Towards an eco-theatre:
I was born into a family of diverse origins, related by interconnected trade histories. If I split myself in two, one of my hands descends from a line of Indians, employed as a sort of imperialistic polyfiller. Thus we sailed from Calcutta in the 1860’s as indentured labourers bound for the West Indian sugar plantations. Subsequently, we were groomed to provide the middle class strata in a racially prescriptive society (black-beige-white). Our education enabled mobility. Thus, working as teachers we were instrumental in disseminating westernisation civilisation in Canada. Later, in an age of so-called political correctness, we advanced multicultural education in the English Lake District. My other hand, however, roots in the Calder Valley of Yorkshire: land of the Brontés, Ted Hughes. Despite the distance between them I somehow feel my manus sinister et dextra are related, as much through economics as blood. The market for cotton, also known as Indienne cloth, rapidly developed in nineteenth century Britain. Industrial production of velvets, corduroy and moleskins boomed in the Calder Valley. Grandfather ran a spindle factory. I sense Grandmother’s cherished, sugar-loaded cakestand provided some solace after it fatally blew up.

What’s the link with eco-theatre?
Well it’s a demonstration, on a personal level, of how complex our relationship to the environment is. Human dramas are intimately connected to natural environments. Sugar cane doesn’t grow in Yorkshire; however, the soft waters running through gritstone and moorland are perfect for the dye trade. Thus trade niches have provoked dramas of interrelated hardship and privilege in many global settings. Nevertheless environmental agency can be overlooked in scripts. Deus ex Machina plots; Shakespeare, c.f. Macbeth; Beckett, Endgame; Shepard, Buried Child and Churchill, Rafts and Dreams being notable exceptions.

HAMM “Look at the earth.”/“Look at the sea.”/“And the sun?”
CLOV “Damn the sun”.
(Beckett, Endgame)

So what’s your idea of eco-theatre anyway?
Perhaps a theatre that can open our eyes to the fact that Earthly drama operates on timescales generally beyond human perception? A theatre that shows our existence is informed by, and yet also effects, the environment?
There are several elements I would like to explore:

• Whether patterns and rhythms for story can emerge from outside the literary canon. Perhaps biological or geologically inspired structures such as folding; juxtaposing, mirroring, compressing, extending, doubling, mutating can influence story. Goat Island Performance experiments with some these frameworks arguing they give access to “wider narratives”.

• Whether story maps can be created through performance in a theatre space.

• If the juxtaposition of micro and macro scale structures in a performance space (e.g. film projection or shadow) could provoke the interrogation of received ideas about place/space.

• How corporal narratives of movement, or dance can objectify the body, thereby interrogating the perceived binaries subject-object/ noun-verb: seemingly barriers between humans and their environment.

• Whether using the body as “our first technology”, can interrogate the humanness of perception. We posses a rotating larynx, like dogs, enabling us to bark; like birds, we derived pleasure from song. So what are the boundaries between the human and the non-human?
...and more concretely?
This year I’ve participated in several inspiring workshops including:

• **At the Juncture of Body and Object: International Puppetry Institute/Théâtre du Mouvement**

  “An object should not be consumed. One should be consumed by the object” (Théâtre du Mouvement)

  “It is not an object that is being manipulated but a memory, a thought.” (Théâtre du Mouvement)

  Some Théâtre du Mouvement themes:
  - Identity-transience
  - doubling-multiplication
  - life-death
  - presence-absence
  - hiding-revealing.

  *Matilde Henry: Chimera*

• **Environment Theatre: Insitu Theatre**

  Using the Goat Island Performance template of creative regeneration, one section of work on this course was generated from a tripartite research walk around Llandudno. During the walk’s first section we registered the impressions we received from our feet to knees; in the second section, from our knees to thoraxes; and in the third section, from our thoraxes to the tops of heads. We were especially attentive to textures and rhythms. At the three stopping points during the walk we recorded our impressions. While stopped we also generated similes from sounds heard; and recorded visual, olfactory and kinaesthetic stimuli.

  *This is my plastic, creative response to the tripartite research walk. Another participant performed a movement piece in my installation space. This performance was in turn a response to a third actor’s 2-minute presentation based on the research walk.*

  *RHH Nisbet: Diptych, Eternity of Last Suppers?*

  Also, with much help, I’ve created a 40 m², performance space. Complete with hemp and lime insulated walls; hand dyed organic linen curtains and eco light bulbs. At last, a space to make works!

  Finally, my Poetry-Performance project, *Erratics: Greenland, photographed with poetry*, has been accepted as in International Polar Year Event 2007-2009. To this *end* I’ve recently attended a sci-art conference, *Polar: Fieldwork and Archive Fever*. Inspired by the talks of science historian, Sveker Sorlin, artist-activist, David Buckland and the curator Rachel Weiss, I am beginning to develop my first solo.
(with thanks to Martin Leer, for all the insights gained from his 2008 ecocriticism seminar).