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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "What are little girls made of? What are little girls made of?  
Sugar and spice, and all that's nice. That's what little girls are made of.  
What are little boys made of? What are little boys made of?  
Snips and snails and puppy dog tails. That's what little boys are made of."

I know there must be a reference (Mother Goose maybe) for this folk rhyme, but I can't find it.  
This rhyme is an insidious and structural part of my culture, my community, and my cognition.

<sup>2</sup> See the Guerilla Girls' Web Page: <http://www.voyagerco.com/gg/>

## ROOTS/ROUTES AS ARTERIAL CONNECTIONS FOR ART EDUCATORS: ADVOCATING FOR ABORIGINAL CULTURES

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*Arterial and life connections for art educators. Arteries are muscular vessels carrying blood away from the heart to every part of the body, eventually bringing the blood back to the heart before venturing out again. Metaphorically, these pathways locate the heart as a home from which travel extends, repeatedly, expectantly as life itself. Symbolically, arterial connections pulsate with the notion of art, expressing art through life through art. To many peoples, and particularly Aboriginal peoples<sup>1</sup>, art translated as cultural performance is found in the very pathways and bloodlines of their geographies and histories. However, these arterial connections are available to all of us, especially art educators, as we come to recognize our own pathways and bloodlines. Sharing stories of lives, cultural roots and routed experiences, illustrates complex identity building in the late twentieth century. In this article I talk about a trip to a Paiwan aboriginal community in southern Taiwan and what I learned from/with these people. I hope this portrayal encourages others to reflect on their travel experiences in ways that may help to make classroom art experiences socioculturally diverse and politically engaged.*

During my career as an art educator I have taught in three Canadian provinces, spent several months teaching in Cameroon, Africa and have visited and studied in aboriginal communities in Australia, Canada<sup>2</sup> and Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> In each location I have encountered a complex range of experiences as a result of traveling, of practicing the crossing of borders, or as Clifford (1997, p. 2) might say, practicing a temporary "traveling-in-dwelling and dwelling-in-travel."

Dwelling is a word/concept which connotes a collective life in which travel is an extension, a supplemental experience. But what if

we uproot the rootedness of dwelling so that we displace the notion that roots always precede routes and consider the notion that traveling experiences are practices of displacement which:

emerge as *constituent* of cultural meanings rather than as their simple transfer or extension. The cultural effects of European expansionism, for example, [can] no longer be celebrated, or deplored, as a simple diffusion outward - of civilization, industry, science, or capital.... Virtually everywhere one looks, the processes of human movement and encounter are long-established and complex. Cultural centers, discrete regions and territories, do not exist prior to contacts, but are sustained through them, appropriating and disciplining the restless movements of people and things. (p.3)

When asked where I come from, I hesitantly reply, from a dry-land grain farm in southern Alberta. This location has always represented my roots. My personal memories are deep and formative, and are held within collective family and community memories. Yet, increasingly, I have felt uncomfortable with this answer. My location is not just rooted in this one location, it is also routed in dislocation, in multiple locations. My cultural source is not just grounded in southern Alberta, it is grounded in cultural practices which include dwelling-in-traveling rather than simply locating my travels as a point of departure and return.

Diaspora is a concept discussed in anthropology, cultural and political studies, and related fields. It is a concept that provides an identification for a great many people who have traveled away from their homeland yet retain memories or myths of that homeland, who feel alienated in their host countries or communities, who hold the desire to return to their homeland and as such maintain support for their homeland while living away, and who feel a collective identity with others who continue to live in their homeland (Safran 1991). This range of experience helps to situate the concept of diaspora but should not limit our understanding of diaspora. For instance, in my own experience having moved away from my prairie roots, I have elements each place I h of diaspora even though I have never chosen to move permanently away from my national homeland of Canada. Yet, I have been temporarily displaced, sometimes for months at a time. In this sense, I experienced having a home away from home while holding a strong desire to return home.

However, I must admit that my experience is not diasporic in that it allowed me to become more or less assimilated into the norms of new cultural roots/routes in each place I have lived. In this way, I do not use the language of diaspora as with displaced people who feel a "sense of connection [which] must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing.... diaspora communities are 'not-here-to-stay.' Diasporas cultures thus mediate, in a lived tension, the experiences of separation and entanglement, of living here and remembering/desiring another place (Clifford 1997, p. 255)."

