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**CATALYST FOR CHANGE: THE DRAMATURGE AND  
PERFORMANCE DEVELOPMENT IN NEW ZEALAND**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis sets out to analyse the methodologies of the dramaturge and the contribution of the dramaturge to performance development. First used in Europe during the late 18th century, but not established in its contemporary sense until the 20th century, the dramaturge is a relatively new professional role that has developed different characteristics as it has been introduced and contested in different countries and contexts.

The thesis begins by tracing the evolution of the dramaturge in Europe, America and Australia to map key moments of transition and the translation of practice. The research then focuses on New Zealand practice from 1974, when the role was first introduced by the playwright Robert Lord, through to 2012. I examine how the introduction of the dramaturge was caught up in the project to develop national identity but has evolved under the influence of post-colonialism, feminism, biculturalism and subaltern practice.

In the last 20 years, through interdisciplinary practice, devised theatre, dance and performance art, the dramaturge has developed an expanded practice. I propose five actions of dramaturgical transition to understand these kinetic and reflective interventions: listening to the work; reflecting back the performance vision; questioning assumptions; facilitating dialogue; and suggesting new developments. Using Bourdieu's theory of practice I examine the tension between embedded beliefs and new ways of working. I argue that the questioning process can unsettle habitual connections to create alternative possibilities for development.

The research methodology employs detailed production case studies and 20 in-depth interviews with some of New Zealand's leading dramaturges in order to deconstruct and extend practice. Deploying different metaphors of methodology ('architect', 'midwife', 'conservationist', 'navigator', 'bridge-builder' and 'catalyst'), I test the multiple roles of the

dramaturge and different ways of working. Deleuze's philosophical concepts of 'becoming', 'folding' and 'rhizome connection' are used to deepen understanding and critique practice. My thesis shows how the dramaturge moves between 'outside' and 'inside' positions to inhabit a third space of collaborative experimentation. Drawing on the work of Braidotti (1994) and Bly (1997), I show how a 'nomadic' subjectivity can challenge siloed thinking and catalyse performance development.

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## INTRODUCTION

The work of the professional dramaturge is a relatively recent addition to performance development. The arrival of the role in the English-speaking West is described by theatre historian Mary Luckhurst as heralding a ‘revolutionary sea change in English theatre culture’ (Luckhurst 2006:1). The word dramaturg(e) has two alternative spellings: ‘most people in Eastern and Central Europe, the UK and the USA prefer the German *dramaturg*, while France and Canada tend to prefer *dramaturge*’ (Kennedy 2003: 387). In New Zealand the dramaturg is most commonly employed but I have chosen to reframe and revision the role using the dramaturge. Performance development enables practitioners to establish a shared vision and examine the implications of what they are doing to extend the work. In this collaborative process each individual contribution affects the other and builds towards a collective response. The dramaturge has most often worked with the playwright to provide ‘feed-back’ and ‘feed-forward’ creating different insights and new connections. However, in the last 20 years the dramaturge has also been employed in interdisciplinary practice, devised theatre, dance and performance art. My research is interested in how the dramaturge can intervene in the assemblage process to unsettle performance assumptions and catalyse development.

First established in Germany during the late 18th century, but not established in its contemporary sense till the twentieth century, the position of the dramaturge has evolved in different ways in America, Australia, Britain and the rest of Europe (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997; Eckersall, Monahan and Beddie 2005; Luckhurst 2006; Turner and Behrndt 2008). My research investigates how the position has changed and the different methodologies and practices of the dramaturge. The research then focuses on New Zealand practice from 1974, when the role was first introduced by the playwright Robert Lord, through to 2012. I examine

how the introduction of the dramaturge was caught up in the project to develop national identity but has evolved under the influence of post-colonialism, feminism, biculturalism and subaltern practice. The professional dramaturge has been employed in New Zealand for 38 years but the role continues to remain unclear and contested. New Zealand director Stephen Bain observes that: ‘many times when I work with a dramaturge they begin by saying that they don’t know what the term means’ (Bain, interview 2012). Very little has been written about the methodologies of the dramaturge in New Zealand and, unlike other countries, there is currently no formal training or network to support the development of practice. My research investigates the process of performance development so that the contribution of the dramaturge is analysed, defined and acknowledged.

The main questions for this thesis are: What have dramaturges done for performance development? What are they doing now and what might they do in the future? These raise three further questions of a more theoretical and methodological nature: How is the dramaturge situated in the development process? What are the actions of transition which affect change? And how can theory and practice inform each other? To address these questions I track the history of performance development in New Zealand from the introduction of the dramaturge in 1974 to contemporary practice in 2012. The study offers examples of contemporary international practice which may provide development opportunities for the future. At the same time I begin to imagine what a specifically Pacific/New Zealand dramaturgy might look like and what it could offer to the world.

By shifting the analytical focus from the macro to the micro and back again, I hope to provide new ways of seeing and understanding the work of the dramaturge in New Zealand. Drawing on Raymond Williams’s 1966 distinction between the ‘dramatic text’ (which privileges the written text) and the ‘performance text’ (which weaves multiple texts that may be visual, kinetic, sonic or written), I argue that the dramaturge has been employed in both

processes to extend development possibilities and make new connections. By re-framing the role of the dramaturge it is thus possible to facilitate the development of the performance text as well as the dramatic text. Performances can be assembled through very different ideas of composition. These range from David Edgar's *How Plays Work*, which offers prescriptive rules and structures, to Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre*, which offers post-structural strategies. I suggest that the examination of different kinds of intervention provides the basis for a critique of current practice as well as establishing possibilities for a more transparent, reflexive, constructive and inclusive practice. One of the objectives of this study is to analyze the development strategies used in different kinds of practice. In so doing, I also hope to show how cross-fertilizations of theory and practice lead to new ways of thinking and working.

### **What is dramaturgy?**

Dramaturgy, in its broadest sense, can be defined as the shape and form of an event which is influenced by representational choices and the process of composition. It is how the actions are constructed and provides what Claire MacDonald has termed 'the connective tissue' (MacDonald 2010b:93). However the term dramaturgy has been used in two different ways. The first usage refers to the concept that any performance has an identifiable structure and form which can be analysed. In terms of performance this is non-hierarchical and an installation, a poetry reading, a ballet, a musical, a folk dance, a realist play etc will each have a dramaturgy. There is always "dramaturgy" practiced by makers of performance regardless of the particular set of roles available (eg. the "director" like the "dramaturge" is essentially a modern term). The second use of dramaturgy is of an active process carried out by a designated individual to maximize the efficiency of the performance by drawing attention to the potential of the work. This kind of dramaturgy belongs to the Romantic, Post-Romantic,

Modern and Post-Modern eras and relates to social and ideological changes, technical revolutions of theatrical and performance practice, and ideas of representation, authorship, identity, consciousness and existence.

Barba describes dramaturgy as a synthesising process; the weave or ‘weaving together’:

The word text, before referring to a written or spoken, printed or manuscript text meant a weaving together. In this sense, there is no performance without text. That which concerns the text (the weave) of the performance can be defined as dramaturgy. (Barba 1985:75)

This weave of performance actions can include writing, movement, space, sound, light, new media technologies and audience reception. In this sense, dramaturgy responds to what Bourdieu (1997) describes as ‘the field of influence’ when artists decide how, why and what they will create. At the same time dramaturgy reflects the aesthetic and ideological forces (Eckersall 1996) as well as the structures and contexts in which it is situated (Turner and Behrndt 2008). Dramaturgy is thus balanced between what Barba (1991) calls the poles of ‘concatenation and simultaneity’. The poles of simultaneity (sign systems operating at the same time) and concatenation (sign systems operating through time) provide a useful graphic tool for performance analysis, but both will always inevitably be present. In the process of assemblage the work oscillates between these poles to establish where it belongs: ‘if there is one thing we can say with certainty about dramaturgy, it is that it is movement itself, a process’ (Van Kerkhoven 2009:7).

The complementary relationship between concatenation and simultaneity is also reflected in the creative tension between dramatic and postdramatic performance. Postdramatic practice has challenged modern drama which Szondi describes as:

A time-bound concept, it stands for a specific literary-historical event – namely, the drama as it arose in Elizabethan England and, above all, as it came into being in seventeenth-century France and was perpetuated in the German classical period (Szondi 1965:5)

According to Szondi, drama of modernity was introduced in the renaissance after the collapse of the medieval world and was inspired by a desire to mirror interpersonal relationships using dialogue. This is the dramaturgy of literature as developed by the writer:

In the Drama, time unfolds as an absolute, linear sequence in the present. Because the Drama is absolute, it is itself responsible for this temporal sequence. It generates its own time. Therefore, every moment must contain the seeds of the future (Szondi 1965:9)

Szondi describes an internal crisis which occurred in drama during the late nineteenth century when Ibsen, Chekhov and Strindberg challenged the dramatic form. He offers a tentative solution to this crisis through the work of Brecht and epic theatre which challenged the unity of time and created new forms. However Lehman (2006) argues that Brecht continued to use the dramatic structure to maintain synthesis and closure. In postdramatic dramaturgy the linear form is ruptured, there are no causal relations and writing is not at the centre of the composition process. This assemblage is inspired by avant garde practice following the legacy of Artaud, Grotowski, The Living Theatre Company and Robert Wilson. Tim Etchells from the British theatre company Forced Entertainment writes about the importance of disconnection. Although he notes E.M. Forster's advice to novelists to 'only connect', he is actually more interested in separation: 'so that as a viewer you have an active and fecund job of reading between separated objects' (Etchells 2010:16). In this practice the spectator becomes a witness making their own connections.



Lehmann shows that performance and drama have drifted apart in the second half of the twentieth century (Jürs-Munby in Lehmann 2006:3). In response to this Kershaw (1999) argues for ‘the radical in performance’ creating what he describes as a balance between Brecht and Baudrillard. This practice weaves the social agendas of epic theatre with the multiplicity and diversity of postmodernism. Here new discoveries are made ‘on the edge’ in a manner that recalls Gilles Deleuze’s ideas of events and folding. According to Deleuze, events occur ‘like crystals, they become and grow only out of the edges’ (Deleuze 2004:12). Dramaturgy is therefore about interconnectivity and can describe many different kinds of cultural assemblage including: ‘settings, people, bodies, texts, histories, voices, architectures’ (Pearson and Shanks in Turner and Behrndt 2008:36). Dramaturgy incorporates time, space, movement, sound, the social/ political context, audience reception and structure. It is an overarching term for the composition of a work but also a word for the collaborative process of putting the work together (Turner and Behrndt 2008:17). In this respect dramaturgy can be conceptualised as the fabric of representation but also the way in which the threads of an event are woven together.

### **Definitions of the dramaturge**

The dramaturge is a professional consultant that is employed to develop the dramaturgy of performance. In recent publications Mary Luckhurst (2006) has provided the first history of the dramaturge, while Turner and Behrndt (2008) analyse European practice. Jonas, Proehl and Lupu (1997) assess the work of dramaturges in America, and Rudakoff and Thompson (2002) document Canadian and American practice. This literature shows that the work of the dramaturge is broad and diverse; it varies in different cultures and contexts and changes over time and in different political situations. Luckhurst examines the roots and definitions of the dramaturge which centre upon dramatic composition and structure. She highlights the role of

the dramaturge as teacher – a conception that was reinforced by Brecht – but concludes that the term has multiple definitions and remains contested. Luckhurst argues that ‘the anxiety about definition has part to do with territorial battles over the means of production, and with hierarchy and credit’ (Luckhurst 2010: 174). I propose that the struggle to define the term can be encompassed by the idea of a nomadic practice the very strength of which is its multiplicity and unsettled instability.

New Zealand has tended to use the spelling ‘dramaturg’, so my choice to employ the ‘dramaturge’ is also an attempt to provoke a re-thinking of the role. As Pavis (1998:124) notes, the word ‘dramaturgy’ has two Greek derivations: *drama-t-ourgos* (the ‘composition’ of the drama) and *drama-t-ergon* (the ‘work’ of the drama). Peter Hay examines the core meaning of *drame* (drama) and *urgy* (the process or work) to conclude that dramaturgy is about making the drama work (Hay in Cardullo 1995:75). The difference between the ‘dramaturgy’ and the ‘dramaturge’ is also important. Turner and Behrndt (2008:3) distinguish them thus: ‘while the term “dramaturgy” applies to the general composition of a work, “the dramaturge” is a specific professional role’. That role can be performed by an individual or an entire production ensemble: ‘some of the best dramaturgs are actors, directors, designers, playwrights and producers, even though they might not use this word to describe what they do’ (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:viii). The dramaturge works on the dramaturgy of the performance, they analyse the totality of the work.

The role of the professional dramaturge, like that of the performance director, is collaborative. They do not work alone. The dramaturge may be employed to develop a singular written text with an individual writer in literary theatre or to develop the multiple textualities of performance with a group of practitioners. These texts may already be established or they may be at different stages of development. These alternative ways of working can sometimes separate the development of the literary dramatic text from the

performance text. In this research I do not preference one way of working over the other but rather aim to identify a range of strategies. It is interesting to question how the artist can operate as dramaturge in their own practice and how they move between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ perspectives when working alone. One answer comes from the visual artist and academic Ian Jervis who describes the necessity of ‘forgetting’ when attempting to create new work. He argues that if the artist follows an established formula they will never be inventive: ‘the only hope is to forget completely’ (Jervis, presentation 2012). Artists attempt to challenge the patterns in their practice to create fresh ways of seeing and doing. Jervis relies on his ‘sense of dissatisfaction’ to create new possibilities and re-position his gaze (Jervis, presentation 2012). For Bakhtin ‘the self’ is always dialogic, there is always a relation to other: ‘the capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness’ (Bakhtin in Holquist 1990:15). Bakhtin argues that seeing requires a certain ‘out-sidedness’ to what is seen in order to know what has been created. He describes this as ‘transgrediance’, that is when an individual can see through ‘outside eyes’. In a similar vein, the dramaturge provides a professional ‘outside eye’ which can ‘feed-back’ and ‘feed-forward’ in the performance development process. According to Kennedy, the dramaturge is:

A person with knowledge of the history, theory, and practice of theatre who helps a director, designer, playwright or actor realize their intentions in a production. The dramaturge – sometimes called a literary manager – is an in-house artistic consultant cognizant of an institution’s mission, a playwright’s passion, or a director’s vision, and who helps bring them all to life in a theatrically compelling manner. (Kennedy 2003:291)

This is a good way of describing the development of the dramatic text in literary theatre. It acknowledges the structure of separate roles within a cooperative creative process. In this practice the work of the dramaturge focuses on the function of script advisor. In performance, multiple texts may be woven together between groups of practitioners through

the function of the dramaturge as creative collaborator. Roles may not be so structured and the production process may be more open, collaborative and experimental. Performance here includes interdisciplinary practice, dance, devised theatre and performance art.

The ‘script advisor’ function describes a specific relationship between the writer, the written text and the dramaturge. It is most often a one-to-one process where the focus is on structure, story and character development rather than a collaborative engagement with a group of practitioners and the embodied text. The ‘broker’ or middleperson who sets up these contracts is very important as the ‘matchmaker’ influencing who will work together and how the work will unfold. The broker’s choices can shape the development process and the performance vision. In New Zealand this role has often been facilitated by Playmarket, which is the main agent for New Zealand playwrights. Significantly, in 2009 Playmarket decided to abandon the term dramaturge in favour of the term script advisor. The implications of that decision are analysed in Chapter Three but it is clear that this choice reduces development opportunities and privileges the written text in the creative process.

