

After about two hours of dancing and painting, and when all of the actors said they felt satisfied with their creations we went around the room in a group looking at and talking about the art work. I facilitated the discussion by having artists of each triptych explain what they saw or felt about their creations. I would ask the other members of the cast what they saw. I asked that they only speak from their perspective using “I statements” as opposed to statements starting in ‘you’ such as ‘you really used a lot of aggressive strokes, etc’. I stole this way of moderating discussion from Judith Koltai at the Voice Intensive. I found that it fostered an environment that encouraged open discussion without generating an atmosphere fuelled by blame or judgements. At this early point in the rehearsal process I was working in a fairly unorthodox manner. I wanted everyone involved to feel that their individual impulses were respected.

While we looked at the various paintings, it was remarkable how many images from the script seemed to come up. One particularly shocking moment was when we were looking at one of the works by the actor playing Marie. She mentioned that in one of the last minutes of the exercise, when I called out to paint whatever came to mind, she painted a snake. It struck me as significant because not only is there a scene in the play in which Francesca screams after seeing a snake, but also the theme of snakes is prominent in Thompson’s work. As I mentioned earlier she has written an essay discussing her own creative process titled “Epilepsy & the Snake: Fear in the Creative Process” (Thompson 79). The image of snake is a universal one and it would be fair to argue that a lot of what came out in the painting and dancing exercise could be coincidental. However, it does not matter why we arrived at the images that we did on that particular evening, but rather that we made them at all. The work elicited a discussion about the images that concerned the

text in a way that came out of a place of physical impulse. It solidified for the actors the closeness between the characters they were playing and themselves. Although half the cast would be playing characters almost double their age and the other half would portray characters less than half their age, they could trust their impulses to take them through their individual journey and the proof for that was in the paintings they made.

The second half of that rehearsal was spent on another exercise that incorporated movement, music, and art. In this exercise, the actors were divided into pairs that reflected the play. Young Patsy and Marie were put together and Adult Patsy and Francesca were coupled. Each pair was given two pieces of dowelling that they had to hold using only their pointer fingers, while moving through the space. The teams were not allowed to talk to each other or to give any obvious visual clues, but were told to come up with three moves without dropping the sticks. After they accomplished this, I would call out for them to return to their individual stations and begin to draw in crayon on the two pieces of paper taped to the wall. I directed the project by asking them to draw their character's world. Step by step, I guided their work by asking them to illustrate specific elements of their world such as their home, a safe place, what it smells like, etc. While this took place, I interrupted them periodically to return to the dowelling exercise. The goal was to upset the drawing often enough to keep the actors from spending time analysing what they were drawing or from evaluating their abilities. After finishing this exercise, we once again went around the room and talked about what we saw in the images. The actors told me that some of the sensory questions such as "what does your home smell like?" prompted strong sense memories for them that they hoped could be recalled later in the rehearsal process. I found that these discoveries were rewarding

because it implied that already in these early stages the actors were relating to the text with their entire bodies and not solely engaging with the text in an analytical manner. This would have been, given my past experience, unusual.

The Low Whistle at the Back of my Mind: The Role of Music in the Creative Process

Music has played a large part in my creative process since beginning to study theatre. Along with my many dance classes, I also spent hours studying classical vocal technique from the age of twelve. My first experiences acting on stage were in musicals, and for many years it was a joke amongst friends that I could not deliver lines unless I had underscoring. It is because of the importance of music for me that I have developed a tendency to take for granted its role in my directorial process. When I first began acting after my undergraduate degree, I found that I never had enough time to warm up before rehearsal so I would begin my warm up at home. As a way of maintaining my focus from my house to the rehearsal space, I would put on my iPod and listen to music that reminded me of the character on the long bus ride. Slowly as rehearsals progressed, I would refine my music selection so that it became one or two songs. By the time we began the performance period my soundtrack was a part of the daily routine. This helped me to both establish a consistency in my pre-performance routine as well as to ground me before my first moments on stage.