In recent years, Canadian art educators have become sensitized to cultural pluralism (Chalmers 1996), issues of identity, representation and appropriation (Long & Dickason 1996, Sacca 1997), and governmental policies governing multiculturalism and First Nations peoples (Irwin, Rogers & Farrell 1997a, 1997b). Yet in this sensitivity, I wonder how much we encourage ourselves and each other to reflect upon our own cultural source(s), identity(ies), and location(s) in an effort to understand and contest assumptions, meanings, beliefs, and values?

Elsewhere, colleagues in art education and I have written about our work with First Nations and Aboriginal peoples and communities in Canada and Australia (Irwin & Reynolds 1992, 1994, Rogers 1994, Rogers & Irwin 1995). In this work, we attempt to understand the beliefs and practices of individuals struggling with language and identity as they assert a collective cultural memory while working within a period of cultural transformation. In each case, we are struck by mistranslations made or assumed between English and Native languages, and between mainstream and First Nations ideologies (Irwin & Farrell 1996, Irwin, Rogers & Farrell 1997a, Rogers & Irwin 1997). It is apparent that to be truly involved with cultural translation, research must take on the characteristic of researching *with* people rather than researching *about* people (Alcoff 1991). Cultural translations, even when a common language is shared, are still interpretations rooted and routed within personal experiences, histories and geographical locations.

Stuhr, Krug and Scott (1995) suggest that cultural translation is really about understanding our own lives in a fuller way. A number of years ago, I became aware of my own assumptions and ignorance about First Nations art and culture when I realized the ethnocentric

bias in art curricula. At a time when I was living in a northern Ontario community closely situated to many First Nations communities, I became very aware of my lack of knowledge about Native artists and their beliefs. As I learned about Native cultures from local First Nations people and as I became more interested in national issues surrounding Aboriginal peoples, I found I had to make a decision. Should I learn about First Nations peoples, artists and cultures on my own and for myself, or should I share what I learn in an effort to influence art education generally? I chose the latter.

Efland, Freedman and Stuhr (1996) discuss at length the characteristics of a postmodern approach to art education. Postmodernizing pedagogy within art education helps to "create an informed citizenry who question authority and the status quo, accept differences, and act in defense of others and the environment (p. 90)." One postmodern pedagogical approach is an education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist (see Cahan & Kocur 1996, Goodman 1996). In this approach, diverse sociocultural groups across a nation are expected to be represented (Rogers & Irwin 1995). Typically the representations are found within short stories that portray power and knowledge relationships, and which show possibilities for negotiation. Through a knowledge of enframing, knowing is action within a cultural frame. Probably the most important characteristic of the social reconstructionist approach is that "through the curriculum, teacher, students, staff, and community are enabled and expected to practice democratic action for the benefit of disenfranchised sociocultural groups. As Lucy Lippard (1990) contends, we cannot speak for the other, but we can speak *up* for them (Efland, Freedman & Stuhr, 1996, p.89)."

In Canada, it is widely known that First Nations peoples are marginalized, yet through their actions to secure self-government, land claims, and other legislation, First Nations peoples are re-discovering and re-creating themselves and their histories (Irwin, Rogers & Farrell in press). This lived historical moment needs to be shared in classrooms across Canada. However, simultaneously with this, greater numbers of immigrants are coming to Canada than ever before and as a result, multiculturalism plays a significant role in curriculum development. In my experience, I have noticed a tendency among art educators to include a variety of culturally-based experiences, while ignoring First Nations' cultures. As a social reconstructionist, I have chosen to speak *up* for First Nations representation in the art curricula

across Canada and encourage educators to involve First Nations elders, artists and community members whenever possible.

Within this context, I have become interested not only in aboriginal issues within Canada, but beyond, and whenever I travel abroad I ask about aboriginal cultures. To my surprise, on a trip to Taiwan about two years ago, I learned about aboriginal groups who continue to practice their beliefs and customs. After a serendipitous encounter with an art educator interested in doing research with aboriginal peoples in Taiwan, I was able to organize a trip to visit the Paiwan people of southern Taiwan. I want to share with you my reflections on this trip as a way to further examine not only my own personal roots/routes but also the roots/routes of the Paiwan as they provide arterial connections for art educators interested in a social reconstructionist approach to art education.