Turner and Behrndt recognise that the work of the dramaturge remains unfixed and has multiple possibilities:

The dramaturg may be someone who plays a key institutional role in the theatre, helping to develop policy and repertoire, while acting as critic, commentator, and communicator. The dramaturg may be someone who brings analytical skills, knowledge and creative thinking to the preparation and rehearsal of a theatre production, offering support to the director and contributing to the understanding of the work as it evolves. The dramaturg may be someone appointed to a theatre that takes particular interest in dramatic literature and could be responsible for translation, adaption and even writing new work. The dramaturg may be a person who is concerned with the identification and development of new writing for theatre. The dramaturg may be a ‘creative critic’ or a ‘critical collaborator’. The dramaturg may be all these things or only one of them, or some of them. The dramaturg may be someone

who brings some of these skills to devised theatre, dance or live art. The dramaturg could be a curator or creative producer or a programmer. The dramaturg could be a sound artist. The dramaturg could be a city planner. The dramaturg could be a provocateur, a collaborator, an activist, a creator of new networks. The dramaturg is bound to set new roles, expanding our sense of the many ways in which ‘dramaturgical thinking’ can be applied. (Turner and Behrndt 2008:102)

In all these examples the dramaturge analyses what the work is doing and explores development opportunities. It is an expansive and constructive practice that creates new connections and change. In each project the role has to be negotiated so that the work can serve the participants, the collaborative process and the development of a shared performance vision. The dramaturge closes the gap between the performance vision and performance delivery. They function as what Maori call the *kaiarataki* - the pathfinder – offering different routes for the performance development journey. I propose that their role is to unsettle established practice and to question orthodoxy.

### **Dramaturgical thinking and the relationship between theory and practice**

In framing this study I use theoretical concepts from Pierre Bourdieu and Gilles Deleuze to understand and critique practice. Elizabeth Grosz argues that concepts offer the possibility to think otherwise:

The concept is what bathes the object or the real matter in potential, making it available in the future in ways unrecognized in the past, opening it up to a new order. The concept is what opens up the thing, object, process or event – the real – to becoming other. (Grosz 2011:81)

The concepts become what Deleuze and Guattari (1994:23) call ‘movable bridges’, which can help to make sense of what the work is doing. I use Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘doxa’ to open up established practice and Deleuze’s concepts of ‘becoming’, ‘folding’ and

‘rhizome connection’ to explore new ways of creating and thinking. From this creative praxis I propose five actions of dramaturgical transition that operate through listening, reflecting, questioning, facilitating and suggesting. I aim to show how the dramaturge *listens* to the work and what they are listening for, how they *reflect* back the performance vision, how they *question* to deconstruct and reconstruct material, how they *facilitate* a collaborative dialogue, and how they *suggest* possibilities for development. I examine what informs the dramaturge’s analysis or conceptual grid and what constitutes their ‘tool-box’ of development strategies. My research extends the work of Rudakoff and Thompson (2002), Luckhurst (2006), Jonas, Proehl and Lupu (1997), and Turner and Behrnt (2008) through practice-led case studies and the theorization of practice. The research should be of interest both to academics and practitioners who want to interrogate what happens in the performance-development process.

### **Performance development and the ideology of social agency**

In analyzing the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice, Bourdieu’s writings on ‘habitus’ and ‘doxa’ are used as a vehicle for discussing the field of dramaturgy in so far as it is constituted by a set of norms, practices and discourses that become habituated. Bourdieu argues that in any given field agents compete for available positions and the right to control the interests and resources of the terrain. Bourdieu’s project demonstrates that agents are socially situated. Within his sociology of art, the dramaturge is a cultural producer occupying a position within the social field. I use Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus (social situated-ness) and doxa (ideas of ‘established’ practice) to reflect the subjectivity of the dramaturge and their ways of doing. I investigate how gender and culture have influenced performance development to reflect an evolving national identity in New Zealand.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice provides a useful illustration of how structures are shaped by their historical and social context. For Bourdieu social context or ‘habitus’

engenders thought and reproduces past structures. He defines habitus as ‘a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which integrate past experiences ... as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions’ (Bourdieu 1977:83). They are the enduring set of dispositions that bring together the political and social context and individual agency. Habitus can operate on a conscious or unconscious level and is related to the social capital or status of the individual. From this perspective the dramaturge is a social agent operating in the field of the performance industry according to their ‘feel for the game’. Bourdieu argues that social agents develop strategies that are adapted to the world they inhabit. It is important for performance practitioners to articulate their collective performance vision and to make informed choices. The dramaturge can reflect the habitus of the work to facilitate this process. In a similar vein, the ‘master’s tools’ and ‘rules of the game’ are also shaped by external forces. Each dramaturge is influenced by their training, experience, and unconscious beliefs, which then inform their interventions and taste.

Bourdieu uses the term ‘doxa’ to describe the way in which certain ideas and practices come to be normalised and treated as the natural way of working. These create structures that can result in a ‘self-evident and natural order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned’ (Bourdieu 1977:167). Writing in 1966, Raymond Williams identified a similar practice when describing the dramatist who employs the rules and conventions to write a work that ‘goes with the grain’. Williams was more interested in writing that challenged the values, feelings, ways of seeing, and participation of the status quo. He described the need for a creative process that challenges the subjectivity of the practitioners:

It can be a long and difficult remaking of an inherited (determined) practical consciousness: a process often described as development but in practice a struggle at the roots of the mind – not casting off an ideology, or learning phrases about it, but confronting a hegemony in the fibres of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships. (Williams 1966:212)

Echoing Williams, I propose that the dramaturge can challenge the doxa (established practice) within the work through a process of critical but constructive questioning. The challenge for dramaturges is to establish a reflexive practice that can acknowledge embedded dispositions and interrogate the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin the work.

Bourdieu's theory is useful for showing us how practice can remain dominated by gatekeepers who reproduce themselves in their structural choices. As Bourdieu observes, a tradition can be silently continued without questioning: 'it goes without saying because it comes without saying' (Bourdieu 1977:167). Typically, performance is shaped by structures that have been reproduced over time to dominate the 'field of play'. Practitioners enter the field of play with a conscious or unconscious acceptance of the explicit or implicit rules (Harker, Mahar and Wilkes 1990:7). By showing us how agents construct their social world, reproduce their positions, and gain social status in the world, Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus' and 'doxa' provide a lens or conceptual framework that helps us to critique and challenge these processes. His ideas can also help the dramaturge reflect on the ideas and practices that influence their own interventions. This calls for a more transparent and fully contextualized understanding of the ways in which the dramaturge and other cultural producers are socially constituted. In this reflective action the dramaturge aims to show how the work is socially situated to open new ways of seeing and doing.

### **Reflexivity and the research process**

Reflexivity and transparency are also required in the writing of this thesis. It is important to attempt to identify the 'habitus' and 'doxa' that frame my analysis as a researcher and practitioner. This pause for reflexivity is important in all practice-led research where the researcher has to negotiate the balance between 'inside' and 'outside' perspectives. It is never possible to be objective about oneself and the processes that have shaped one's worldview,



but these moments of open, first-person reflection can enable more transparent analysis. Here I acknowledge the professional experience I believe has most influenced my way of seeing and operating as a theatre practitioner.

While I began working in theatre as an actor, I have been employed over 30 years as a director, writer, dramaturge, academic, producer, and workshop leader. As someone who identified with socialist feminism, I have been particularly engaged with a political theatre that sought to question power relationships, particularly with reference to gender and class. My British experience was with theatre in education, community theatre, and feminist theatre companies. These companies had a collective practice and often worked through a devising process. When later commissioned as a writer, I continued to work with companies where a collective performance vision was facilitated throughout the development process. This collaborative and feminist experience continues to influence my practice and professional perspective. I have worked alongside many experimental practitioners (for example, Forced Entertainment, Complicite, Claire MacDonald, and Anna Furse) but have also attended courses on conventional story development through the work of Propp, Campbell, McKee, and Vogler. These different ways of working inform my practice and ‘toolbox’ as a dramaturge.

Throughout this research I have continued my work as a freelance dramaturge and producer. I began the thesis while finishing a large, multicultural community theatre project *Our Street*, which is analysed in Chapter Six. I have worked as dramaturge on two verbatim theatre projects *Hush* and *Be/longing* with Talking House Theatre Company and Otago University. I have also produced my own theatre work *Passage* and been employed by Carol Brown to work as dramaturge on *Slip – I’m not falling, I’m just holding on for as long as you can hold me* for Touch Compass Dance Company. I analyse the dramaturgical process in Brown’s practice in Chapter Seven. Most recently I was dramaturge for the re-work process

on *Paper Sky* by Red Leap Theatre Company. This juxtaposition between theory and practice, the analysis and the doing, has created new knowledge and insights. The thesis has enabled me to theorise my practice and the practice has extended my theoretical thinking.

I was not born in Aotearoa/New Zealand and do not have the embedded knowledge that comes from growing up in this country. In 2007 I became a citizen and have now worked as a professional practitioner facilitating New Zealand stories for almost fifteen years. In my practice I move between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ and this is a core theme within this thesis. The research benefits from my ‘outside eye’ but there are many occasions when I am disadvantaged because I do not share the lived history of the insider. The feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz acknowledges the courage that is needed to work in this way:

Courage is necessary to think, to write, and especially to think and write as an outsider – a position that makes one especially vulnerable to criticism, but also fresh and new to the inside. (Grosz 2001:xiii)

### **Metaphors of methodology and the role(s) of the dramaturge**

My research builds on Melanie Beddie’s (2006) analysis of dramaturgical practice by testing the utility of different metaphors to conceptualize the multiple roles of the dramaturge. Each chapter thus takes a particular metaphor to analyze different kinds of intervention and the different methodologies that underpin these. The metaphors I use are those of ‘midwife’, ‘navigator’ ‘conservationist’, ‘architect’, ‘bridge-builder’, and ‘catalyst’. As a type of analogy, metaphors can provide new ways of evoking and understanding what it is that the dramaturge does and how they are working. The use of metaphor enables the researcher to test the domain of methodology through a more familiar concept. In this research I analyze how a metaphor can both extend and restrict the understanding of practice. A dramaturge may identify with one approach or use many different ways of working within the same

project. In a convergent practice the metaphors serve as devices to differentiate between strategies. Each descriptive category indicates the dominant strain in a dramaturgical approach and such critical categories help to articulate the multiple disciplines of the dramaturge. The multiplicity of categories indicates both opportunities and challenges in a disciplinary culture that tends to favor singularity of tool and task. To this extent, the need to come up with categories to describe dramaturgical difference is a key signal that the disciplinary position of the dramaturge is contested.

While my research attempts to map the evolution of dramaturgical methodology in New Zealand from the introduction in the 1970s to the present, it is not possible to cover everything and this thesis is not a history of New Zealand performance. Hence, I have chosen to analyze key productions that reflect the main moments of transition in the development process. If the analysis of transitions can reveal the dramaturgy of a performance, as Turner and Behrndt (2008) argue, I suggest the study of key moments of transition can serve to illustrate changes in methodology. I also use international examples to provide a comparative perspective and a wider literature review. By drawing on examples from Europe, North America and Australia I hope to identify some of the main ideas that have influenced New Zealand practice in the past. I suggest that contemporary practice may also offer possibilities for development in the future.

### **The methodology of the dramaturge and the questioning process**

Deleuze argues for a ‘superior dialectic’ in assemblage that allows difference and contradictions to remain in tension. He calls this way of thinking ‘The methodology of dramatization’ that works through questioning:

The idea, the discovery of the idea, is inseparable from a certain type of question. The idea is in the first place an “objectivity” [objectité] which, as such corresponds to a

way of posing questions. It only responds to the call of certain questions. (Deleuze 1967:1)

How the dramaturge can use the questioning process to be an active agent of ordering and arrangement is a key focus of this research. I analyze how open questions can create a reflexivity and outside eye within the development process and how practitioners then 'respond to the call' making new connections.

The Socratic Method has been part of the philosophical and educational imagination of Western civilization for many centuries. Through questioning and dialogue students gain a critical thinking and a deeper understanding. Turner and Behrndt (2008) document how in Brecht's practice the text was subjected to a rigorous questioning process. Their research has many examples where the dramaturge recognises the importance of a questioning methodology. One of these is Maja Zade who 'sees it as her role to both pose and answer questions concerning the reason for producing a particular play in a particular time and place' (Zade in Turner and Behrndt 2008:150). Another is Richard Pettengill who 'questions and interrogates the proceedings with an eye to deepening the conceptual approach' (Pettengill in Turner and Behrndt 2008:149). A third is Wagner, who argues that the dramaturge has 'to be able to ask questions and to respond when the performance does not make sense according to its own logic' (Wagner in Turner and Behrndt 2008:158). American dramaturge Mark Bly writes that when asked for a definition of what he does as a dramaturge, both in a rehearsal hall and in the theatre at large, his answer is, 'I question' (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:49). My research sets out to examine what happens in this questioning process and how new knowledge is provoked in a collaborative dialogue. I investigate how the dramaturge facilitates dialogue and how ideas are exchanged and developed.

The philosopher Alain Badiou illuminates a development practice that works through questioning: 'there is something lying beneath or something at work in the situation,

something that remains to be discovered through a constructive practice' (Badiou cited in Feltham 2008:108). Discovering what the work is doing and what it can become is what performance developers seek to establish. By questioning performance assumptions the dramaturge attempts to identify embedded dispositions and the often taken-for-granted subjectivities. I question how the dramaturge can develop a constructive practice and operate as a social agent in the composition process. One answer is provided by Feltham (2008), who states that, the process of discovering or unfolding performance vision 'does not happen all at once as soon as the event is named as belonging to the situation. Rather, it is unfolded step by step in an infinite procedure made up of what Badiou calls enquiries' (Feltham 2008:108). In each chapter I attempt to show how the questioning process is central to the methodology of the dramaturge.

### **Creating new connections**

The philosopher Gilles Deleuze believed that philosophy is a site for the invention of concepts and thought results from the provocation of an encounter: 'thought is what confronts us from the outside, unexpectedly: "Something in the world forces us to think"' (Grosz 2001: 60). I propose that the dramaturge encounters performance practitioners 'from the outside' and their questions create new thinking and connections. In performance development Deleuze's question 'what is the work doing?' is vital because most decisions relate to action, transition and movement. The live performance is never twice the same and the work is in a constant state of 'becoming'. The dramaturge analyses what the work is doing in the present moment to explore what it may also become. The central idea is a multiplicity, and meaning is often located in the place of mis-understanding between practitioners. As Tim Etchells from Forced Entertainment puts it, collaboration is about 'a mis-seeing, a mis-hearing, and a deliberate lack of unity' (Etchells 1999:56).

Stivale (2008) describes Deleuze as an ‘intercesseur’ or mediator facilitating links and resonances between different ideas. In *Negotiations 1972–1990* Deleuze (1995) describes mediators as being fundamental to the creative process, arguing that nothing happens without them:

I need my mediators to express myself, and they’d never express themselves without me: you’re always working with a group, even when you seem to be working on your own. (Deleuze 1995:125)

In the questioning process the dramaturge can function as a mediator between artists to create a shared performance vision. Deleuze describes how the mediator catches the artist ‘legending’, by which he means ‘to catch the movement of constitution of a people’ (Deleuze 1995:125). The dramaturge reflects back the artist’s way of seeing and representing. For Deleuze the mediator is required to make the ‘legending’ explicit and challenge established practice. In a similar vein, the dramaturge can use the questioning process to fold new ideas and stimulate rhizome connections. For Deleuze the fold is the ‘practical means by which all manner of intersections between ideas and cultural and existential practices can be developed’ (Stivale 2008:10). Folded perceptions identify a becoming body of movement, or as Manning put it:

They are virtual recomposings of the force of perception. They feel the world worlding, and they contribute to it, this contribution altering the dynamics at work in the relations they call forth. They re-gather perception, recompose the body towards it’s appetite for seeing. (Manning 2009:80)

In the Deleuzian fold ideas are fractured and juxtaposed to create new possibilities for development.

In his analysis of creative theory Rob Pope observes that *inter* means ‘between’ and *venire* means ‘to come’ so ‘inventing’ and ‘intervening’ carry a radical sense of ‘between

coming' (Pope 2005:63). Pope defines *intervention* as 'discovery', 're-invention', 'finding' or 'making'. By contrast, *de- or re-construction* is defined as 'breaking down', 'making up', 'piecing together', 'transforming'. This thesis argues that the dramaturge intervenes in performance development to mediate this deconstruction and reconstruction process. Using Elizabeth Grosz's writing on feminist philosophy, and Rosa Braidotti's writing on nomadic practice, I explore how dramaturges can operate through a kinetic practice that is constantly moving between different positions to make new connections.

