Prefatory Note

These three research poems are included as part of an interdisciplinary dissertation project in theatre and curriculum: “Audience in Performance: A Poetics of Pedagogy of Spectatorship” (Prendergast). The study, to be published under the title Teaching Spectatorship: Essays and Poems on Audience in Performance, offers a curriculum theory that attempts to bridge what I see as the alienating abyss that lies between performers and their audiences in much of our contemporary North American theatre culture. The fourth wall is breached and broken down through the mediating influence of education as the teacher of pedagogy of the spectator facilitates meaningful drama-based activities (mirroring exploratory rehearsal processes), dialogues, and other interactions between students and performing artists.

Other poetry from this study has been previously published in drama/theatre and education arts education journals. However, it is my intention to elicit some reflection and response amongst my colleagues in theatre with the placement of these poems in this particular setting.

The longer poem raises the key problem addressed in my dissertation, which is reflected upon and responded to by the two poems that follow it.

the stranger in our midst

the stranger
in our midst
in theatre
is the spectator

we open up the doors
of our
dark and secretive
creative process

and then what?
(we let in anyone?
   everyone?)

their strangers
walk in
sit down
   gawp
   gape
   guffaw
   grumble
   gag

pass judgments
in applause
(or lack)
trot back home

they are
too strange
   estranged (our problem)

they are not part of us
we are apart

we are not part of them

the abyss lying
between actor
   &
   audience
(of our own creation)
must be brought down
   disrupted
   dissolved

in the name of art
   of authenticity
   of meaning
   of performance

(from estrangement to intimacy)

to care
to know
not to market  
but to mark  

audience attendance  
becomes  

attending to audience  
(as we do our own creations)  
with great care  
with passion  
with all our collective  
creative powers  

our very lives  
depend  
on the banishment  

of the stranger  
in our midst  

residuum (n.)  

#1  
what remains (substance)  
left after combustion/  
evaporation  

(Concise Oxford Dictionary)  

#2  
what remains  
from engagement  
with performance?  

what residua?  

for me  
what remains?  

the undeniable force  
of essential loneliness  
within the protection
of the audience
around me
it is final moments
that mark me
haunt me
in conspiracy
with actors
connecting to
characters
who embody meanings
(all for
one
one for
all)

the storytellers
who suffer
fail
die
love and hate and feel and desire
too much
& are left on stage
or exiting
solitary and silent
breathing to their last breath
with (and
for)
me

Haiku

Vital performance?
Attend to the audience:
All purpose sits there.
Works Cited