Taiwan is an island about 250 miles long and 80 miles wide at its broadest point. With over 20 million in population it is the mostly densely populated self-governing area in the world outside of Bangladesh and the city islands of Hong Kong and Singapore. The straits between Taiwan and mainland China are just over 100 miles wide and contain more than 85 islands controlled by Taiwan. Japan controls islands 70 miles to the northwest and the archipelago lies 200 miles to the south of Taiwan (Long 1991). The eastern mountainous spine of the island, though inhabited, remains forested with lush vegetation while the remainder of the island is densely populated. It is also in the mountainous region that most of the aboriginal peoples live, with the Paiwan people living at the southern tip of the island. Other aboriginal groups live in the western and northern lowlands (Knapp 1980, Wang 1980). Overall, the aboriginal cultural groups make up much less than one percent of the population even though they have very deep roots in Taiwan. Historians have determined that some aboriginal groups date back over 2000 years.

Over the last 400 years, Taiwan has been colonized by the Dutch (1624-1662), Chinese (1662-1895), Japanese (1895-1945) and the Chinese (1945-present) again. The Dutch and early Chinese "did come into contact with the mountain aborigines but because of the difficult terrain and strong resistance they did not invade aboriginal territory until the late nineteenth century. The mountain aborigines were thus enabled to maintain their way of life into the twentieth century without much external interference (Wang, 1980, p. 39)."

During Japanese rule, interest in exploiting Taiwan's natural resources marked a planned intrusion on Paiwanese territory. Many older Paiwanese individuals remember Japanese influence on their region, with some having fond memories. It was during this time period that aboriginal peoples were consolidated into settlements close to urban areas. The Japanese established schools and police stations and encouraged the learning of aboriginal languages among the Japanese. In the postwar era, aboriginal peoples became citizens of China with all of the same legal rights as the Han Chinese. In an effort to "protect them from exploitation, the Chinese government continues the reserve system forbidding Chinese to enter without a permit but leaving the aborigines free to depart or enter (p. 50)." Nevertheless, a Chinese influence is felt. A network of roads makes the region highly accessible allowing capitalistic influences to penetrate communities. Young Paiwanese leave their home communities for employment, secondary education or military service. As a result, the Paiwanese are becoming deeply influenced by a Chinese way of life, not only as they migrate away from the reserves but also as the Chinese influence slowly penetrates Paiwanese communities.

Prior to my visit to Taiwan, a colleague in art education at the National University of Education in ChangHua, Dr. Yuh-Yao Wan, initiated a research project with the Paiwan community in Ku-Lou village (Chen 1961, Hsu & Ke 1994). Her knowledge of the community, individuals, and festivals, provided an introduction into the culture. Previously, my research colleagues and I were able to locate individuals who could speak English and their own aboriginal language. In this way, an aboriginal person was able to translate the ideas, beliefs and language from one culture to another, in an effort to act as a cultural translator and pedagogue between cultures. In Taiwan, this was not possible. Few Paiwanese people speak Mandarin and virtually none speak English. With Wan speaking Mandarin and English, interviews were conducted with a Paiwan translator who could translate into Mandarin. From here, we tape-recorded English translations (see Irwin, Rogers & Wan 1997), recognizing that with two levels of language translation already in place, our attempts at cultural translation became more tenuous. However, if we accept that cultural translations like this are happening around the world, it gives us an opportunity not only to examine the ideas that are gathered in a foreign place but to examine our own interpretations of the experience and how we try to learn from one another. Engaging in the activity of sharing stories of our cultural experiences offers each person an

opportunity to learn more about themselves. It also fosters respect, interest, and participation in cultural events (Chalmers 1996) among cultural translators of diverse linguistic and sociocultural backgrounds.

Stuhr, Krug and Scott (1993) suggest that cultural translation is a collaborative research method which should begin with researchers situating their own backgrounds, histories, and geographical roots. They state all cultural translations are still interpretations, set against personal experiences, and can never be complete translations, regardless of shared language. Therefore, one must understand why cultural translations are important, especially to art educators: "to translate is an effort to know more about ourselves and the world we live in" (Stuhr, Krug & Scott, 1995, pp. 31-32). Cultural translation, states Krug (in press p. 1) "is a way to study the contextual complexity of cultural identity ... through a collaborative, ethnographic research method." Using this approach, he suggests the development of partial tales or short stories to illustrate the complex nature of lived activities in an effort to provide a basis for developing mutual understanding. If we choose to enter the lifeworld of another person as cultural participants, cultural translators and cultural pedagogues learning from one another, we create a pedagogical space for interpreting meaningful partial tales (Stuhr, Krug & Scott, 1995). It was from this place that I found I could learn from the Paiwanese while I also tried to share some cultural stories from my own background. The following account is a partial tale of what I learned during my stay.