A key problem in studying the creative role of the dramaturge lies in assumptions about creativity itself. The creation of the dramatic text is often assumed to be an individual act in which a visionary director translates a script for the stage. The work of the individual genius is often valued above the work of collaborators and the individual artist's greatness is thought to be diminished when acknowledged to be a collaborative product (Lunsford and Ede 1990). It is unusual for a "group" to carry the name weight of a set of ideas or works. Because of this bias, the role of professional dramaturge is often invisibilised, dismissed or even seen as a threat to the authority of the writer or director. Luckhurst writes how the dramaturge can be seen as a 'dangerous controller (destroyer perhaps) of the writer's creativity, or the dramaturg as ideologue, secretly pressing their own agenda of what a play is or isn't' (Luckhurst 1999:4). The British literary manager Graham Whybrow has associated the dramaturge with an aggressive idea of 'fixing' the writers work and an intrusive presence in the rehearsal process (Turner 2008:126). These reservations re-enforce the need for an open, transparent and reflexive methodology.

The dramaturge may also be employed to work on an established text to enable the development of a new performance vision. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are many occasions when a performance is developed without a dramaturge or other theatre artists perform this role. Most of all the dramaturge is a collaborator whose work is

‘an active objection to the notion that all great art is the product of a single individual’s activity’ (Haring-Smith 1997:143). I suggest that the questioning process can establish a collective and collaborative dialogue. The dramaturge Frisch notes that sometimes his job involves ‘constructing circles of dialogue, so that a project is not emanating from a single perspective or clique’ (Frisch cited in Turner 2008:164).

### **Methodologies of this thesis**

One of the challenges in examining the contribution of the dramaturge to performance development is that it is hard to measure with any precision; the difference made from these interactions is usually undocumented and only known from within. This research has been completed through the documentation of different case studies where I move between an ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ analysis. This juxtaposition of different perspectives means the researcher, like the dramaturge, has to negotiate different ways of seeing to analyze what the work is doing. The ‘outside’ case studies are researched with no previous knowledge of the project and are informed by the analysis of writing from other academics and practitioners. The ‘inside’ case studies are practice-led and draw upon my own experience as a professional dramaturge in New Zealand. In this creative praxis there is a movement between theory and practice as theory informs practice and practice shapes theoretical development. The experience of being both researcher and dramaturge, and the transition between these different positions, facilitates new insights and understanding. I have also interviewed 20 leading dramaturges in New Zealand and used the questioning process to analyze their practice. In this methodology the researcher is situated in dialogue beside the interviewee. The questions can provoke new thinking as the dramaturge articulates their practice and the material passes backwards and forwards in discussion.



My research began with a scoping exercise to identify the literature of the dramaturge and key transitions in the development of methodology. I then concentrated on the practice of the dramaturge in New Zealand. ‘Outside’ studies of individual productions investigate ideologies of nation building as well as cultural and gendered positions. Archival documentation provides the material for performance analysis through articles, policy documents, scripts and materials associated with script development. In my final chapters the practice-led analysis of methodology attempts to create an open, transparent and reflexive account of the development process from a situated perspective. These studies illuminate a collaborative and interdisciplinary process that may offer new possibilities for the development of the dramaturge in New Zealand.

The most original research material has been generated through interviews. The list of interviewees and interview questions are in the appendices. Interviews were digitally recorded and took up to two hours. They addressed the same questions but each dramaturge developed the conversation according to their own particular interests. Every interviewee was provided with a copy of the recording and gave permission for their answers to be used in the thesis. This research is inspired by a feminist methodology that aims to establish a ‘reciprocity wherein the researcher can form a dialectical relationship, where experience can be developed and exchanged’ (Edwards 1993:32). Many of these interviews developed into open conversations where experiences were exchanged. The interviews provide a unique insight into different ways of seeing and working that it is hoped will encourage a better appreciation of the work of the dramaturge in New Zealand while suggesting possibilities for new dialogues, collaborations and ways of working. Throughout this thesis writing I have avoided footnotes and aimed to sustain the flow of writing by keeping all references inside the text.

## **Thesis Outline**

In Chapter One I examine how dramaturgical roles evolved and were translated from Western Europe to North America and then to Australia, on their way to shaping performance development in New Zealand. The evolution of the dramaturge raises a number of questions: what role has the dramaturge played in articulating national identity? To what extent can the dramaturge facilitate the subaltern voice? And, how is the dramaturge located in contemporary performance development? This chapter attempts to address these questions by focussing on key moments of transition when the agenda of the dramaturge has evolved. This overview is necessarily schematic in order to identify new trends rather than provide a detailed history.

In mapping these changes I identify five separate moments of development which have influenced methodology. The role first emerged in Germany through the work of the Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) who provided outside literary criticism for writers and theatre companies. This way of working was then challenged by the Marxist practice of Bertolt Brecht, who introduced the role of dramaturge as inside collaborator and creative agent in the composition process. The third transition arose as the dramaturgical role assisted in shaping an emerging national identity in America and Australia. At this point, with the advent of feminism and critiques of colonialism, the dramaturge was used to counter fixed ideas of “the nation” and to promote subaltern practice.

The most recent development occurred in the 1990s; inspired by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006), I call this phase ‘postdramatic performance’. In postdramatic performance, the dramaturge is positioned as curator and translator to interdisciplinary collaborations informed by post-structural theory. In this chapter I set out to document and analyse these changes in agenda and methodology. I consider alternative dramaturgical trajectories in

different countries to map waves of influence and different ways of working. The dramaturge is sometimes an outside critic and sometimes an inside collaborator. I investigate how the role can move between these positions to establish a kind of hermeneutic understanding or holistic framing of subjective views and experience.

In Chapter Two I explore how the role of dramaturge was introduced in New Zealand by Playmarket in the mid-'70s, how that role developed, and the effects of the dramaturge on subsequent practice. Taking up the idea of dramaturge as 'nation builder', I analyze why this function was important at this time. An analysis of the development process on *Foreskin's Lament* by Greg McGee examines how this play contributed to New Zealand's national identity. The study examines the possibilities of the collaborative workshop process and how a convergent practice of multiple interventions developed the work. I document and deconstruct the development processes to question what kinds of questions were asked of the writer and who performed the functions of the dramaturge. This leads to a deeper examination of how the New Zealand workshop process has shaped the practice of the dramaturge from 1980 to 2009. The chapter ends by discussing Playmarket's recent decision to abandon the workshop process and the position of dramaturge. I examine the choice to develop new work through the script advisor and 'clinic' to investigate the implications of this decision for future practice.

Chapter Three examines the narrative structures that have influenced literary theatre or what Lehmann (2006) calls 'pure drama' where the written text is privileged through the function of the script advisor with the individual playwright. I show how Aristotle's tripartite structure continues to influence the development of this work though other writers have also shaped the literature of contemporary story development. I use the metaphor of dramaturge as architect to examine the process of performance construction. Turner and Behrndt argue that the dramaturge creates the architecture of performance, and quote the architect Bernard

Tschumi who believes ‘our experience becomes the experience of events organised and strategized through architecture’ (Turner 2008:5). My research investigates the ways in which the architecture of performance can be both discovered and imposed. The dramaturge as architect can listen to the client’s needs and experiment with new forms or offer solutions already shaped by the building regulations. The development of the dramaturge in New Zealand can be thrown into relief through tracing the policy changes of Playmarket. The work of script advisor and playwright Gary Henderson provides a specific example of dramaturgical practice. Throughout this research I employ Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘doxa’ to analyse the subjectivity of the dramaturge and what is taken for granted in their way of working. I argue that every performance decision has multiple opportunities for development and investigate what happens when ‘rules’ are imposed.

In Chapter Four I examine the work of six leading professional female dramaturges in New Zealand to analyse how gender and feminism have informed their practice. The dramaturges are Kate Jason-Smith (producer, director and dramaturge), Jean Betts (National Script Advisor for Playmarket and dramaturge), Fiona Samuel (writer and dramaturge), Catherine Fitzgerald (producer and dramaturge), Philippa Campbell (Literary Manager of Auckland Theatre Company), and Carol Brown (choreographer, performer, researcher and dramaturge). I investigate how different waves of feminism and post-feminism have shaped their methodologies as dramaturge and their assumptions about how the work is done. I propose that feminist practice is not a historical movement but a tool for dramaturgical development which can establish different ways of working and possibilities for new kinds of performance architecture. My research analyses how feminist dramaturges have created new concepts and asked new questions. Using the metaphors of dramaturge as midwife and navigator I investigate some of the ways that they have been able to make a difference.

Chapter Five questions how Māori kaupapa (philosophy) has influenced performance development in New Zealand through the interventions of the dramaturge, kaumātua (Māori elder) and kaitiaki (spiritual guardian). I examine the relationship between tikanga (Māori customs and culture) and performance form and content. The dramaturge employs a range of strategies and this chapter tests Melanie Beddie's (2006) metaphor of the dramaturge as conservationist to analyze such a tendency in Māori practice. Beddie defines conservationists as:

People who work in and with the current landscape furiously trying to hang on to what we have. These conservationists have a feeling of responsibility towards looking after the species, whilst also separately nurturing diversity and ensuring that new landscape and evolving environments can flourish alongside the established ones. (Beddie 2006:4)

I analyze how the kaumātua (Māori male elder) and kaitiaki (spiritual guardian) work to conserve Te Ao Māori (the Māori world), traditions and protocol within performance development. This chapter challenges the siloed thinking that Māori performance has a homogenous identity and investigates multiple ways of working and seeing. I examine the dramaturgical process in four landmark texts to analyze how interventions have changed and what are the opportunities for Māori performance development in the future.

In Chapter Six I investigate how a dramaturge can function as a bridge-builder between different cultures in the development of intracultural and intercultural performance. This work is multicultural practice combining elements of more than one culture. Patrice Pavis (1996) writes that it is more productive to describe this work through the idea of intercultural exchange because it is still too soon to propose a theory of intercultural theatre. He describes how intercultural theatre 'creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas'

(Pavis 1996:8). The dramaturge Eugenio Barba has woven different cultural traditions of performance to produce new forms. This is a very different assemblage from intracultural or multicultural performance which honours cultural diversity to create a cultural mosaic. Pavis writes that multicultural exchange is only possible:

When the political system in place recognises, if only on paper, the existence of cultural or national communities and encourages their cooperation, without hiding behind the shibboleth of national identity. (Pavis 1996:8)

In the last 38 years New Zealand has become increasingly multicultural as different groups of people have migrated from all over the world and become citizens. This chapter investigates how New Zealand can develop an identity based on multiple ethnicities that reflects the polyphony of voices within this society. In a practice-led case study I examine how the dramaturge can work as a bridge-builder between different cultural perspectives. This case study provides an insight into working methods and how the socio-political decisions of the dramaturge are manifest as well as the ethics at stake.

Chapter Seven examines how the dramaturge can weave different languages of performance to function as a catalyst in interdisciplinary practice. Throughout the '90s the introduction of postmodernism and Performance Studies challenged narrative structure and paved the way for 'new dramaturgies'. Critics of literary theatre argue that postmodern experiments in performance have moved away from a 'logo-centric' theatre where written text is the central and stable element to re-think conventional approaches to texts (Boenisch 2010:162). These critics have questioned the assumption that a written theatre text should be privileged over and above the visual and embodied text. Lehmann and Primavessi (2009) describe a postdramatic theatre where space, light, sound, movement and gesture tend to have equal weight in the performance composition process.

This work has been influenced by avant-garde theatre and the ideas of practitioners including Artaud, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Brecht, and Beckett. Postdramatic performance has embraced the possibilities of postmodernism through multimedia and fragmented narratives to reflect contemporary experience. Examples of this practice can be seen in America and Britain through the work of Robert Wilson, The Wooster Group, Goat Island, Pina Bausch, Impact Theatre, Forced Entertainment, La Fura dels Baus, Desperate Optimists, and many others. This work invites the dramaturge to re-think the principles of conventional ordering and structure to find new strategies and models of representation. In New Zealand I analyse the development process through a practice-led case-study which investigates how the questioning process can create new connections.

My conclusion draws together the research findings to reflect on the implications of my discoveries for performance development. I draw on the historical, political and conceptual work of the dramaturge to highlight different ways of working and set out a path toward a more inclusive methodology. I argue for the value of an unsettled and nomadic practice which can challenge performance assumptions and catalyse change.

## **Chapter 1. The Evolution of the Dramaturge in Western Europe, North America and Australia**

In the late 18th century, as theatre became more complex and professional, the role of the dramaturge was introduced. Dramaturgical roles evolved and were translated from Western Europe to North America to Australia, on their way to shaping performance development in New Zealand. The evolution of the dramaturge raises a number of questions: What role has the dramaturge played in dramas that articulate national identity? To what extent has the dramaturge facilitated the subaltern voice? And how is the dramaturge located in contemporary performance development? This chapter attempts to address these questions by focussing on key moments of development when the agenda of the dramaturge has evolved. This overview is necessarily schematic in order to identify new trends rather than provide a step-by-step history. I concentrate on the countries that have influenced performance development in New Zealand.

In mapping these changes I identify five separate developments that have influenced methodology. The role first emerged in Germany through the work of the critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–81) who provided outside literary feedback to develop German theatre. This way of working was challenged by the Marxist practice of Bertolt Brecht, who introduced the role of dramaturge as inside collaborator and creative agent in the process of political composition. The third transition developed as the dramaturgical role helped shape an emerging national identity when America and Australia began to develop their own stories. Then, with the advent of feminism and critiques of colonialism, the dramaturge was used to access multiple identities and to promote subaltern practice. The most recent development occurred in the 1990's: inspired by Hans-Thies Lehmann (2006) I call this phase postdramatic performance.



In postdramatic performance, the dramaturge is positioned as curator and translator to interdisciplinary practice informed by post-structural theory. In this chapter I set out to document and analyse these changes in agenda and methodology. I consider alternative dramaturgical trajectories in different countries to map waves of influence and different ways of working. The dramaturge is sometimes an outside critic and sometimes an inside collaborator. I investigate how the role can move between these positions to establish a holistic framing of subjective views and experience. In anthropological writing this balance is often termed the 'emic' (insider) and etic (observer) dualism (Geertz 1973). The distinction is important as it draws analytical attention to the contrasting perceptions or world-views of those who are inside and those who are outside a particular cultural framework. This first chapter and the final chapter frame my study of New Zealand practice to identify international influences and possibilities for development.

### **Dramaturge as critic: the practice and influence of Lessing**

There is a broad consensus that the role of dramaturge was first developed in the 18th century in Germany by Lessing, who Luckhurst describes as 'the world's first officially appointed dramaturg' (2006:24). At the Hamburg Theatre he wrote fierce dramaturgical criticism and developed the role of dramaturge as critic, expert judge and instructor. Turner and Behrndt (2008:22) describe how, as a deskbound literary consultant and playwright, he wrote about the art of theatre and initiated a debate on dramaturgical models. Lessing argued for Aristotelian theory and Shakespeare over French neoclassic theory. One example comes from his criticism of Voltaire:

I must note another difference that exists between the English and French ghost. Voltaire's ghost is nothing else but a poetical machine that is only employed to help the unravelling of the plot: it does not interest us in the very least on its own account.

Shakespeare's ghost, on the contrary, is a real active personage, in whose fate we take an interest, who excites not only our fear but our pity. (Lessing 1962:35)

Luckhurst writes how Germany at this time was a loose confederation of over three hundred principalities, and the country 'lacked its own national literary figures, its own definable traditions and, to some extent, a common literary language' (Luckhurst 2006:25), Lessing's work coincided with the age of enlightenment and a political desire to educate the masses. Graeber (2011) describes how the French Revolution had introduced the idea that social change was inevitable and desirable. Lessing's romantic idea was to revolutionise German theatre, to educate practitioners and the public, to improve production standards, and to make the work relevant to society (Luckhurst 2010).