After arriving in Calgary to start my MFA, I decided to test this theory with my first directing scene by asking the actors to bring in one or two songs that reminded them of their characters during the first week of rehearsal. We then listened to them and

discussed what it was about the songs that they felt related to their roles. The actors seemed to really engage with their song selection and the music provided another layer through which we could discuss the play. Not only did it allow me a new way of deciphering how the actors felt about the character they were portraying, but it also evoked a sensual response in the actors. Even though actors may not be able to express in words how they saw their respective character, the song could communicate that for them early on in the process. It has since been a consistent part of my directorial technique to ask the actors to bring in music in the first week of rehearsal.

I tried to compile the majority of what I thought would be the soundtrack for *Perfect Pie* prior to the first rehearsal and worked hard to make sure that the same songs played throughout the process. Then as new music began to be considered for the production, I would bring it in to rehearsal, and play it for the cast and stage management team. I found that this process of sharing music for the production prior to the technical rehearsals provided the actors with some insight into how the production would sound and made for a consistent environment throughout the ever-changing rehearsal conditions. The majority of the music played in the early dance and paint rehearsals was included in the production and was used several times in rehearsal for warm ups and various dance related exercises.

A particular exercise that involved a song from the play was completed mid-way through the blocking of the first act. Early in my research, I listened to several recordings of the James Carr hit “The Dark End of the Street”. It is sung by the characters in the play and represents a crucial metaphor for the relationship between the two women. Of the versions of the song I listened to, my favourite of these was Aretha Franklin’s 1970

recording. Not only did song have an uplifting quality to it that I loved, but it is almost impossible to listen to it without breaking out into a some sort of dance. The exercise was devised from my need to have the Bon bon McFee scene come out of a place of collaborative storytelling. I wanted the actors to build memories of working together in a silly and creative way. I had the women break up into their respective pairs of young and old and develop an entire dance routine while singing along to the Franklin track. They then had to perform it for the rest of the team as best they could after only a half hour of rehearsal. Directly following this exercise, we blocked the Bon Bon McFee sequence and much of the movement for this scene was inspired by the way the women had danced together during the exercise. They would begin by coming up with some movement relating to the text and then I would shape it as an external eye. We had a great time in rehearsal that afternoon and all of the blocking from that session was used in the final production.

I was lucky to have an assistant stage manager who, amongst several other talents, is a piano player and student of music. I wanted all the singing in the show to feel natural. I did not need it to sound rehearsed or polished and at the same time I needed the actors to feel confident enough in the songs to allow themselves to really connect to the lyrics and melodies. Early in the rehearsal process, I asked if the assistant stage manager would be comfortable taking on the role of the musical director. She did and we never looked back. That she was available to lead the actors through the songs in a technical manner was wonderful because it provided a casual aspect to the music rehearsals that seemed to encourage the natural delivery of the songs. Seeing as she was at every rehearsal acting as an assistant stage manager, she was privy to how the music functioned

within the script and was able to communicate with actors regularly regarding questions or concerns they may have had about singing. Once the actors seemed comfortable singing and dancing I noticed how compelling it was to watch them hum the songs off stage. I decided to include it in the transitions that occur in the play. The song “Abide with Me,” which is used at the beginning of the play to create a sense of ceremony to Patsy’s conjuring, was added in later as a hum to underscore some of the women’s discussion. This also served to illustrate young Patsy’s loneliness as she soothes herself after being chided by her new friend Marie. The theme of Patsy humming and singing was an auditory motif for Patsy’s growing ability to express herself. She begins with a hum in the first act and begins to sing with full voice by midway through the second act.

Eating the Words: Food, Sense Memory, and Trust

As the early rehearsal period progressed, I tried to include textual discussion with activities that engaged the senses. On the first Friday I had the entire creative team bringing in their favourite comfort food. We then spent the evening sharing each other’s foods and talking about the significance of each dish, while also discussing the relationship of the food with various characters in the play. Considering that the first act of the play centers around food for the older pair, it was important to me that we begin thinking about what the food means for these two women and their relationship. In order for the audience to believe Francesca’s reactions to Patsy’s cooking, it was important that both the actors understand how eating can soothe and feed the memory. The food night also provided a good opportunity for the cast and stage management team to bond. The script demanded that the actors be very vulnerable throughout the play and I knew that

the only way that we could achieve the raw qualities that Thompson's script demanded in front of an audience was if the actors trusted each other and their technical team immensely.

