

# BEING IN TRANSIT

*The following are excerpts from responses that came from participants at the Transit III Festival and Meeting held in Holstebro, Denmark, in January 2001. They have been chosen with particular reference to the theme of this issue of The Open Page - Theatre-Women-Travel*

... It's over a month since I returned from Transit and still I find myself in transition... My question at the beginning of the Festival was: "Am I in the middle of the old and the young?" (only 10 words! 11 - I cheated!) And my answer by the end was: "In the middle" (three words! - accurate and honest at least!)

On returning home I realise that being in the middle is more than just a state of mind - it is my position in England, being in Coventry and at the centre of the country. How many times did I have to say: "No, I am not from London, I am from Coventry", "Oh, where's that?" "In the middle... and (to qualify for fame's sake) near Stratford, Shakespeare's town." Then there's also the middleness that comes from not always making the kind of work you want to and the climate in which work is created at the moment. ... I will remember Transit for its reminder to me of my position and the point in my journey.

**Carran Waterfield, Britain**

Theatre, Women, Generation is: 1. Giving, Sharing, Opening;  
2. Alternative, Opportunity, Possibility;  
3. Mirror, Reflection, Recognition.

**Ya Ling Peng, Taiwan**

Going to Transit was very important for me, because it allowed me to reaffirm my position as a Latin American woman and artist in my city, in my country and in the world. ... When I feel frail, I think of Transit and remember that even if we are far away we are not alone. ... I had to travel a long way to find my essence in daily work again, and this made the trip worthwhile; the information is registered in my whole body.

**Anabel Llorca, Venezuela**

I (mask maker) was invited to give a workshop with Marie-Josée Ordener



(puppeteer) from France with the idea of having a final presentation in a shop window. With time and the exchange of emails, the list of participants grew. How will twenty-eight women fit in a shop window?! It is a metaphor for the impossible. .... Thanks to Ana Woolf's generous translation, Marie-Josée - who speaks French, but no Spanish or English - and I - who speak English and Spanish, but no French - presented our workshop to the twenty eight participants from Venezuela, the Czech Republic, France, Yugoslavia, Norway, Poland, Colombia, The Philippines, Spain, Mexico, Romania, Portugal, Italy, Britain and the USA - the blessings of physical theatre!

**Deborah Hunt,  
New Zealand/Puerto Rico**

To feel part of something like Transit made me feel happy and alive. I was amazed by the generosity from you at Odin Teatret and the way experience was shared among everyone. It was such a great way of being introduced and getting a perspective on theatre. So many of my questions were answered and things I have been wondering about became a bit clearer.

I was very curious about Odin Teatret before I came and I believe I was even more curious when I left. It was all a big thing for me, and a challenge too, to see if there was something for me at Transit. I haven't got much experience of theatre and this kind of meeting was new to me. I have not been much involved in the women's movement either or been to a meeting with almost only women. It was a different, nice feeling. Actually I have never even spent much time with female friends at all, discussing feminism or the women's perspective. My musician friends always happened to be men for some reason - I realised there are very few female "heroes" in my life.

When I arrived it didn't take long before I felt I had come home in a way.

**Cecilia Hvarfner, Sweden**

By charm, obsessiveness and ruthless dedication, Barba has made Odin Teatret one of the most famous institutions of contemporary theatre. Famous enough for Jenny Freed to hear the name while studying at Auckland's Unitech. After attending Julia Varley's workshops in Wellington in 1998, she rushed to Holstebro. Why? "I feel very insecure in New Zealand. You get the script, there's four weeks to put it on, to get back the money that's been spent. Then you never know if they're going to want you again."

Jo Randerson announces her show is, in fact, now called *The Rabid Horse*. One of the new generation Varley has chosen "to fight against oblivion", she induces Miff Moore to be her technical director. Moore left Christchurch two years ago for the Magdalena trail. First to Wales and then to Aniksdal in Norway, to a post-NATO festival in Yugoslavia, and a tour of Italy with the Saggiocco Ensemble. "I've learned some real things from some real people", she says. Yesterday, she presented her first ever solo show. How did it feel? 'G-o-o-d!

Magdalena is not exclusively female. Several men pass as "technical advisers"; Alejandro with Cuban Marianela Boán, Anders with Grenland Friteater. And Barba himself circulates constantly. He asks me why we sing Maori songs. Is it Anglo-Saxon guilt? I explain we are constructing a society via negotiation between the dispossessed and the immigrant cultures. He looks nonplussed. I tell him my suburb (Island Bay) was settled by southern Italians. He laughs. I say, 'I saw your *Brecht's Ashes* in New York in 1984.' He clasps me and bussess each cheek. We are both unshaven.

**Alan Brunton, Aotearoa New Zealand**

It took weeks before I felt like talking to people again, and fourteen days to get out of

the bubble. So many women to get to know and so little time!