In *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, written between in 1767 and 1769, Lessing reflects on criticism, play composition, structure, acting, audience and the state of German theatre to offer literary solutions (Turner and Behrndt 2008:19). He was commissioned to write these essays as a playwright and critic by the director of the Hamburg Theatre. Every week over two years he wrote two critical feedback essays but he was not invited to be part of the board that decided the programme. The translation of these essays into English was made by Helen Zimmern in 1895 and the 1962 introduction notes that some passages are missing and the language is 'somewhat archaic' (Lange in Lessing 1962:xxi). The writing does not always sustain a coherent analysis and throughline. However Lessing's writing had an enormous influence upon other critics and provided the foundations for the often-cited definition of dramaturgy as 'the technique (or poetics) of dramatic art, which seeks to establish principles of play construction' (Pavis 1998:2). He challenged the French theatrical tradition and wanted to develop plays about Germany from German writers. He wrote of French theatre:

Oh yes, what cannot be learnt from the French! Here and there, it is true, a foreigner who has also read the classics a little would like humbly to beg permission to differ from them. (Lessing 1962:30)

He supported German practitioners and ‘championed the development of an indigenous national repertoire and of the plays of the ancients and Shakespeare which were virtually unstaged in Germany at that time’ (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:viii)

The conventional role of the German dramaturge was shaped by Lessing to work with the artistic director and research new plays, select works for production, assist with casting, write programme material, and liaise with marketing (Turner and Behrndt 2008:7). These tasks are consistent with the view of dramaturge as ‘critic in the house’. The model offers an intellectual role providing theoretical solutions for composition. The dramaturge here is an ‘outsider’ offering intellectual critical ‘objective’ feedback and the composition of drama through narrative structure. This work has had enormous influence on the function of dramaturge as script advisor in literary theatre. This kind of literary critical analysis was later provided by academic dramaturges based in the university. The political agenda for Lessing was to construct representations of national identity and challenge the dominance of foreign plays. The creative process privileged the individual playwright through a one to one relationship with the ‘critic in the house’. The appointment of a dramaturge:

Stressed the importance of a reflective voice at the heart of theatre-making, and at a stroke invented a new form of theatre criticism designed to have a direct and dynamic dialogue with and impact on the theatre company, whilst simultaneously ensuring that play-making itself became a subject of debate. (Luckhurst 2006:29)

Lessing established the need for a development process and the possibility that the outside critic could inform this work. As Luckhurst argues, it was a development that demonstrated how theory can inform practice and how practice can shape the development of theory.

Luckhurst describes how the role of the dramaturge then became established in German speaking theatres and in Eastern Europe. She documents Lessing's legacy in Austria and Scandinavia but observes that in other countries:

Official appointments of dramaturges were delayed because of cultural antipathy to the intellectualisation of theatre, because national theatre movements were not underway, as in Britain or America, and/or because the existence of rigid state or imperial controls and theatrical censorship, as in Russia and France, made an oppositional presence in theatre impossible. (Luckhurst 2006:41)

Lessing's idea of the dramaturge as outside critic also influenced the development of the 'literary manager' in Britain and the teaching of dramaturgy courses in America. In 1922 the British critic, actor-manager, director, producer and playwright Harley Granville Barker argued that good new plays are not written without criticism, cultivation and encouragement. However, it took 40 years before the British critic Kenneth Tynan became the first literary manager with the establishment of The National Theatre in 1963. The academic critic George Pierce Baker was perhaps the first American dramaturge, and his students included the influential playwright Eugene O'Neill and the director Elia Kazan. Baker began working at Harvard and wrote *Dramatic Techniques* (1919) before setting up the drama department at Yale in 1925. The more widespread setting up of dramaturgy courses at American universities did not occur until the late 1960s and 1970s. Lessing's ideas remained central to the teaching at Yale where the dramaturge as critic, observer and diarist was developed and taught by the director Robert Brustein. Yale graduate Bert Cardullo defines the dramaturge as 'critic in residence' and was very influenced by Lessing's view of creating 'intellectually illuminated theatre'. In his article *Enter Dramaturgs* Cardullo describes the dramaturge as 'the true architect, archaeologist, the discoverer, transmitter and interpreter of playtexts both ancient and modern' (Cardullo 1995:10). These ideas have been developed by the dramaturge Leon Katz (1997) who defines 'the complete dramaturg' by listing the skills, knowledge and

experience needed for the role. These include a critical sensibility, a thorough knowledge, the protocol of the dramaturge, and knowledge of rehearsal decorum. The ‘complete dramaturg’ again follows Lessing with the creation of programme notes and a contextualisation of the work through critical analysis. The pre-requisites for Katz include intellectual skills for research and criticism, the ability to read and write script reports with useful feedback, practical collaborative skills to assist the director to establish production vision and the ability to properly document the process.

Lessing established the dramaturge as critic to improve standards of performance and to create non-imitative drama reflecting German national identity. In Chapter Two I investigate how academics in New Zealand influenced the methodology of the dramaturge to improve standards of performance and establish representations of national identity. The dramaturge as critic operates as an outside expert who can be given the power to censor and shape performance. Chapter Three examines the models of structure which may shape these interventions and the way that the dramaturge can become a cultural gatekeeper. I investigate how the dramaturge can develop a reflexive and transparent practice which challenges established conventions and embedded dispositions.

### **Dramaturge as collaborator: the practice and influence of Brecht**

Bertolt Brecht first introduced the term ‘production dramaturge’. He developed the role away from critic and literary consultant to become an active collaborator within the theatre-making process. This transition requires a more detailed examination because this was an important breakthrough in the methodology of the dramaturge. I will analyse who was working as dramaturge within Brecht’s composition process and exactly what their work entailed. Throughout his practice Brecht developed the role of dramaturge as educator to support a political ideology within his theatre. This was not a nationalist agenda but the vision of an

idealised microcosm of a workers' state. The objective for his work was to create a theatre which would expose capitalism and support a classless society.

Russell Brown (1995) documents Brecht's work as a dramaturge through two phases of development. Between 1922 and 1924 he worked at the Kammerspiele Theatre in Munich, adapting Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* for production. He used his own words, ideas, and structure to create a separate text and collaborated with his old school friend Casper Neher as designer. The playwright Lion Feuchtwanger was involved in the writing process but is not credited for this work. The German premiere took place in 1924 under Brecht's direction at the Munich Kammerspiele with Edwin Faber and Hans Schweikart as Edward and Baldock. It was Brecht's first appointment as director and he discovered the possibilities for epic theatre and the alienation effect. Benjamin (1973) writes that in the battle scenes Brecht realised that the soldier's faces would be white with fear. He used white chalk and discovered a production style that enabled the actors to show terror but not identify with the emotion (Turner and Behrndt 2008:54). This discovery resulted in the emergence of a new stage language that aimed to distance the audience from the action for political education. The composition process on *Edward II* became the template for Brecht's practice as 'chief dramaturge' on future productions. In Berlin he then became co-dramaturge with Carl Zuckmayer at the Deutsches Theatre under Max Reinhardt from 1924 to 1925, and continued to develop Reinhardt's use of film, machinery and slogans within his emergent epic theatre practice.

Brecht's second phase of development as dramaturge was with Piscator's collective structure in Berlin from 1927 to 1928 where they worked together on *Rasputin* and *The Good Soldier Schweik*. It was his experience with Piscator that most influenced his dramaturgical collective and collaborative process. Finburgh describes how Brecht's committee of dramaturges was responsible 'for defining and explaining a text's ideology, and then assisting

the director in translating it into concrete theatrical effects' (Finburgh 2010:204). Brecht set out to challenge and destroy the classical narrative structure and dramaturgy of Aristotle. He prioritised the written text through the *fabel*, a critical term that analyses the plot, structure and attitudes of the play according to a historical materialist perspective. The *fabel* summarizes 'the moral of the story not merely in an ethical sense, but also in a social-political one' (Wright 1989:28). In this development process the offers made by the dramaturges were first informed by the Marxist concerns of class struggle and the inequities of capitalism.

Brecht's attention to context is the most crucial aspect of his dramaturgy and determines the composition itself: 'Brecht suggests that the events of a play should be viewed historically and subjected to historical analysis by the director, actor, dramaturge and audiences' (Turner and Behrdt 2008:39). Every moment was examined and questioned for political education. Brecht was strongly influenced by his early experience as a dramaturge with Reinhardt and Piscator and their use of documentary theatre, film footage, slogans and machinery. His work grew to be grounded in a Marxist perspective which challenged the power relationships of the status quo, the theatre development process, and conventional understandings of the well-made play and dramaturge as expert critic. After Brecht and Piscator the 'production dramaturge' worked with the director in rehearsal, offering feedback on textual change and composition while researching contextual information.

In the years between 1939 and 1942 Brecht wrote *The Messingkauf Dialogues*. This was a series of fragmented theoretical dialogues that discussed theatre practice and illuminated the role of the dramaturge. These dialogues allow a subject to be approached 'from different points of view over four nights' (Brecht 1965:108). In *Der Messingkauf* the dramaturge stands between the philosopher and the actor, between theory and practice. This text demonstrates how Brecht developed the dramaturge from critic and literary advisor to be

actively involved in the staging of the play. In *Der Messingkauf* the dramaturge is a writer, analyst, historian and critic but the role is also at the centre of performance development in rehearsal. It is a collaborative and collective process which enables the dramaturge to develop the work for the director. As Luckhurst explains:

The dramaturg is no longer a backroom figure whose function extends no further than the selection and delivery of a text to the rehearsal room, but is positioned within the rehearsal process and is made its dynamic facilitator. (Luckhurst 2006:113)

Part of the dramaturge's role was to teach the process of adaptation to both writers and actors: 'Brecht's telling of story was, in fact, a matter of re-telling a story' (Turner and Behrndt 2008:42). The adaptation of story to reflect a materialist perspective was a crucial part of the dramaturgical practice and was an extremely collaborative process. In *The Messingkauf Dialogues* the Philosopher says, 'There's no reason why you shouldn't leave out part of his interpretation, make fresh additions, and generally use plays as so much raw material' (Brecht 1965:38). This composition process occurred between the director, dramaturges, designer and actors 'on the floor' and 'in the moment' during rehearsal. The Dramaturge in *The Messingkauf Dialogues* states that 'alterations demand a great deal of art, that's all'. He argues that alteration for the sake of alteration is frivolous but 'the important thing is that if one is going to alter one must have the courage and competence to alter enough' (Brecht 1965:74). This shows how the dramaturge's interventions could have enormous influence over the composition process and required careful consideration.

Like Piscator, Brecht enjoyed working with teams of people and created a strong collective process. In *The Messingkauf Dialogues* he describes this process in Piscator's theatre: 'a team of playwrights used to conduct a more or less non-stop discussion on the stage, and this discussion continued right through the whole immense city in newspapers,



drawing-rooms, pubs and cafes' (Brecht cited in Willet 1959:65). Brecht's most important collaborator was the dramaturge Elizabeth Hauptmann who observed:

Wherever he was, there was always a circle of friends, of collaborators who helped him during the work process and with whom he talked about his plans and projects. (Hauptmann cited in Eggert and Hill 1977:18)

Within this process Brecht began to collaborate with a number of dramaturges, each of whom served a different function. Most of them were women, including Elizabeth Hauptmann (1897–1973), Ruth Berlau (1906–74), and Margarete Steffin (1908–41). However, Hauptmann remained his most senior dramaturge and functioned as the script advisor. She worked as editor, consultant, translator, researcher, writer and secretary. Her contribution to dramatic structuring was very important:

It was often her task to present Brecht with variable dramatic structures once an idea had been formulated: 'Ideas for a play came to Brecht quickly, usually in ten to twenty pages, but trying to find a dramatic structure was the hard part'. (Hauptmann cited by Luckhurst 2006:147)

Hauptmann's interventions sustained the work of dramaturge as critic while contributing to a new collective practice. Their first major collaboration was *The Threepenny Opera*, which was adapted from John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* to offer a socialist critique of the capitalist world. It opened on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1928 at Berlin's Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. Fuegi (1994) later discovered that Hauptmann 'wrote' over eighty per cent of *The Threepenny Opera* although her name did not appear on the text. Margarete Steffin contributed to *Mother Courage* and *The Good Woman of Setzuan* and Ruth Berlau helped to finish other works when Steffin died. Fuegi describes how Berlau was Brecht's translator and literary agent in Denmark and later in Berlin but was never credited for this work. She also offered her thoughts, observations and stories for source material. Berlau became responsible for the

Modelbuch (model books creating a full record of the productions) that documented the work through the juxtaposition of text and photographs. This initiative became vital to the composition process during the Berlin years (1949–1956) as they both recorded and elucidated practice. In *Theaterarbeit* Berlau wrote that they were designed ‘to test the sense and beauty of our dispositions’ (Willett 1959:163). Later they became a permanent guide for other producers who wanted to stage Brecht’s plays.

It is very rare for a group to be credited for the composition process. These dramaturgical contributions raise the question of who was the writer and who was the dramaturge within this process. The women were employed as dramaturges but they were writing the material and creating the compositional framework for the performances. Brecht made the final decisions as director but only he is credited as the writer. A more accurate description of the composition process is that a collective group of writers created the written texts and Brecht operated as ‘chief dramaturge’ to select the best material. The ownership of the writing has been contested because the individual contributions to a collaborative process were never credited. In Chapter Four this issue is analysed through the feminist practice of New Zealand writer, director and script advisor Jean Betts.

However, in *The Messingkauf Dialogues* Brecht did recognise the contributions from his old school friend, the designer Caspar Neher. He acknowledged the way that Neher’s drawings and designs influence gestures, groupings on stage and character development:

Out of his own seeing and experiencing of reality the artist has made a picture that reproduces his thoughts and feelings and is for us to see and experience. (Brecht 1965: 95)

Neher was able to identify the central images that then clarified and shaped the work. This visual documentation was very important in the composition process, offering narrative

clarity and new connections. Even the simple placement of chairs could reveal status relationships, and each object was carefully chosen for meaning. Brecht described Neher as ‘a great painter. But above all he is an ingenious story-teller. He knows better than anyone that whatever does not further the narrative harms it’ (Brecht 1965:86). Here the designer operates as dramaturge mapping the narrative through central images. For Brecht’s production of *Antigone* (1948) Neher produced many sketches of stage action rather like a comic strip or the storyboard for film. These pictures were used in rehearsal and were another tool for play analysis: ‘the positioning of the characters was discussed in terms of the ways in which it revealed social attitudes and ‘gestus’ of those in the scenes’ (Turner and Behrndt 2008:63). The construction of the visual text was crucial to performance development and the designer made important dramaturgical interventions:

Where Brecht’s ideas end and Neher’s begin is difficult to determine. Often, the Neher drawings are taken verbatim as a matrix into which the actors were placed. Directing credit was shared in the program. (Fuegi 1994:491)

In this relationship Brecht shared the credit as director but the written text was again assumed to be the work of the individual genius writer.

Brecht rejected Aristotelian drama to create a theatre through the ‘montage’ of contrasting episodes (Esslin 1959:113). In *A Short Organum for The Theatre* (Willet 1964:179–205) Brecht stresses the importance of narrative development and in *Der Messingkauf* he articulates the strategy of breaking drama into small units with individual slogans so that ‘the action progresses by jumps’ (Brecht 1965:75). The ‘jumping action’ was another alienation technique used to distance the audience from the story. The interrupted and disjointed structure gave the audience the opportunity to step back and reflect (Turner and Behrndt 2008:52). However, this fragmented assemblage also made it possible for Brecht to use all the contributions from a collective process without acknowledging the different

writers. Dramaturges such as Hauptmann, Neher or Berlau were then able to clarify the structure of the story or *fabel* before Brecht made the final decisions as ‘chief dramaturge’. This collaborative composition process was informed by a collective Marxist perspective but became branded with the name of Brecht.