As we moved along in the rehearsal process the actors and stage managers would often refer back to the food night. Frequently, people would bring in treats for each other based on what they had learned during the comfort food discussions. These small and simple details contributed to a work environment that was both supportive and specific. It reminded me that all of the participants in this project were listening closely to one another and taking responsibility for the quality of the rehearsal space. Slowly but surely, I became only one of the keepers of the space and eventually once the show opened, the creative team continued holding the container in their own way while using some of my initial techniques. I think it is fair to write that although my unusual rehearsal methods may not have always been as effective as I would have liked, the outcome of these exercises was a cast and crew that both knew each other and respected each other's needs.

A Swift Kick in the Ass: Opening up the Container to Include the Audience

A week before the opening, I began to notice some strange behaviour on stage. I saw that the actors simultaneously started to shy away from playing the full extent of their emotional journeys. The rawness that we had worked so hard to establish in the work seemed to have disappeared and been replaced with more conservative actor choices. On one of the last run-throughs before entering technical rehearsals, Dawn McCaugherty pointed out this fact. She also mentioned that I had somehow managed to

block the majority of the monologues in the same awkward position upstage centre left. While talking to her, I realised that I had not purposely made that decision, but that in past runs the actors had been moving more during the monologues. From this discovery, it became clear to me that the vulnerability that the script demanded was at risk of disappearing if I did not confront the actors about this issue directly and quickly.

After working hard to establish a safe rehearsal space where risks could be easily taken, it was difficult to find the most effective tone in confronting my cast about the sudden emotional retreat. With some encouragement from Dawn, I decided the best plan was just to be honest with them and to trust that they would be up for the challenge. At the end of the run, the cast gathered in the green room for notes and I delivered the bad news. I told them that the stakes, as they were being played that evening, were way too low and that a lot of the scenes were ending at the emotional pitch that they should be starting. In rehearsal, I talked about the image of a pendulum swinging to express how the sudden emotional shifts that the characters in the play experience can be visualized. The idea being that in order to experience the highs of ecstasy shown in the script you also have to play the immense lows of deep sorrow. More importantly, it is the momentum from the move in one direction that helps you find the opposite. In the discussion on that late November night, I told them that as it stood the pendulum of the play was only moving within a quarter of its capacity resembling a lazy porch swing on a Sunday afternoon instead of a rushing pendulum.

In retrospect, I wish I had been more articulate with my last direction to the group before departing for the evening, because it became a running note over the final rehearsals leading up to the opening. I must admit it was effective, but it stings a little to

preserve it in this form. What I told them was to “Kick yourself in the ass!”. I wanted them to push themselves back into a place of discomfort with the play. If they found themselves comfortable on stage they should automatically investigate the situation they were playing further. As they knew, *Perfect Pie* is anything but a comfortable play. The other note I gave them was to try to leave everything on the stage. Similar to the idea of bad dancing, the concept is that if you play your character’s needs to the fullest degree on stage you should be re-entering the wings with very little residual emotion. The tears should be shed on stage and not saved for the wings. I meant this as a note for the actors’ personal well-being as well. This play can be emotionally taxing on those involved and if we were not careful an actor could have begun carrying around unexpressed feelings related to the events of the play. We could be putting their emotional well-being in jeopardy. The next run of the play after the note session was completely different. The actors seemed to have gained back all that they had lost in the previous run as well as added a new layer of depth to their performances. I am glad that I took the risk of pushing the production out of its comfort zone and I am thankful that the bold decision to break open our secure container in that moment worked in favour of everyone involved.

The final evenings leading up to the opening proved to deepen the emotional range of the play and by the time it came around I felt rather pleased with where I was forced to leave the production. During the week of technical rehearsal, as we slowly allowed more and more people into our safe container, I found that the new faces and the threat of the arrival of an audience contributed to raising the stakes of the production, ultimately clarifying the story we were trying to tell. By opening night, I was still

incredibly protective of my cast and crew, but knew that they were in a good position to carry on without me.

CHAPTER 3: REFLECTION

The wonder that is keeping the stars apart: How to Let the Production be...