The Paiwanese people are quick to talk about their daily activities and especially their cultural beliefs and production. During our stay of one week, we lived in a local teacher's home and experienced the hospitality and warmth of our hosts and many other community members. Over the week, we were able to interview ten men and women who carve ceremonial items, bead or cross-stitch garments, or make jewelry. We also interviewed two female hereditary chiefs, a shaman, several community members and three contemporary artists. In return for their generous gift of time with us, I gave them gifts from Canada: cloths and carvings with First Nations designs, and for some, tinned salmon. I took many pictures during that stay and share several with you here.

The primary focus for the conversational interviews was to understand enough about the culture to determine if a parallel concept

for art existed in the Paiwanese ideology and language. What we found was not surprising. The Paiwan people could not translate art as a word nor as a concept. However, through long conversations about cultural practices in their community, certain words<sup>4</sup> came to the fore which are used to describe activities with natural objects. For instance, *vinzig* is used to describe 'being able to do.' A thing of beauty might be called *nonwag* or if it is very beautiful, *nonwagwag*.

Participating in some of the local events and activities, talking with elders, chiefs and shamans, one notices carvings (see figures 1 & 2) in every home and intricate beadwork and cross-stitch (see figures 3 & 4) on ceremonial costumes. Chiefs wear special headdresses and showcase valuable cultural forms in their homes (see figure 5). The older hereditary chief was particularly distinctive with her tattooed hands. At the age of fourteen, her hands were tattooed to distinguish her forever as a chief. As she grew, and her hands grew larger, the tattoos no longer covered all of her hands (see figure 6) yet they continue to symbolize her position in the community. Although the Japanese and Chinese governments allowed the Paiwanese to make cultural products they were not allowed to continue any cultural performances or ceremonies (Hung 1993). After much resistance, the Chinese government allowed the Paiwanese to practice their cultural beliefs through ceremonial rituals in the late 1970s.

Cultural products repeatedly illustrate certain symbols that are easily recognizable in the region as Paiwanese. Most visual products portray snakes, eagles, and male and female heads with large round eyes, which are often combined with regular geometrically patterned decorations. Carved ceremonial drinking cups (two linked together for two people to drink from) are used for special occasions and were used during a marriage celebration during my visit. When asked if the Paiwan gave the makers of such objects a specific name, they struggled



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

to find the following words: *rraruvenzigan* meaning the one who carves often and *rrariwalunya* meaning the one who weaves, beads or does cross-stitch very often.

Traditional designs tell ancient stories of events, relationships among people(s), ceremonies or tribal conflicts. These are passed orally from generation to generation and if certain items are considered ancient, they cannot be sold for fear of offending spirits. However, many Paiwanese today adapt the Paiwan style for tourist trade items which do not possess cultural stories. Contemporary aboriginal artists are careful to adapt Paiwanese designs without offending elders. Young people are encouraged to learn how to carve, bead, make jewelry, weave and make other cultural products. This is usually encouraged through the watching of accomplished creators, though there are times when direct instruction is given.

The cultural memories or roots of the Paiwan are deeply situated in the oral nature of their cultural practices as well as in their relationship with land, their environment. The Paiwan believe land is a sacred entity to be honored and respected. Even though governmental relocation of their communities has separated them from traditional lands, they firmly believe their souls will return to their sacred Da-Wu mountain after they die where they will join their ancestors. In addition to this belief, the Paiwanese also believe that Chiefs inherit land on behalf of the community. Chiefs are entrusted with land and with this entrustment, cultural rituals and cultural performances of all types, are sustained, cared for, nurtured.

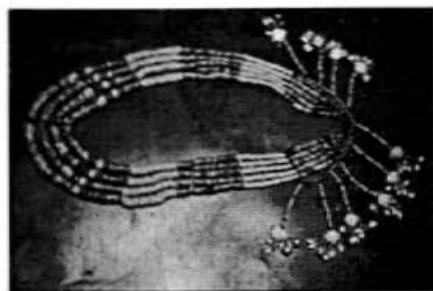


Figure 5



Figure 6

Though the Paiwanese roots or cultural memories are deeply felt, so too are their routes. These routes assume several forms. Before the nineteenth century, cultural memories passed on through oral traditions recall tribal connections, travels, and conflicts. With colonization, routes were imposed with entire communities relocated, permanently. Clifford (1997) discusses the tension and relatedness of diasporist and autochthonist histories, that is the histories of migrants and aboriginals, respectively. In many ways, the experiences of aboriginal peoples holds diasporic elements: displacement, dispossession, and adaptation of dispersed peoples. By claiming their "firstness" on the land, and articulating their common histories of marginalization, aboriginal peoples hold diasporist visions of returning to an original place. The Paiwan hold these same views, though interestingly, not to the degree I expected. My experience with First Nations peoples in Canada has deeply sensitized me to issues of treaties, land claims, and self-government (among others). The Paiwan people never spoke of such activism or concern to me. Upon reflection, I came to appreciate another interpretation of the relationship between rootedness and displacement.