Collaborative dramaturgy gained enormous influence through the performance development process at the Berliner Ensemble. Following his return from exile in 1949 Brecht began to train many young dramaturges and developed the methodology of the model book from the work of Berlau. Documentation was very important and the students were required to record the work through individual company journals that Brecht would read at the end of the day and use in the composition process. His directors and dramaturges had the same training, the directors worked in the dramaturgy department, and the dramaturges worked as assistant directors. Brecht created a hierarchical education system within the Ensemble with the elite *Meisterschüler* from the Academy of Arts ranked above *Studenten* from the university and *Élevè*n from schools (Luckhurst 2006:130). There were six *Meisterschuler* students who already had considerable theatre experience. For two years they attended all rehearsals, directed work in factories, adapted plays, and went on to become dramaturges, directors or theatre critics. The trainee dramaturges made *Notate*, i.e. critical written observations, which could then be monitored by the senior dramaturges and fed into the development of the work. This collaborative process enabled the young dramaturges to develop critical feedback skills and their ideas were then filtered into the rehearsal process to develop the *fabel*:

The chain of events must be clearly and strongly established not just in the production, but beforehand in the actual play. Where it was not clear it was up to the ‘Dramaturg’ to alter the text, in order to cut unnecessary entanglements and come to the point. (Willett 1959:153)

At The Berliner Ensemble the dramaturge became the director's most important collaborator. Turner and Behrndt (2008) note how the text was subjected to a rigorous questioning process. These questions were shaped by the shared habitus of their political vision:

The play's moment is examined, tested, considered. Questions are raised as to what forces have created and the circumstances depicted and how these circumstances might be changed. What alternatives were, and are, available? How might one learn from this? (Turner and Behrndt 2008:48)

This methodology developed the questioning process but the questions were shaped by their materialist analysis so that the company could deliver Marxist solutions. Through the *faber* the dramaturge shaped an ideological performance vision and a form of political education.

The dramaturges and directors shared the same training process and every aspect of the playmaking was considered (Canaris 1975:250). The collaborator model positions the individual dramaturge inside the development process as a creative agent who is equally responsible for the development and ownership of the text. However, Brecht often divided the work between several dramaturges and gave individuals specific responsibilities. As already shown, by dividing the work between multiple dramaturges Brecht was then able to take their individual contributions, weave them together and claim sole authorship. Once established, this practice continued and the collaborative composition process was not acknowledged. It is ironic that the figure that did most to promote and develop collaborative practice at the same time exploited his co-workers and made their contributions invisible.

It could be argued that Brecht has been remembered most as an aesthetic innovator rather than as dramatist/playwright. As a dramaturge, his work on Marlowe's *Edward II* introduced the techniques of epic theatre that continue to influence performance practitioners today. This production became the template for his assemblage process. Brecht created a top-

down hierarchical process where he was positioned as the catalyst for composition. This way of working materialised on the rehearsal floor when the company offered writing, images and structural composition to support a Marxist vision. Hauptmann's function was the senior script advisor within the group:

It is interesting that while Brecht refined the model of the dramaturg established by Lessing and created a new theory and practice, he did not shelve the idea of the traditional dramaturg, but in the figure of Hauptmann allowed it a complex, dialectical coexistence with the new model. (Luckhurst 2006:138)

Brecht was positioned at the centre of a cooperative process where he retained a hierarchical control over the means of production. This practice clearly demonstrates the need for an ethical practice which credits all contributions.

The dramaturge as inside collaborator was developed by Joel Schechter at Yale University in America as an alternative to the model of dramaturge as outside critic. Inspired by the work of Brecht he influenced a wave of pioneering American regional theatre throughout the 1980s. In this model the dramaturge was:

Someone who is a leader, right beside the artistic director, helping to shape a theatre's future; a person who translates, adapts, reads scripts, and writes criticism. A person who is in rehearsal all the time, involved in shaping the textual, design, acting, directing and aesthetic values of a production. (Bly interviewed in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:304)

Schechter argued that a collective ownership of plays is not uncommon but it is frequently unacknowledged. He recognised that Brecht had instigated a major development when he moved the dramaturgical staff out of its script-reading library and into the rehearsal halls (Schechter 1997:22). This transition created the role of production dramaturge but Schechter's practice moves beyond cooperation to develop a truly collaborative process. This

kind of collaboration is best described by Mary Schmidt Campbell, the Dean of Tisch School of Arts at New York University:

People who succeed here have learned that true collaboration is subversive. A common synonym for collaboration is cooperation. But there is another meaning. An alternative definition for collaboration is working with the enemy. Think of it this way. In an ensemble of creative individuals, each will have his or her distinctive vision, a way of thinking that is, by definition, alien to yours. To collaborate – really collaborate – means crossing the border into that alien place, that place where the language is different and the assumptions make no sense. To collaborate is to go to that alien place, violate your assumptions, surprise yourself, and let go of what gave you most certainty. (Schmidt Campbell 2010:3)

This kind of collaborative journey can be facilitated by the dramaturge through the questioning process. Mark Bly was a student under Schechter and established the methodology of production dramaturge as ‘questioner’ at The Guthrie Theatre. This way of working builds upon the cooperation and questioning introduced by Brecht but here the dramaturge challenges the habitus and doxa of practice to collaborate and offer multiple possibilities for development. Bly wanted American dramaturges to stop using the self-limiting labels, inspired by Lessing, of ‘in-house critic’, ‘resident intellectual’ and ‘conscience in the house’ (Bly in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:302). He challenged this ‘codified and calcified thinking’ and the dramaturge as expert myths that had evolved around the role. He argued that the dramaturge as critic could be dismissed, trapped and classified as reader/researcher in America. The critic suggests an outside academic expert and theoretical interventions that are imposed on practitioners. Bly envisages a collective future for dramaturges wherein they can collaborate with theatre practitioners to transform theatre practice for ‘a future where our roles in theatre are not fixed’ (Bly in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:321). This is a complete break from Brecht because the collaboration is properly credited and there are no ‘right’ answers. Bly argues that every production decision

has multiple possibilities in development, while Brecht experimented to find Marxist solutions. Bly recognises that theatre requires collaboration and teamwork but notes how many individuals become trapped by their sense of territory and hierarchy (Bly in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:322).

Bly developed the use of the production casebook while teaching the principles of dramaturgy at Yale. Each student is taught how to create the production casebook and an open letter to the director before the rehearsals begin. This letter is a manifestation of Bly's 'questioning spirit' where the dramaturge challenges fixed notions of how the play could be staged. The students are encouraged to ask thought provoking questions that raise the possibility of alternative solutions. The production casebook has the opposite function from Brecht's *Modelbuch*, which documented 'correct' and prescribed production answers for future performances: 'words can be treated as sacred only if they are the right answer to the people's questions' (Brecht 1965:37–8). The production casebook has a diversity of resource materials that draw on historical and social research, interviews, visual images, etc. Bly pursues an open-ended process of experimentation to create many different connections. In his teaching he works through a range of texts directly related to dramaturgy but the students also discuss a wide spectrum of art perspectives and movements. He argues that the dramaturge must be 'bristling with multiple possibilities and not limited to a single task or one evolutionary path' (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:53). My research extends the ideas of Bly to focus on how the dramaturge can facilitate an expanded practice. Bly describes the dramaturge as a 'professional doubter' and argues that the questioning process is central to the development process. I investigate how an open questioning process can be a methodology that enables the dramaturge to challenge habitual practice and provoke new dramaturgies.



## **Representing national identity**

Starting with Lessing, Luckhurst (2006) has observed how the dramaturge has continued to develop the national voice and debates over nationality. Lessing supported indigenous German plays in response to the French theatrical tradition that had dominated the German stage. Similarly, early American theatre was dominated by British theatre scripts, and there was a strong desire to develop American stories. During the 1960s Francis Ferguson and Arthur Ballet began a debate about ‘what might constitute their country’s ideal repertory’ (Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:4). The dramaturges who first developed national identity were academics and critics who became central to the American production process. Training programmes developed the professional dramaturge and there are now more than forty theatre departments in America offering degrees, programmes or coursework in dramaturgy. Cummings describes how American theatre has used the dramaturge to develop plays through new play festivals, small theatres devoted to producing new works, the introduction of the literary manager to evaluate scripts, the formation of local playwrights organisations, summer workshops (such as the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center’s National Playwright festival), the publication of play anthologies, numerous prizes, commissions, grants and staged readings (Cummings in Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:378).

The Eugene O’Neill Center in Waterford, Connecticut was set up by George C. White in 1964. It was an important national theatre centre developing playwrights and creating a climate receptive to American plays. The centre aimed to encourage the growth of theatre in America through the development of new writing and the training of theatre practitioners. The workshop methodology was central to this process and the dramaturge was used to develop these American stories. In Chapter Three I show how this work influenced Australian practice and the workshop methodology in New Zealand. In the USA there was sometimes a tension between academics and practitioners, which Brunstein explains as a

conflict between those who want to preserve the past and those engaged in new practice (Brunstein in Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:33). This tension has also surfaced in New Zealand and in Chapter Seven I investigate how practice-led research can establish new relationships between academics and practitioners. Dramaturges are now employed throughout American theatre and in other media including opera, dance, puppetry, film and television. In Canada the dramaturge was also introduced in the late 1960s and 1970s and was synonymous with the development of national identity: ‘the ground-breaking work generated at the start of this period spoke to Canadian audiences who were eager to hear their own stories, in familiar voices and from characters with whom they could identify’ (Rudakoff in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:3).

In Australia the development of the dramaturge followed a similar journey to that of America as Australian writers challenged the dominance of British drama on the Australian stage. The role was first introduced in March 1973 at the first Australian Playwrights Conference in Canberra. The Whitlam Government had just been voted into power with a policy that encouraged the pursuit of excellence in the arts. The conference was modelled on the American Playwrights Conferences that have been held at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Centre in Connecticut since 1964. The Sydney actor and director Brian Syron had worked at the American conference and instigated a series of research visits for the playwright Alexander Buzo in 1971, for founding secretary of the Australian conference Amy McGrath in 1972, and for the critic Katherine Brisbane in 1973 (Parsons 1988:4).

George White, the director of the O’Neill Center, attended the first Australian conference with the critic Martin Esslin and Arthur Ballet who was director of the Office of Advanced Drama Research in Minneapolis. It is clear that American practice exerted an enormous influence on the development of Australian playwriting at this time. One of the Australian conference founders Brian Syron stated that ‘we’re getting what we didn’t have in

the 1960's: a theatre that reflects our own humanity' (Parsons 1988:5). The Australian organisers recognised that 'indigenous theatre reflects the quality of life of a nation and that there can be no truly Australian theatre without representative Australian plays to form its backbone' (Lord 1973:7). Following the American model, the dramaturge was introduced to develop these Australian stories through the workshop process. The intention for the Australian conference was that 'it should be a national focus for indigenous drama and that it should attract to it theatre people from all over the country and in doing so concentrate attention on the role of the playwright' (Lord 1973:7). The term 'indigenous' is employed here to cover all the citizens of Australia rather than the aboriginal people who occupied the country before colonization. Gonsalves (2011) has described how the stories of indigenous peoples, as well as other non-white migrants, have continued to be largely excluded from the Australian national narrative. She argues that Australian practitioners still need to engage with multicultural practice so that it becomes second nature.

The Australian conference established a place for writers to gain professional feedback and to network. Terrence Clark argued that the conference provided dramaturgical support in order to develop form and content:

It is very hard to write a play if you don't know plays, if you don't know theatre, and The Playwrights Conference and Centre helped in that enormously. (Gough 2009:56)

It set out to examine the work of the playwright in a series of workshop productions of new plays. New Zealand playwright Robert Lord (1973) wrote that the emphasis was on the play and the playwright and not on other aspects of theatre, which he argued was of great benefit to the writer with little experience of theatre. The Australian Conference ran for two weeks and had seven writers each with one play, a group of eleven professional actors, three directors, three dramaturges, an administrator, a secretary, and an overall artistic director. The

methodology acknowledged the importance of the collaborative process and the dramaturge was used as an advocate to develop the writing process:

The dramaturges sat in on rehearsals of plays and acted as a buffer between playwright, director and cast. They made suggestions both to the director and writer and by not being actually involved in the rehearsal process they could take a more detached view of the work in hand. (Lord 1973:7)

The Australian Council for the Arts stipulated that the conference should be open to the public, which became a major divergence from the American model. The public and practitioners were able to wander in and out of all sessions. There were also daily seminars and discussions between people from film, radio and television. Throughout the early '70s this work contributed to a sense of 'nation building' through the development of Australian plays.

In a similar pattern to America, it would seem that the Australian dramaturge was first employed to develop the national voice but over time identities have multiplied to include Aboriginal writers (Australia's first people) and multicultural voices (different immigrant groups). These developments reflect a shift from colonial to post-colonial conditions and reflect wider socio-political trends and historical forces. In 2009 the New Zealand director Hilary Beaton, who was working in Australia, argued that Australia must concentrate on 'good' plays that are well-constructed stories of universal appeal:

We need to question what constitutes a "good" play and to explore new directions for theatre into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is here the dramaturge can play an enormous role, as one of their primary functions is to question: what are form, content, style, characterization, dramatic tension, credibility and marketability. The dramaturge is not just a prop for the writer or a contingency plan for grant submissions. Dramaturgy, given status within the industry and respected by practitioners, has the potential to

explore these new directions essential to our survival. (Beaton cited in Gough 2009:E10)

Here Beaton recognises that the dramaturge can facilitate new thinking and different kinds of representation through a questioning process.

It appears that the role of dramaturge has been introduced to develop the stories of a country when performances do not reflect national experience. The first dramaturges were critics and academics that were considered to know how to craft a narrative. The first 'national' voices reflected mainstream culture of the time and writers that had access to the dramaturge and education. Later, different voices became included in these national representations. Edward Said critiques the notion of a single identity and supports the 'polyphony of many voices playing off against each other' (Said in Marranca and Dasgupta 1991:43). After waves of migration the idea of a single national identity is totally redundant. In Chapter Six I investigate the function of the dramaturge as bridge-builder between different cultures and diverse audiences.

### **The dramaturge as developer of subaltern voice**

An important transition for the dramaturge was a movement towards stories located at the edge of national representation. In the 1970s the term 'subaltern' was employed to describe colonized people from the South Asian subcontinent and used their voices to describe the experience of colonization. These post-colonial ideas were inspired by the writings of Gramsci who was interested in a historical, political, social, and cultural transformation leading to human liberation. In 1988 Gayatri Spivak wrote *Can the Subaltern Speak?* which defined the voices without identity in society and questioned how they could gain agency. She argued that everyone who has been limited by cultural imperialism is 'subaltern'. In performance, these practitioners are positioned outside the mainstream and may be

marginalised due to gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, etc. In Chapter Five I investigate bicultural practice in New Zealand and the paradox that Māori are both central and marginal in performance practice. The dramaturge as developer of the subaltern voice is influenced by post-colonial theory and works to facilitate greater representation and a multiple sense of national representation.

An important critique of this way of working has come from the author, feminist and social activist Bell Hooks who challenges how the academic (or dramaturge in my investigation) may engage with the subaltern:

No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk. (Hooks 1990:345)

The assumption here is that the academic or dramaturge is ‘not one of us’ and has the power to judge and silence the subaltern voice through representations that are intrinsically oppressive. Braidotti (2006:14) describes ‘the arrogant power that intellectuals and scholars award themselves as guardians of the truth’ and playwright Steve Waters describes the possibility of structural imperialism:

New play development is often inherently reactionary. If it’s about making plays ‘work’ then it can too often result in conversations about the well-made play — the writer is in danger of becoming a construct of the literary manager’s voice and could become homogenised. (Waters cited in Luckhurst 2006:214)

The politics of engagement require careful mediation so that the ethics and methodology of the dramaturge are reflexive, transparent, and accountable. Braidotti observes how ‘ethical

accountability is closely related to the political awareness of one's positions and privileges' (Braidotti 2006:13). This work requires great integrity and cultural sensitivity.