The day that *Perfect Pie* opened I felt exposed. I described the sensation to a friend of mine as being as if I had a naked clone walking around Calgary that was interacting with people. All of the usual opening night ailments came out to play. I could not eat much or sleep much and was communicating in monosyllables. I have opened plays before, but never plays that I liked as much as this one. I wanted it to communicate to the audience clearly and effectively. I was told once that directing a play is a process of slowly walking away from it. In the days leading up to the opening I had begun to feel myself on that journey, but by midday on opening night, I felt as if I was standing on the script and using it as a life raft.

I am still in the process of learning how to evaluate my work. I would like to be able to say that I can judge it from the audience's perspective because it is them who the piece is for. In fact, I spent quite a bit of time trying to find out what the audience thought of the production of *Perfect Pie* at the University of Calgary. At one point, I stooped to the level of eavesdropping. Ultimately, I failed in this endeavour. I realized that as the director of the piece nobody was going to tell me exactly how they felt about the play, especially if they were unmoved by it. This is what led me to come up with my own way of evaluating the work. The questions I feel I need to ask myself are: Was the story told? Is there anything that still bothers me about the production months after its completion? Do any of those things actually matter? Lastly, what did I learn from bringing this story to the stage?

Breaking down the Research and Rehearsal Process

To evaluate whether or not the story was told I must begin with looking at how I decided to tell it. The majority of my research focused on Judith Thompson's various publications and interviews from the beginning of her professional career to present day. I was interested in how she saw her own work and eager to know about her opinions of the world, her plays, and theatre. I wanted her views to inform my directorial choices. In retrospect, I am pleased with where this early research led me. By focusing on Thompson's writing and views, I gained a deeper understanding of the text and I was able to share that with my collaborators. In rehearsal, I would occasionally reference one of her articles that she had written that related to the scene we were working on. If the actors were interested I would provide them with a copy of their own.

Thompson's writing also greatly affected the way we chose to stage the seizure scene. In the essay "Epilepsy & the Snake: Fear in the Creative Process", Thompson describes in great detail how it feels to have a seizure. In addition to my reading on Thompson I spent some time researching epilepsy in various medical text books and journals, but none of these medically informative resources provided as many playable descriptions as Thompson's personal account of a grand mal seizure. I was told by the actor playing adult Patsy that the information she received from Thompson's article aided her through her acting process.

I must also mention that I was lucky to have the aid of a consultant who came into rehearsal on two separate occasions. We also met privately to discuss various elements of epileptic seizures. His input relating to what it feels like to have a seizure was invaluable to both me and the actor playing adult Patsy. He also provided information on

how he felt the seizure should be depicted on stage. I was concerned with portraying a seizure on stage that appeared authentic to a person who had seen several seizures as well as experienced them. Unfortunately, I must admit that the final presentation of the seizure neither fully satisfied me, the consultant, nor the actor. I am not sure what we could have done differently to achieve a more authentic looking seizure. We had countless rehearsals breaking down the various movements explained to us both by the medical text books, the consultant, and even brought in a nurse specializing in the care of children with epilepsy. I think we did the best we could at the time, but the fact of the matter is it is a difficult sequence to stage. Also, seizures can vary in appearance from one individual to another and this may have been a case of too many experts with conflicting perspectives. If I were to stage this piece again, I would narrow my focus to one or two elements of the seizure such as breath and isolation of movements and aim for a more stylized approach instead of attempting a realistic episode.

My decision to approach the script through physical impulse work with the actors proved to be successful in many ways. Firstly, it communicated to the actors that I was interested in storytelling that held its birth place in the body and encouraged them to seek this out in their own processes. I believe this early work contributed to the end result of four actors on stage that were capable of transcending the various ages of their respective characters and conveying the emotional truths of Thompson's story. These early exercises also bonded the cast and crew together which contributed to the authentic feeling of friendship that translated onto the stage. I am positive that I will use these new-found methods in future projects and I am eager to test out more exercises that surfaced in the beginning rehearsals for *Perfect Pie*.

Refocusing the past: what I would do differently and what still bothers me months later...