**Sissel Drag and Kristin Hestad, Norway**

When Julia asked me to write about the Transit III Festival I was enthusiastic, full of ideas and great theories. Then I got home to Paris, empowered by my experience at Transit. Some months have gone by and I still feel nourished by what I saw and by what I experienced physically. I continue in my work as performer and director with the energy I received there. The shared energy has diminished a bit, but I keep in touch with all the new friends I made there.

**Nathalie Gauthard, France**

I came to Transit III for my professional development; to develop my skills, my confidence and my voice. When Julia passed the stone and asked us to speak our question in eleven words or less, mine was : what can I learn from an older generation of women practitioners about generating and sustaining work? More than eleven words. At first I thought that the answer to my question lay in what I observed of the older women through the ten days of Transit: their tireless focus on the work and on supporting, encouraging and challenging each other. Since coming home I have endeavoured to shift my focus from myself to my community and I have re-discovered a great energy and appetite for work.

After ten days, when you once again passed the stone, I was able to keep within the form, this time three words: Move Towards Fear. Initially I thought this was my response to the question Gilly Adams had posed about finding courage for change. But today, for the first time, I realise that those three words are also the answer to my original question. For me, the energy for generating and sustaining work lies in identifying what I fear and moving towards

it. ...

In coming to Transit III I moved towards what I feared and this released an energy within me which has carried me forwards. Since my return to Australia, as I continue the work of building connections around the continent and planning for Magdalena Australia, 2003, I have had to confront my fears time and again. Each time I move through them I sense an increase in the flow of energy in my life. No longer absorbed in the puddle in the gutter, I've become a part of the Great Parade and I'm dancing down the road!

**Dawn Albinger, Australia**

Transit was the meeting of a great family, where love is present and grows; the knowledge and shared experiences are shared with the same generosity as that of a mother giving birth.

**Verónica Früchte Moraga, Chile**

The most important encounter is the encounter within myself. I was opened to new voices and understandings, voices that stay with me to this very day and always will, voices of authority, knowledge, creativity, concern and consideration for strengthening and listening to others.

**Cyle Pollard, Norway**

I was part of Ana Woolf and Hisako Miura's workshop "Wind and Rocks". This was an experience that changed my life and showed me a new direction of theatre that I want to explore. The combination of Salsa, Suzuki methods and Japanese dance was amazing. They are three different fully realised methods of training and require the body to express things and feel things in three different ways. When combined together, they require the actor to make these large shifts that must occur on a deep internal level for the shift to be successful.

I was amazed by the variety of different artists that attended the Festival. As a college senior was questioning where next to go in the world, this breadth of experiences and goals exploded my preconception of what a career in the theatre means.

After spending ten days at Transit, I have resolved that I want to be able to make theatre in a different language. I was very impressed with the ability of so many of the participants to speak several languages fluently and the speed with which that made those people helpful in such a setting.

**Electa Behrens, USA**

transit

cog

cognition

recognition

ignition

**Helen Jamieson, New Zealand**

My fear of flying by plane was replaced by my need to follow the scent of women's theatre. Everything started with my wish and decision - my own female, feminist self-grown, need - to participate in the Transit Festival in Denmark.

Desire to be there, was the first hint. With the help of my Belgrade feminist friends, I took that path. Taking it was like travelling to the nucleus of female art and experience. It was like coming to some strange and beautiful crossroads where different women's theatres meet and crash into each other creating new scenes. The fear of flying vanished when I started flying on my own wings. I landed on theatre, my next means of transport. I arrived just in time to join the travelling women's theatre of surprises. New smells calmed me down, I felt like floating on new meetings, acquaintances, talks.

Moving in the sphere of art that is based

on sensitivity and responsibility toward women's experiences, I understood myself both much more and much better. Free from social masks and all artificial patterns of communication, I could start building my own sense of theatre with my cries, voices, tears, breaths, emotions and wishes. My tears, woven into women's free expression, moved me and gave me power.

It was a unique market place of scents and experiences. I met different women, talked to them, exchanged words, songs, laughter and tears, without walls of violence, wars, discrimination and fears. Through their theatre, women from other countries showed me how to filter and release my own personal feminist vision of theatre. They gave me the air, earth, fire, water and sunshine of women's travelling theatre. I learned to discern the traffic signs in the middle of a very heavy traffic of women's artistic expressions.

Now I know that: voice is the earth, giving birth to feelings and fruit by working hard; tears are the water, necessary to purify the land; emotion is the air that the earth breathes in and out in the form of a calm wind or a storm; movement is the fire and the sun, the warmth that is necessary for the earth to give birth.

Transit Festival overcame and healed my phobia of an unattainable women's theatre I thought I would never find working just in Belgrade. This festival showed me that all that it takes is to simply follow the scent of travelling women, from time to time landing on the trains of feminism, and most importantly to emanate the scent of my own theatre for others to follow.

**Zorica Gudovi, Yugoslavia**