In Britain subaltern practice benefited from the introduction of what was termed the 'development dramaturge' in the 1980s. These positions were short-term appointments at theatre companies that encouraged the development of subaltern practice. This work supported writers in a process that nurtured the playwright's creativity and individual voice. Luckhurst argues that the methodology was influenced both by the work of Brecht and the O'Neill Center in Connecticut:

The primary influence was the post-Brechtian idea of the production dramaturg, but the model found most useful was a new writing theatre, The O'Neill Center, in the United States. (Luckhurst 2006:209)

Development dramaturges were employed by these 'minority' theatre groups, which included women's companies (for example, The Sphinx Theatre Company), black companies (for example, Nitro Theatre Company), Asian companies (for example, Tara Theatre Company), disabled companies (for example, Graeae Theatre Company) to establish their individual voices and company identity. The strategy encouraged specific subaltern writers to articulate their performance vision, develop their writing, and gain representation. In Chapter Five I examine the subaltern practice of Tawata Productions in New Zealand that prioritise Māori practice but also work with other voices that are not part of mainstream practice.

In Britain the national organisation 'Writernet' (equivalent to Playmarket in New Zealand) supported these new writing projects and suggested dramaturges that could mentor them. It was important to broker relationships where the dramaturge was very familiar with the culture of the writer and could encourage them to experiment with form and draw upon their experience. The black American-born British playwright and critic Bonnie Greer

worked with many black writers throughout the '90s, including Anthony Gunter, Roy Williams, and Angela Turvey. The director Rosamunde Hutt argues that she was the clear choice for work with black writers because 'she knew the language, rhythms and culture' (Hutt, email 3/11/09). Each dramaturge (along with all other collaborators) has their individual cultural baggage and the brokerage process requires careful consideration.

Strategies for the dramaturge as developer of the subaltern voice have been supported at the University of Iowa in America. Borreca (1997) describes how the playwright/dramaturge or scholar/dramaturge serves as an empathetic facilitator of the playwright's and director's process and vision. This methodology works through a process of empathetic facilitation where the aim is to create 'a state of insecure security' for the creative process. Borreca acknowledges the power systems at work in university theatre departments which result in specific ideas about how theatre *should* be made. He argues that writers need to build trust in themselves:

The only way to help them do this is to ask questions, questions and more questions, in order to establish that they are proceeding from their own instincts, ideas and images, and to help establish what makes these ideas the student's own. (Borreca in Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:67)

Once again the questioning methodology enables the writer to challenge their subjectivity and identify alternative possibilities for development. They can then make their own choices and retain creative ownership. They may choose to follow a structural linear narrative or create a post-structural fragmented vision but they will have explored multiple ways of seeing and composing. The questioning process critiques tradition to challenge:

The repetition of established habits of thoughts and self-representation ... to cultivate the political desire for change or transformation, for actively willing and yearning for positive and creative change. (Braidotti 2006:8)



It is a radical way of working that supports a desire for change and in-depth transformation.

Rudakoff (2002) argues that every input and re-write creates a trace in the archaeology of a new work, and the dramaturge has to earn their identity and position in the process. This does not always happen – if the project is not clearly brokered, there is breakdown in relationships or there is a clash over methodology. Rudakoff argues that a play reflects the person who has written it: ‘you have to read the person through the play’ (Rudakoff in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:26). Supporting a subaltern voice the dramaturge has to understand the experience and culture that have shaped the writer and the writing. The Director of the Tarragon Playwrights Unit, Urjo Kareda, argues that the dramaturge reveals unconscious possibilities within the work:

Sometimes writers solve their plays too early. Many will stop and edit too early. I’ve always thought that writers know much more about what they’re writing, about the subject of a play than they ‘know’ they know. Part of the process of dramaturgy involves pushing them back deeper within themselves, into stuff they haven’t articulated about characters in a situation or a world they’re creating. Judith Thompson’s description of this part of the process is that she finally has to get to the place where “she stands in her character’s blood.” This is a difficult process, because often a writer hasn’t gone to that place because they’re scared to go there. That type of introspection might touch aspects of their lives or their experience that they had hoped not to have to bring out on the page. Part of what you do as a dramaturg is give them confidence and the assurance that it’s okay to go to those places. (Kareda cited in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:27)

This is a delicate process that requires great sensitivity and trust. There has to be a strong respect and understanding between the dramaturge and writer to take these risks. The dramaturge here is a collaborator and works through questions rather than answers. The dramaturge as developer of the subaltern voice may be a theatre practitioner who knows a different kind of performance journey and / or may share the same cultural background as the

writer. This practice is demonstrated in Chapter Five through the interventions of the kaumātua (elder) and kaitiaki (spiritual guide) in Māori performance development. This choice enables a supportive framework as the dramaturge makes ‘inside connections’ with the process and experience. This is often a very private dialogue and only the dramaturge and writer will know the significance of this conversation in the development process. The Canadian dramaturge Maureen LaBonte observes that the dramaturge opens doors and then waits to see who goes through them. She argues that the role of dramaturge should be discussed and defined at the start of every project (LaBonte in Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:32). This process is vital to clarify different expectations, ways of working and the ethics of the dramaturge.

### **The role of the dramaturge in postdramatic performance**

The role of the dramaturge has developed over the last 20 years through interdisciplinary performance and contemporary experimental practice informed by post-structural theory. Radical alternative dramaturgies were developed in Britain during the 1990s with the introduction of Performance Studies in universities as a separate discipline. In Europe the work of the dramaturge expanded beyond ‘the play’ to encompass devised theatre, dance, performance art, and multimedia practice. The ‘new dramaturgies’ have developed from international European collaborations with the dramaturge operating as curator and translator. The curator is traditionally the administrative head of a museum, art gallery or similar institution but more recently the role has become developer of an exhibition or the thematic for an exhibition. With the advance in new technologies the dramaturge as curator develops experimental connections between different media and artists: ‘understanding the dramaturgy of an exhibition, for example, places the emphasis on the experience of looking and how it unfolds in space and through time’ (MacDonald 2010b:93). This practice does not privilege

writing and the dramaturge may work with different artists to develop multiple texts. In 2007 Hans-Thies Lehmann and Patrick Primavesi organised an international conference titled 'European Dramaturgy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century' in Frankfurt. They argued that:

In postdramatic theatre, performance art and dance, the traditional hierarchy of theatrical elements has almost vanished: as the written text is no longer the central and superior factor, all the other elements like space, light, sound, movement and gesture tend to have equal weight in the performance process. (Lehmann & Primavesi 2009:3)

Lehman's 2006 book *Postdramatic Theatre* draws on ideas of avant-garde theatre since the '60s. Practitioners include Robert Wilson, The Wooster Group, Forced Entertainment, and Apocryphal Theatre Company. Pavis (1992) writes that the written text is only one element in performance, and the dramaturge has a translating activity between the different component parts. In this methodology the dramaturge develops connections but at the same time there is always a slippage between ideas:

A translation is never quite 'faithful', always somewhat free, it never establishes an identity, always a lack and a supplement, and it can never be a transparent representation, only an interpretive transformation that exposes multiple and divided meanings in the foreign text and displaces it with another set of meanings, equally multiple and divided. (Venuti 1992:8)

Venuti's description of translation shows how the dramaturge has to mediate the space between component parts to shape performance vision. They will always leave their traces in the composition of the work as they influence what is added or subtracted. Translation is an ethical and political practice: 'the translation or dramaturgical concretisation is fundamental because it moulds and continues to constitute the text' (Pavis 1992:140). In the museum or gallery it is possible for curators to become the new author as they re-frame existing works to make their own connections. I have already shown that in performance development it is

important to negotiate the collaborative process to clarify the ethics of ownership and narrative development.

Postdramatic performance does not prioritise the written text and so there is a weaving of multiple texts to create the performance vision. Behrndt (2010:185) observes that in this practice there is no predicted structure or architecture and the dramaturgy unfolds in the moment as the work unfolds. This collaborative process enables the dramaturge to be closely involved with creative experimentation ‘on the floor’ in development and rehearsal. These ‘new dramaturgies’ are being supported in the university and have created new connections between practice and theory. Turner and Behrndt run their project ‘Writing Space’ out of Winchester University and Peter Eckersall runs a similar experimental project ‘New Dramaturgies’ from Melbourne University. Both these academics/practitioners work as dramaturges to facilitate a discourse and collaboration between artists. As in America and New Zealand, the university plays an important role in the development of the dramaturge:

The new dramaturgy intervenes to open that moment, to create what Eckersall calls a new ‘poetics’ of dramaturgy, one concerned with ‘fractures and disorientations’ with the flow of collaboration and, I think, with reflexive decision-making. (Macdonald 2010b:94)

The playwright, performer and academic Claire MacDonald was one of the founder members of the British experimental ensemble company Impact Theatre and co-founding editor of the journal *Performance Review*. She teaches an expanded dramaturgy to students across visual and performing arts. In this practice there is theatre writing but the work also includes artists’ books, performance scores, visual poetics, and language poetry. She argues that in conventional theatre, dramaturgy emerges from the needs of a script and the script’s structure from the needs of a story or situation. However, an expanded practice dramaturgy;

is now conducted and continually re-created in process through engagement with the terms, the means, the grounds, the suppositions and the questions that emerge in the space of and place of performance. (MacDonald 2010b:94)

MacDonald stresses the importance of live improvisation within this process and the possibility that writing is created in the laboratory process. This is a methodology with no blueprint or design plan for development. It responds in the moment to space, action, object, and audience before words are introduced or even considered.

MacDonald describes performance composition as ‘a fluid process where answers are not known and the dramaturge holds together strands which emerge through process’ (MacDonald, interview 2009). She pursues a nomadic subjectivity where dramaturgy moves towards a kinetic practice ‘located in the space/place of production, attending to the many dimensions of making and making sense’ (MacDonald, 2010b:94–95). This work is about developing performances of ‘the (un)knowing as opposed to sanctioned knowledge systems’ (Blazevic and Hannah 2012: Fluid States Conference Proposal). The practice employs Massumi’s translogic as MacDonald ‘tweaks as many stands as (she) can to get a sense of what emerges’ (Massumi 2002:207). MacDonald uses Brecht’s term *Lehrstücke* to articulate a time of open learning, experimentation, and investigation: ‘it is a laboratory process for the modification, critique and adaption’ (MacDonald 2010a:60). This liminal space, within a laboratory process, enables a Deleuzian inspired dramaturge to explore the possibilities of ‘becoming’ on the floor and in the moment.

This work is extended by Catherine Turner’s company *Wrights & Sites*, which has developed post-dramatic performances through inter-disciplinary journeys with multiple locations known as ‘mis-guides’ (Turner 2010:155). She is interested in dramaturgy as ‘architectural intervention’ offering ‘spatial stories’ and different ways of seeing. In a work called *Possible Forests*, specialists from architecture, geography, psychology, choreography,

sculpture, virtual worlds, scenography, and organizational development mapped alternative ways of thinking and journeying through a forest near Exeter:

The staging of the project was simple, in that each expert was invited to walk and talk with a member of Wrights & Sites within the forest itself. Each pair was then required jointly to produce a map of a revisioned forest, to be exhibited in the gallery. (C. Turner 2010:156)

This is a good example of Lehmann's (2006) postdramatic theatre where the performance is not focussed on the written text or the theatre itself but is more interested in the viewer participant and the spectator's journey in space. The work builds on the history of performance art, body art, and live art.

Turner also writes about British practitioners who have experimented to discover new ways to play and experiment with narrative strategy. This includes all the work of Forced Entertainment, Desperate Optimists, Caryl Churchill's *Far Away*, Claire MacDonald's *Correspondence*, and Katie Mitchell's direction of *Some Trace of Her*. This cutting edge performance deliberately breaks the rules to experiment and create new ways of seeing. In the 2010 *Contemporary Theatre Review* 20:2, Turner extends the 'new dramaturgies' by introducing the possibilities of site-specific performance in a virtual environment to explore the dynamics of place and space. She argues that new technologies can offer the dramaturge a 'second life' outside live performance. For example, the artist Stephen Hodge hosts a virtual community of avatars, a website and an island where different artists can interact to build environments (Turner 2010:225).

Luckhurst (2010) argues that in Northern Ireland, the work of Hana Slatte on The Joint Sectorial Dramaturgy Project at Tinderbox Theatre reflects the most recent changes in the development of the dramaturge. The theatre community were initially very suspicious of her appointment in 2004 but have come to recognise the importance of the dramaturge as

curator of innovation, new collaborations, and development. At the start Slatte was defined through traditional development strategies with input to new commissions and script development. However, the artistic director Mike Duke wanted to initiate innovative cross-art experiments with theatre artists from different disciplines. Slatte has worked with choreographers, lighting designers, visual artists, musicians, and puppet makers in the development of new works. Luckhurst writes that her expanded practice has now been recognised as indispensable to theatre development in Northern Ireland. In the 2007 campaign to re-fund the post of dramaturge at Tinderbox it was argued that ‘in this new experimental field of interdisciplinarity the work of the dramaturge is invaluable’ (Luckhurst 2006:183). This example shows how the Bly-inspired dramaturge, as a facilitator of ‘multiple possibilities’, has gained professional recognition.

In Australia the dramaturge Peter Eckersall, together with Paul Monaghan (from the University of Melbourne) and Melanie Beddie (independent theatre maker), founded The Dramaturgies Project in 2001. This is a research and development laboratory that promotes the scope of dramaturgy in contemporary practice. The project aims to explore the possibilities of dramaturgy, promote dramaturgical practice and widen its base to create a debate around dramaturgy, create national and international comparisons and promote this practice in difficult social and economic times (Eckersall, Monaghan & Beddie 2005:1). According to Eckersall (2006), pre-1980s Australian dramaturgy was dominated by a limited definition of dramaturgy consisting purely of literary management and “script doctoring”. He argues that since then theatre has expanded beyond these models to include performance, dance, technical, and production dramaturgy. He describes the technical innovations that have made this possible and the rise in academic studies of Performance Studies where a new kind of dramaturgy has responded to post-modernism.

The Dramaturgies Project has been influenced by the work of Eugenio Barba who is a well-established Italian author and theatre director based in Denmark. He is the founder of the Odin Theatre in Holstebro and the International School of Theatre Anthropology. Interviewed by Mediehus Aarhus (2010:1.07–1.09), Barba argues that practitioners have to ‘smash their reality’ to move away from the dominant way of thinking. He argues for the dramaturge as an ‘outsider’ who can see with the eyes of the foreigner to challenge embodied dispositions. Eckersall writes that for Barba dramaturgy is everything that has action or effect, including sounds, lights and changes in the space (Eckersall, Monaghan & Beddie 2005:2). These ideas have had an enormous influence over the development of ‘new dramaturgies’ in Europe, America and Australia. The Flemish dramaturge Marianne Van Kerkhoven describes how a dramaturgy of the spectator has developed new strategies of perception where:

By transgressing the borderlines between visual arts, dance and theatre, installations and performances come into being in which the spectator alternatively is brought into a theatre or a museum context, with an alternation between ‘looking at something’ and ‘walking in something’, an alternation between observation and immersion, between surrendering and attempting to understand. And in this way the spectator can determine independently his own standpoint. (Van Kerkhoven 2009:11)

Tim Etchells from Forced Entertainment Theatre Company stresses the importance of the spectator who looks and makes their own connections: ‘there is a general forgetting of the fact that spectatorship is a hugely authorial and choice-making thing’ (Etchells 2010:16). The impact of the spectator or passer-by is investigated by Turner and Radosavljevic (2013) in a research project titled ‘Porous Dramaturgy’ with partners Hanna Slättne (Tinderbox, Northern Ireland) and Shadow Casters (Croatia). The use of the term ‘porous dramaturgy’ implies ‘work that attempts to engage the audience in co-creation – for instance, through interactivity, immersion and site-specificity’ (Turner and Radosavljevic 2013). They have



organised a series of events which explore the porous dramaturgy of the artwork and the porosity of the institution in Croatia, Northern Ireland and provincial UK communities. A central question for this research is ‘if certain kinds of performance allow the audience to permeate the artwork, and become part of it, what kinds of community may be constituted or recognised through this process?’ (Turner and Radosavljevic 2013). This practice research examines the political, geographical and social possibilities for new connections through dramaturgy.