Aside from staging the seizure in a more stylized manner there are not many decisions that I would not make again. However, I have a few regrets relating to the rehearsal props for this production. Props were an important part of the story telling. At the beginning of the process they were not available to be used in rehearsal. Too much time passed before I learned we would not have rehearsal props until later in the process. Many of the kitchen props that were needed for act I did not arrive until three weeks into rehearsal. This delay led me to block these scenes without them and then to re-block them when they arrived. Initially, I wanted to have more stylized movement worked into the kitchen scenes in act I. Due to constraints of rehearsal time, I chose to cut my losses and simplify the prop work for the actors as much as possible. If I ever encounter this problem again, I will be more proactive in defining a timeline previous to the rehearsal period. This way I would be more able to decipher when the props would be available to the actors. Overall, I felt very well supported by the technical staff at the University and was happy to have the opportunity to rehearse in the theatre for the majority of my rehearsal period.

Another technical foible that I wish I could go back and fix was the efficiency of the tire swing that came down from the lighting grid in act I. Although I loved the way the swing looked, it never quite reached the seamless exit and entrance I wanted. There is no one to blame for this except myself. At the time I was willing to accept this clunky exit and entrance for the look and use of it. Once the play opened, the swing's loud

entrance and laboured exit caused me and I am sure several audience members to cringe. I am positive that this oversight led to a break in the feeling we had created in the theatre and if I were to stage *Perfect Pie* again under the same circumstances I would fight harder for a less abrasive alternative to the tire swing.

What Was Learned

I have changed a great deal as a director over the last two years. The majority of these changes were solidified for me throughout the directorial process for *Perfect Pie*. The most surprising change I have noticed is that I now direct plays for myself first and foremost (moments of eavesdropping weakness aside). I used to approach a new script like a puzzle that I needed to solve thinking there was only one correct way for the pieces to fit together. My imagined audience was always highly critical and all knowing. I worked hard to appease them. I still think of approaching a play as a puzzle, but one with many successful outcomes. It is my job as the director to solve the puzzle so that the pieces fit together and create a whole story and the solution I come to is uniquely my own. The shift in my thinking has allowed for a much more playful quality in the way I approach rehearsal and staging. I encourage the actors to work from impulse as much as I encourage myself to do the same.

I learned from directing *Perfect Pie* what I had heard many times growing up from various mentors. If something such as a song or a joke feels deeply personal to you, most likely it will have the same effect on others. This idea came across clearly for me in the musical selections for the play. Many of the tracks we used in the preshow and in the play itself were songs that I connected to in a strongly emotional way. As we progressed

in rehearsal and the actors heard them, they began to connect closely with the songs. As opening night arrived, I was approached by technicians and audience members who wanted sound tracks to the show. The interest in the music of the show demonstrates the point very clearly that reactions to art, music, drama, do not occur in a vacuum. I have taken this point to heart. I now know that if I am sitting in the rehearsal hall and am unmoved by what I am seeing, most likely my audience will have a similar reaction. I have learned to trust my responses to the theatre I am creating and to follow my instinctive reactions to the work I am doing.

In fear of appearing twee by tying my learning process in with the journey that Patsy Willet takes in the play I must admit that there are some parallels that I see between myself and the fictional woman. I learned from my directorial experience to free up my creative impulses and follow my curiosity in order to tell the story as honestly as I felt it. Patsy's journey begins with a recognition of a truth and ends with a deeper understanding of that same truth. Like Patsy, I came to understand my own directorial process and style more deeply by admitting my ignorance as it related to the text. I trusted what I did know and did my best to work through all that was unclear. Also, like Thompson's heroine I brought together a group of strong diverse women to help me tell the story so that I could better understand it myself. Patsy and I both began our journeys alone with a story and from this solitude birthed community and later understanding.

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Fig. 1 Patsy and her Kitchen Shadows.
Archive Photograph, Department of Drama,
26 Nov. 2010

Fig. 2 The Train Crash.

Archive Photograph, Department of
Drama, 26 Nov. 2010.





Fig. 3 The Set.

Archive Photograph,
Department of Drama, 26 Nov.
2010



Fig. 4 Cleaning.

Archive Photograph,
Department of Drama, 26 Nov.
2010



Fig. 5 The Slumber Party.

Archive Photograph, Department of Drama, 26 Nov. 2010



Fig. 6 Dancing. Archive Photograph, Department of Drama, 26 Nov. 2010