Before reflecting on my experience with the Paiwanese, I assumed that most aboriginal peoples sought their roots, their homeland, their place of ancestral memories in an effort to argue against the relentless trend toward the routedness of a global, transnational world. Even though I felt an opposition between roots and routes, I never questioned this opposition to any significant degree. My roots were in southern Alberta. My familial pride, my metaphoric agency,

my formative grounding came from these roots. In imaginative moments, I still feel a desire to return to what and where I once was. When I thought about the routedness of my travels, my assumption was that they formed trajectories that looped outward yet returned homeward. My roots/routes were central to my experience, my identity, my sense of community.

My interpretation of aboriginal experience, as well as my own experience, assumed a centrality of cultural roots. I suspect, this notion is not unusual. However, I have come to perceive the relationship between the rootedness *and* routedness of experiences differently as a result of my visit to the Paiwan. One of the visions of modernization has been the decimation of autochthonous notions, cultures, communities. However, these same autochthonous groups have never been purely local or regional: "they have always been rooted and routed in particular landscapes, regional and interregional networks (Clifford, p. 254)." In a curious turn, "what may be distinctively *modern*, however, is the relentless assault on indigenous sovereignty by colonial powers, transnational capital, and emerging nation-states (p. 254)." In an era of post-modernism, what is needed is a shift of understanding toward the roots/routes of our cultural identities. We cannot have one without the other, nor would we want one without the other. Diasporic consciousness is not in absolute opposition to tribal consciousness, but rather, is in a dialectical relationship. Our understanding of ourselves, our lives, our beliefs is rooted/routed in dialectical relationships. These dialectical relationships may have been in place with the Paiwanese, perhaps other aboriginal groups (and others), prior to colonization.

Arterial connections for art education. In the opening paragraph I metaphorically suggested that the roots and routes of one's experience might be compared to the bloodlines of the muscular vessels leading to and from the heart. In our experiences, we situate our formative sense of home with our traveled sense of home-away-from-home. We negotiate these roots/routes through dialogue and reflection. As we do so, we develop a stronger sense of ourselves, but we also develop a stronger sense of community.

These arterial connections are profoundly important for art educators. Not only because all art educators are cultural translators and pedagogues, but because we are cultural performers teaching about art as cultural performance. Earlier in this paper I mentioned

that the Paiwanese people did not have words or concepts that translated to an English language notion of art. Nor have any other aboriginal cultures with whom I have worked. The reason no clear translation exists, I am told, is because cultural products which might be considered art in mainstream society, cannot be separated from the flow of cultural life, from the memories of cultural sources, from the environmental and spiritual situatedness of cultural identity and community. Cultural performances not only involve cultural products, they also involve the active beliefs, active meaning-making, active understandings that surpass temporal notions of past, present and future. These cultural performances are often celebratory in nature but they may also be everyday experiences that link the mundane with the spiritual, the practical with the abstract in and through time. These products are not separate from but are integrated with cultural life. The best, yet poor translation, is that art is life, is integrated with being and becoming, is a source of memory and forecast, and is the flow of culture itself. Culture is performed in and through life. Art, or cultural performance, pulsates in and through life.

For art educators, understanding the roots/routes of our experiences helps us to understand the roots/routes of our students' experiences. As we recognize the dialectical relationship between the two notions, roots/routes, we begin to realize the narrowness of the concept of art in a modern sense. Post-modern pedagogy encourages educators to explore difference and diversity. For me, embracing the sense of art as cultural performance helps to liberate me from the separation of art from my life. There are times my rootedness to art is comforting, but increasingly my experience and routedness toward cultural performance influences not only what I create but how I create it and how I live through it.

Classroom art experiences which recognize the roots/routes of our identities should help to form pathways for understanding ourselves and each other in ways that are pulsating; an engagement with life itself.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> I use the term Aboriginal to refer to all indigenous peoples. First Nations will refer to Canadian indigenous people. Although I will generally refer to the Aboriginal people of Taiwan, I will refer to the Paiwan people in this paper.

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<sup>4</sup> All of these Paiwanese words which follow are phonetically spelled as they are said in the Paiwanese language. Linguists might disagree with our spellings or translations.