The dramaturge, as curator and translator of postdramatic performance, works without a narrative blueprint or design plan to facilitate post-structural and interdisciplinary assemblage. This practice has been expanded through the dramaturgy of intermediality and new media technologies to explore different structures and virtual connections. As Etchells puts it, technology has ‘rewritten and is rewriting bodies, changing our understanding of narratives and places, changing our relationships to culture, changing our understanding of presence’ (Etchells 1999:97). Eckersall (2013) has used the term ‘New Media Dramaturgy’ to examine choreographic art that deals with socially relevant themes through the interplay of bodies and new technology. In dance the dramaturgy of the body has been developed by many dramaturges including Stelpaert (2009), Kunst (2009), (Behrndt 2010) and Cool (2013). At the 2013 Tanz Kongress in Düsseldorf a series of talks on dramaturgy explored different collaborations between choreographers and dramaturges. One example is the work of dramaturge Guy Cool with the Flemish choreographer Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui. They describe their practice as ‘working with bodies beyond the norm, the non-hierarchical attitude towards body images from different cultures and the special significance of bodily rhythm and energy’ (Cool and Cherkaoui 2013:29). Cool has developed a decentred methodology where the dramaturge is physically involved in the choreographic process to become a partner in the development dialogue.

## **Mapping Developments**

This chapter has mapped the evolution of the dramaturge through moments of transition, detailing how the role has mutated over time and been appropriated and adapted within different countries. The dramaturge has shifted from theory to practice by facilitating national and subaltern stories, by promoting political ideas and by developing an expanded practice (Eckersall 2006). The function of the role has evolved from critic and script advisor to mediator and creative collaborator. It is possible for the dramaturge to become positioned as an institutionalised gate-keeper so it is important to establish a reflexive, transparent, and accountable practice. Their interventions negotiate the politics of ownership and the balance between theory and practice, academic and practitioner, critic and collaborator, insider and outsider. These dualisms reflect a field of practice where habitus and doxa remain contested. One of the findings in this chapter is that academics have continued to play an important role in the advancement of the dramaturge. However, there have also been moments of backlash when practitioners have resented intervention from the theoretical outside expert. Contemporary practise-led research methodologies, with their emphasis on a symbiotic relationship between theory and practice, open further scope for the dramaturge to be positioned with a foot in both worlds.

## **Chapter 2. The Introduction of the Dramaturge in New Zealand: National Identity and the Workshop Methodology**

The decision to introduce the dramaturge to New Zealand was an important response to a theatre industry that, according to some critics, ‘remained in the shadow of cultural imperialism’ (Thompson 1984:128). Theatre directors in the ‘60s were still looking to the UK and US for plays to stage. The director Yvette Bromley observed:

The tendency seems to be that the further away geographically, the more respect. Australian playwrights are moderately acceptable; UK plays are warmly received whilst American plays are greeted with a sort of charismatic awe. (Bromley 1975:326)

At this time only a few New Zealand dramas had been produced, including Bruce Mason’s *The End of Golden Weather* (1959), *The Pohutukawa Tree* (1960), and the plays of James Baxter. In 1964 the playwright Terence Journet described his experience where:

In New Zealand I have met individuals and societies who oppose this trying-out of new plays on the public. They seem to think that a New Zealand play should be performed behind locked doors and to an empty hall! The argument is that the theatre going public is ruined by the sight of a New Zealand play. (Journet 1964:26)

Many playwrights moved away from New Zealand, including Max Richards, Peter Bland, Robert Lord and Gary Langford. Richards described the production conditions as being the only reason for going overseas: ‘my work was being produced in Australia and ignored in New Zealand’ (Richards 1975:294). The playwright Gary Langford wrote, ‘it is this lack of using local playwrights that is not only tragic, but a condemnation of much of our professional theatre’ (Langford 1975:303). At the same time, there were experimental theatre companies representing New Zealand experience, such as Amamus and Theatre Action, who devised their work through improvisation. Edmond (2007) documents the influence of Lecoq

on Theatre Action (1971–77) and Grotowski on Amamus (1970–78). These companies had a performance vision concentrated on ‘autonomous theatre’ that was interested in the body rather than the written word. Theatre Action was supported in 1964 by the newly opened Downstage Theatre, which had a radical beginning, with no artistic director, and a group of artists based around Victoria University:

They were a local magic show, insurrectionary and subversive, yet linked to international avant-garde innovations in theatre. The ‘happening’ rather than the Old Vic was their inspiration. (Edmond 2000a:39)

These experimental performance collaborations involved multiple texts that employed the body, sound, visual image, and words. If funded and supported they might have provided the foundation for an experimental theatre movement that could have grown into Performance Studies in the ’90s. Edmond argues that Downstage’s radical vision became lost in 1966 with the introduction of an Artistic Director and the appointment of Sandy Black. When Black was dismissed in 1967 Downstage did not have artistic leadership until the appointment of Sunny Amey in 1970. Under Amey it became the policy of Downstage Theatre to stage as many New Zealand plays as possible, though Richards (1975) points out that Downstage was the only theatre supporting New Zealand playwrights at this time. In 1975 the new Artistic Director Mervyn Thompson staged plays by Craig Harrison, Joseph Mustaphia, Jennifer Compton, Bruce Mason, Dean Parker, Edward Bowman, and himself. Thompson articulated the need for a ‘national’ drama that would be ‘devoted to the exploration of the vital and horrifying divisions that existed in our land, both now and in the hidden recesses of our history’ (Thompson 1984:122). He wanted history plays that would create a sense of national identity and critical consciousness:

Give a people back their history and they may become less inclined to see themselves as useless, fretful sleepers, succumbing to a living death in an irrelevant province far from home. (Thompson 1984:126)

Thompson was a controversial but important campaigner for New Zealand theatre, and Gary Langford acknowledged the support he provided at The Court Theatre and the University in Christchurch from 1970 to 1974:

Mervyn Thompson is one of our country's most gifted theatre people and, therefore, frequently abused. The blackest side of our theatre is its near manic urge to tear our creative people apart, hacking from the head upwards. (Langford 1975:302)

Thompson was operating at a time when there was a resistance and hostility to the representation of New Zealand voices through theatre. This sense of cultural cringe resulted in: 'the widespread belief that there was little writing of quality by New Zealand writers and that audiences would not come to see New Zealand plays' (Rees 1984:23). Bruce Mason described it as the Costa Rica syndrome, 'nothing we say will have any impact on the world because we are so insignificant' (Mason 1973:51). He observed that many New Zealanders regarded art as 'an act of unlicensed prying which is disloyal and New Zealand life is beyond criticism and examination' (Mason 1973:46). There was a sense of isolated insignificance and a fierce determination to keep everyone and everything in their proper place. Thompson and Mason described 'a powerful cabal' that was operating at this time, particularly evident in the north, which was 'in opposition to the tide of history' (Thompson 1984:123). Thompson provides one example of these attitudes when he was attacked for supporting New Zealand Drama at a 1975 educational conference in Hamilton:

Insofar as my opponents of that day had arguments to offer, they ran as follows: (1) No drama existed in New Zealand. (2) No drama *ought* to exist in New Zealand; our needs were being well catered for by overseas playwrights. (3) If New Zealand drama was *allowed* to exist it would inevitably reveal itself as 'mediocre, provincial and self-

conscious' – and that must never be allowed to happen. (4) My address was 'nationalistic' – and nationalism was bad – New Zealand writers were required – to be 'internationalists', (5) New Zealanders were as dull as ditchwater and had no sense of humour; therefore it followed that New Zealand plays were not and never could be commercial. (Thompson 1884:123)

This repressive control and self-censorship made it very hard for New Zealand artists to make work that reflected their lives and their country. Mason described the 'furious satisfaction' of pinning the label 'artistic failure' on all local work before it had even been staged (Thompson 1975: 323). At the 1974 Writers Conference in Wellington, Thompson argued that a New Zealand attribute 'was to distrust one's enjoyment of anything, thereby denying valid experiences. Theatre goers had a tendency to nit-pick, rather than get to the substance of an issue and assess' (Thompson in Nicolaidi 1975:49). He believed that the New Zealand environment made it hard to begin and easy to stop making theatre. The experience of working in these conditions shaped and formed practitioners; it was very easy to become paranoid and cynical. Bruce Mason argued that to survive in New Zealand theatre during the '60s and early '70s 'one needed the strength of a bull and the hide of an armadillo' (Mason cited in Thompson 1984:122). At this time theatre practice looked to the UK and USA for production material. There was little sense of national identity and a lack of confidence in New Zealand stories.

### **The introduction of Playmarket and playwright's workshops**

Throughout the '60s and '70s the theatre industry was led by directors and actors who were not used to working with 'living' writers who could be part of the production process. These practitioners had been concentrating on setting up a professional theatre industry. Nonnita Rees observed that 'most writers had little experience of theatre and that by and large theatre

people had no experience of working with novice writers' (Rees 1984:26). The director Yvette Bromley wrote:

It's disconcerting, after directing so many plays written by long-deceased writers or by those living safely thousands of miles away, to find suddenly, that the playwright is here on your doorstep or, worse still is sitting in the theatre at an early rehearsal. (Bromley 1975:327)

Rees was determined to get New Zealand writing into theatres and to find strategies to support development. Together with Bruce Kirkland from the New Zealand Students Arts Council, she organised a 3-day conference in 1974 to provide practical assistance for writers. This was part of the tenth birthday celebrations at Downstage, where Artistic Director Mervyn Thompson paid tribute to the retiring director, Sunny Amey:

If it had not been for Downstage and Ms Amey positively adopting a policy of performing new work, the momentum now developing on a wider front may well not have occurred. (Nicolaidi, 1975:49–50)

The educationalist Jack Shallcrass read a lengthy paper sent from America by playwright Robert Lord comparing the Australian and American Playwrights Conferences. In 1973 Lord had attended the first Australian Playwrights Conference in Canberra where his play *It Isn't Cricket* was workshopped. The Australian Conference was modelled on the conferences at the Eugene O'Neill Center in the USA, and later in 1973 Lord also attended one of these conferences. The Eugene O'Neill Center in Waterford Connecticut had become an important national theatre centre developing playwrights and creating a climate receptive to American plays:

Though we didn't know it at the time, the O'Neill had become a *de facto* forum from which an entirely new generation of playwrights could vent their frustration at a theatrical establishment that had limited access to a few American dramatists (i.e. Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Robert Anderson and Arthur Miller) and the rest

of Broadway was perceived, with some reason, as a British Cultural Colony. (White: 2012:4)

The Center aimed to develop American stories through the encouragement of new writing and the training of theatre practitioners. In this process actors performed with script in hand to re-enforce the sense of process rather than finished product. The directors were assigned their plays when they arrived so that they would respond in the moment to the work:

Their job became to explore a play, and expose its problems: to allow the playwright opportunity for change and re-writes, rather than the commercial theatre function of making the theatre function by covering up its flaws. (White 2012:4)

White and the Artistic Director Lloyd Richards then decided to introduce a new development role:

Which was to use an especially skilled critic as a sort of ombudsman between the director and dramatist. I suggested that the name for this person might be stolen from Bertolt Brecht's theatre and we call them "dramaturgs". It has interested and amused Lloyd and me, that over the years this name, which I learned from my theatre professor Alois Nagler at Yale, has come into the mainstream of contemporary American Regional theatre life! (White 2012:10)

Almost 50 years later the O'Neill Center has developed more than a 1000 new works and 25,000 emerging artists ([www.theoneill.org](http://www.theoneill.org)). From 1969 foreign playwrights and international companies were also invited, which resulted in the establishment of the Playwrights Conference in Australia. As well as the National Playwrights Conference the O'Neill Center now hosts the Cabaret and Performance Conference, the National Music Theatre Conference, the National Puppetry Conference, the National Theatre Institute that trains young theatre artists, the Critics Institute and the Commercial Theatre Institute which trains producers. The training of the dramaturge has continued at Yale and many other universities throughout America.



The American conference (1964) and the Australian conference (1973) were both introduced at times when plays from Britain dominated the stage. At the 1974 New Zealand conference Australian playwright Alexander Buzo described Australia's provincial attitude towards theatre in the '60s and his feelings of dissatisfaction that Australia was still a colony. Lord's report documented how these conferences were first established to direct attention towards 'indigenous theatre' (by this he referred to theatre made by all citizens of Australia). The Australian organisers described how:

Indigenous theatre reflects the quality of life of a nation, and there can be no truly Australian theatre without representative Australian plays to form its backbone. (Lord 1973:7)

In Australia, the intention for the conference was that:

It should be a national focus for indigenous drama and that it should attract to it theatre people from all over the country and in doing so concentrate attention on the role of the playwright. (Lord 1973:7)

This initiative privileged the written text and the mind of the writer at the centre of the creative process. Nonnita Rees describes how Lord came back to Aotearoa 'exhilarated by what he had seen of new Australian theatre and utterly determined about what had to happen in New Zealand' (Rees 1984:24). In an interview with Sunny Amey, he argued that:

The craft level is important. A lot of people have got things to say and don't know how to say them, so I think theatres have got to create programmes and ways in which writers can discover a playwright's craft. (Lord cited by Amey 1974:10)

A series of discussions began between Rees, Lord, Ian Fraser (from the Arts Council), and Judy Russell (who later became the administrator for Playmarket). At the end of 1973 they set up a script advisory service with plans to establish an agency, which later became

Playmarket. First, they needed to identify writers and develop their understanding of the theatre process. David Carnegie remembers that ‘directors were swamped by new plays and had no time to read them, or so they said’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). Mervyn Thompson argued that in fact they were not interested in New Zealand plays (Thompson 1984:127). These comments suggest a continuing internal ambivalence about New Zealand stories and writers.

Playmarket aimed to organise a theatre workshop that would focus on work in progress and ‘doing rather than talking’ (Rees, interview 2010). Carnegie defines the difference between the Australian Conference and the New Zealand Workshop as being ‘work for the playwright rather than work for display’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). Initially the organising body wanted to keep the New Zealand workshop focussed on ‘doing’ rather than ‘talking about doing’. They wanted to protect the writers and did not want to create the end-of-week pressure to produce a ‘finished performance’. Rees believed that the workshop would be the testing ground for a methodology where the dramaturge, rather than all the conference members, would ‘provide feedback on play development and structure’ (Rees, interview 2010).

Membership of the 1974 conference was open and inclusive as different kinds of performance practitioners were involved in the development process. Democratic participation was very important in the workshop methodology, which was influenced by the political and cultural radicalism of the times. Experimental theatre had challenged the authority of the director/writer, and the New Zealand workshop process was influenced by the avant-garde theatre practice of the late ’60s and early ’70s. Theatre Action and Amamus were both represented and had performances at the conference. Different working groups focussed on children’s theatre, political theatre, the writer in ensemble, and shaping a script for production.

Frances Batten from Theatre Action led the ‘writer in an ensemble group’ and hoped that at future meetings ‘the net will be cast wider – that the word will be wriGHT not just wriTE’ (Batten, cited by Edmond 1993:51). The argument here was that the ensemble of theatre workers could develop a convergent theatre made from multiple texts. However, as the conference unfolded Batten noted a rather cosy, limited, and conservative approach which did not question the possibilities for other kinds of text but was ‘overwhelmingly literary’ and concentrated on script development (Batten, cited in Edmond 1993:51). David Carnegie summarises the workshop process as ‘a mainstream conservative impulse coming out of Downstage and Playmarket to assist playwrights to write for companies as individuals’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). The focus was on the word and the individual writer rather than collaboration between theatre workers and the development of kinetic, visual sonic and written texts. This development reflected the influence of Anglo/American literary theatre and a choice to wriTE rather than wriGHT the work.

Nonnita Rees acknowledges the influence of experimental work at this time and that ‘we were holding all those ideas in our heads while trying to open up writers to wider possibilities’ (Rees, interview 2010). Inspired by the collaborative process, Mervyn Thompson aimed to establish a workshop company at Downstage in 1975. He argued:

1. The time is now ripe to build up a stronger impetus in the development of a national drama.
2. There are enough good dramatists writing in New Zealand at this moment to warrant the kind of encouragement we can provide.
3. The theatre in which I work may be able to improve standards a little by providing workshop facilities for native playwrights.
4. It is possible that the rigid and stultifying divisions which exist between dramatists, actors, directors, and so on may be broken down a little if all parties are brought into collaborative activity. (Thompson 1975:321)

It is clear that Thompson wanted to challenge established relationships to create new ways of working. The first National New Zealand Playwrights Workshop was held at Victoria University in 1980. These workshops continued to take place every 2 years in different locations and became central to in the development of New Zealand drama. The 1980 organising group of Rees, Lord, Fraser and Russell decided that:

The purpose of the workshops is to develop new writers for the theatre. Usually the plays will be by writers who have not previously had work performed in professional theatre. The workshop gives the writer an opportunity to work on his [*sic*] script with experienced actors and directors in intensive rehearsals, but without any pressure to produce a finished product for public performance. Actors and directors are also free of pressure from producing a finished product. They are in a situation where the aim is to serve the playwright and develop the script. The end result of a workshop may be that the writer sees new possibilities for a script and goes away to re-write. The writer on the other hand may well decide that the workshop has brought him to the end of the road with a particular play. He may lose all interest in the theatre (or vice versa). Another outcome is that the workshop may open up new possibilities and the writer will go away to work on a new play. A dramaturg will usually work as an intermediary, seeing that script changes are recorded and that script problems are analysed. (Rees 1984:26)

The aim was to place the writer at the centre of the development process facilitated by the function of the dramaturge as script advisor. It was envisaged that the writer would then go away to reflect on feedback and decide how to proceed. These recommendations were ignored when the workshop schedule was finalised. Rees was away in China and Judy Russell decided to follow the American and Australian models. It was decided that the work would be presented at the end of the conference in front of an audience composed of all the participants (Rees, interview 2010).

There was no training for the dramaturge. Rees discussed the role with each new appointee but describes the work as ‘an instinctive process where each individual would learn

on the job' (Rees, interview 2010). Carnegie argues that it was an ad hoc method where the dramaturge would defend the writer's voice but sometimes also represent the director in order to develop the text. He observes that 'directors were not used to doing what the playwright wanted or even allowing them into the rehearsal' (Carnegie, interview 2010). The ground pattern of the biennial workshops became established in the initial workshop in 1980. Over one week, up to four new plays would be developed with the writer, dramaturge, director, and actors. There would also be readings of three or four other new plays with the opportunity for audience feedback.

### **The life and times of *Foreskin's Lament***

The first play to capture a sense of national identity came from a Pākehā male-dominated production team on the subject of rugby. The Māori term Pākehā is most used to describe New Zealand born people of European, particularly British descent. Jonathan Hardy (Director of the Mercury Theatre) first made the connection between New Zealand theatre and rugby:

Do you see people flocking to the theatre? Do you smell something in the air and feel excitement? Of course you don't – that only happens at a rugby game in New Zealand. (Thompson 1980a:95)

In his 1981 review of *Foreskin's Lament* Bruce Mason wrote that 'for thirty years some of us have known that "the Great New Zealand Play", to call in that old chimera, would be about rugby football' (Mason, cited in Carnegie 1990:203). Jock Phillips recognised how rugby reflected the male dominated identity of New Zealand:

The character of the Pākehā male stereotype in New Zealand was forged by the interaction of two powerful traditions: the desire to keep alive the muscular virtues of the pioneer heritage, and the concern to contain that masculine spirit with respectable boundaries. The place of rugby football in this society is largely explained by the way in which it combines these two traditions. (Phillips 1987:86)

Phillips argues that rugby had sustained ‘manly attributes’ while offering civilising restraints within a moral Christian life. The game was a ‘training for life’, which was seen as a tough competitive struggle where only the most determined would win. He quotes from the manager of the All Blacks in 1905, whose team had just defeated England:

Rugby football is the New Zealand national game, every boy in the colony plays it, and this team, chosen almost by national assent, is the result of much care and thought. It represents the manhood and virility of the colony. (Phillips 1987:111)

Phillips wrote that *Foreskin’s Lament* challenged the nation ‘with deep doubts about rugby and the masculine values which it embodied’ (1987:271).

*Foreskin’s Lament* was developed in the first 1980 New Zealand Playwrights Workshop along with *The Stationary Sixth Form Poetry Trip* by Rachel McAlpine, *Consequences* by Chris Else and *Brown Shirts* by Mark Prain. Seen throughout the country during the ’80s, the play became an iconic New Zealand drama. According to Playmarket (2010) there were 18 licensed productions between 1989 and 2009: 6 were by theatre companies, 2 by drama schools, 7 by high schools, 1 by Auckland University, and 2 by amateur groups. Sebastian Black (1990:183) recognised that *Foreskin’s Lament* answered a national need to make sense of New Zealand in times of transition. In 1980 David Carnegie was workshop dramaturge and described how:

The play revealed conformity, hypocrisy, and violence underlying the country’s smug self-image as God’s Own Country, and from the time of its first workshop reading and subsequent professional productions it became the subject of audience enthusiasm and heated debate throughout the country. New Zealand recognised it as marking a watershed in the county’s development; the end of the myth of homogeneity in a social paradise, and its replacement with the uncertainties of adult nationhood. (Carnegie 1998:203)

In his introduction to the published version of *Foreskin's Lament* Michael Neill argues that the play mourned the passing of an era in New Zealand. He wrote that it is 'not just a play about rugby, but (as its workshop director, Mervyn Thompson, put it), a play about 'the state of the nation', A.D. 1980' (Neill in McGee 1981:10). This was work that exposed the legacy of colonialism in New Zealand: 'only a people which has lost faith in its past fears for its future' (Neill 1981:10). It captured an identity crisis that was summarised in Foreskin's last angry question to contemporary Pākehā New Zealand, 'Whaddarya'? David O'Donnell observes that in 1980 the play seemed to offer a collective identity for all New Zealanders:

By using the rugby team as a metaphor for a violent, masculinist society characterised by tension between National party-voting rural districts and (in Clean's disparaging language) the 'edjimicated' liberalism of the cities, it keyed into core questions about national identity in Aotearoa. (O'Donnell 2007b:17)

He is describing a collective recognition that New Zealand's idealised equal classless society did not exist. The myths of rugby, which had created a sense of community, were exposed by a different analysis of society. The rugby coach Tupper observes:

This is a team game, son, and the town is the team. It's the town's honour at stake when the team plays; god knows there's not much else round here. Now, you've been away to the univarsity and had some funny ideas put inside your head, some funny ideas you've got to get rid of if you want to keep playing here. (McGee 1981:48)

The play was taken up by academics and practitioners because it was the first work to contest what it meant to be a New Zealander. The first act of the drama is set in a rugby dressing shed after a practice. In Act One we are introduced to the team and their coach Tupper who is preparing them for an important game on Saturday. This man lives for rugby, 'you take away the rugby and you take away his friends, his interests, his culture' (McGee 1981:35). Tupper's message is that they must win at any cost and the best tactic is violence,

‘we’ve got to concentrate on the basics right? Kick shit out of everything, right?’ (McGee 1981:28). One new player, Clean, is determined to become captain and has already concussed Ken (the current captain) in a bid to replace him. Clean is a police officer and former soldier, ‘you obey orders, you get your dough at the end of the week. You’re looked after, no worries’ (McGee 1981:66). The outside observer is the university student Seymour (Foreskin) who does ‘see more’. He returns to play rugby with this team to stay grounded, ‘I know I couldn’t live here again, but Jesus Larry, you’ve no idea what it’s like up there in the ivory tower’ (McGee 1981:36). Foreskin challenges Tupper’s methods and ethos but Tupper does not want to know.

McGee shows a people who are anti-intellectual and not interested in the rest of the world. It is a male-dominated misogynistic society with little emotional intelligence and an obsession with violence. From the very beginning of the play McGee is asking New Zealand ‘Whaddarya?’ (McGee 1981:22). This was the first time that New Zealand theatre had made such a provocative intervention, which captured the national imagination. The coach Tupper uses the question to taunt his team into violent action, ‘let's finish with a bit of guts – whaddarya anyway?’ (McGee 1981:22) The acute characterisations of these men are truthful, raw, thorough, and exposing. There is a latent homosexuality revealed through their vicious sexual game with the gay character Larry, and an incredible fear of women. Their songs in the shower describe woman as ‘the gash that never heals’ and as an object for sexual relief.

Larry: Here’s to the girl that I love the best!

Clean: I love her best when she’s undressed!

Irish: I’d fuck her sitting standing lying.

Clean: Why, I’d even fuck her when she’s dying.

Irish: And when she’s dead and long forgotten ---

Clean: I’ll dig her up and fuck her rotten.



Act Two is a drunken party at Larry's house after Saturday's lost game. Foreskin has brought his smart liberal lawyer girlfriend Moira who he later describes as 'nothing more than gentility masquerading as reason' (McGee 1981:68). She is appalled by the chauvinism in these men and their violent behaviour on and off the rugby field. Ken is in a coma in hospital having been punched again in a scrum by Clean who is now captain of the team. The act begins with a thank-you speech from Clean and ends with Foreskin's lament. He has exposed Clean's actions to the rest of the team and questioned what they have all become:

If you think they're pigs, then you'd better look closer, and get used to the smell, because their smell is your smell, it's they who decide for us which road, what speed, how far, and who drives – they decide how and why we live. (McGee 1981:68)

The title of *Foreskin's Lament* caused some controversy and was at first thought to be a marketing disaster: 'there were complaints from the ladies of Christchurch and it was hard to get newspapers to accept advertisements for the play' (McGee, interview 2008). However, once the production had opened and received great acclaim the title was no longer a problem. The 'foreskin' describes 'a piece of skin' that 'can cover a lot of sensibilities' (McGee 1981:69). The location and vulnerability of the skin on the male body is a crucial metaphor in this play that exposes a male dominated society. The 'lament' is Seymour's epiphany and the realisation that he can no longer play along with the puritanical ethic that rules New Zealand, 'it costs us all, it's costing me too much' (McGee 1981:86). McGee argues that once you have seen the play you realise that there can be no other title (McGee interview, March 2010). The drama builds to the moment when one man (Foreskin) questions New Zealand identity, 'what you don't understand frightens you – you are too earnest – earnest sincerity constrains this country' (McGee 1981:89). Foreskin's lament moves through anger, sorrow and anguish to finally question 'whaddarya?' The play questions the 'matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions' (Bourdieu 1977:83) or 'habitus' of New Zealand in the '70s.

McGee was critiquing a masculine society that was frightened of change, development, and difference. Set in 1976 it revealed the gender tensions of the time and a culture of stoicism and pioneer individualism where women were seen as ‘fluff’ and relationships as a ‘trap’.

### **The Workshop Process**

The Director of the *Foreskin's Lament* workshop was Mervyn Thompson and the dramaturge David Carnegie. McGee arrived for the week-long workshop in Wellington having never been to a rehearsal before and knowing very little about the workshop process. He had trained in law at Otago University and had been a Junior All Black and All Black trialist in 1972/73. His OE (overseas experience) had included managing a rugby team in Sicily and living in London for a year. The drama had been written in Sicily where he had gone ‘to become a writer’ while making a living coaching rugby. He brought the first draft back to New Zealand but before sending it to Playmarket he had taken the work to Raymond Hawthorne, Artistic Director of Theatre Corporate. Hawthorne liked the first act but told him to re-think the second act – ‘he didn’t really specify what I should think about’ (McGee, 2008:8). In his autobiography *Tall Tales (Some True)* he describes submitting the manuscript for The Playwrights Workshop in late 1979. He was then working for a law firm in Auckland and writing in his spare time.

Rees describes how Playmarket’s resident dramaturge, David Dowling coordinated a team of readers to do the preliminary assessment of 101 scripts and facilitated the selection team. The play was first noticed by Adrian Kiernander, who rang Mervyn Thompson yelling ‘This is it! This is it!’ (McGee 2008:9). Dowling had ranked the play sixteenth on the short list of twenty and McGee believes that the play owes a tremendous debt to Kiernander, who recognised the strength of the writing from the very beginning (McGee, interview 2010). Thompson and Kiernander proposed *Foreskin's Lament* for the 1980 Playwright workshop:

It seemed to me what had landed on my desk was destined to be a great New Zealand classic; and in any case I felt a particular affinity with the play, its grounding in rugby culture and rural, working class life, and the important things it had to say about this country. (Thompson 1984:11)

Following the Australian model, the workshop was observed by 10–20 academics and students and theatre practitioners, all of whom had paid to watch the proceedings. This public exposure during a process of experimentation and new collaboration was a baptism of fire for all the playwrights. The fear of being exposed as a charlatan in this public forum made McGee very nervous. He reflected:

I was worried that, under all this scrutiny, someone would ask a question which would open a black hole of illogic or mistaken motivation which would then swallow the play whole. (McGee 2008:10)

When McGee began the Playwrights Workshop in 1980, ‘I was made very welcome but I was unsure quite how to behave, what the ground rules were’ (McGee 2008:10). McGee had no briefing from the organising body. In this situation Thompson and Carnegie defined the field of play and the structure of the workshop but they did not explain the process to McGee. Carnegie believed that McGee understood the role of dramaturge through his legal training and that Carnegie was there to represent his interests (Carnegie, interview 2010). Carnegie and Thompson had met before the workshop to compare their responses and prepare their recommendations. They wanted to conflate the roles of Prick and Larry, to create a more flowing structure building up to the lament and to question the role of the 10-year-old boy character, Graham. Carnegie recalls that he and Thompson ‘thought as one’ and cannot remember who did what and when. He observed that McGee was ‘very nervous’ and sat beside him to attempt to stay in constant communication (Carnegie, interview 2010). This preparation period established a shared agenda between dramaturge and director that did not include the writer.

Thompson began the workshop by describing his commitment to the play in front of everyone, which helped McGee to relax into the new experience. Thompson had already told him that it was going to have a wonderful reception and that it would be toured throughout New Zealand (McGee 2008: 9). In the first reading it was clear that the actors had not read the script as they began with Cockney accents. In his autobiography McGee notes that commercial theatres ‘were accustomed to performing plays written by people who were overseas or dead’ (2008:211). They were not used to representing New Zealand voices and did not know how to develop and support a live writer in the development process. In the first reading McGee realised that Pākehā New Zealanders were not accustomed to recognising themselves on stage and experiencing a sense of national representation.

As the workshop process unfolded the assumption from the director and dramaturge was that as they worked through the text McGee would take down suggestions and then re-write immediately or in the evenings. There was a sense of urgency, excitement and the desire to rewrite the text as they worked on their feet. This way of working can be described as a devising process when the group of practitioners choose to collaborate equally in the creation of a multi-authored written text. However, this methodology was not specified in the notes of the organising body where it was envisaged that the writer would ‘go away to rewrite’ at the end of the workshop. In Chapter Three, Henderson criticises this way of working because it does not give the writer time to reflect and make considered decisions:

Stories of writers working in the corner of the room and running over with new pages – well it’s all really rock n’roll – but pointless because the writer is never in a good position to make decisions in that situation. (Henderson, interview 2011)

The dramaturge David Carnegie provides one example of this process when he describes how the actors challenged McGee about his representation of the character of Moira. In the original script Moira did not confront Foreskin and decided to leave on her own:

Donna Akersten, playing Moira, could see that she had a structural role as someone for Larry, Clean and Tupper to talk to, but could not, as actress, find why Moira was at the party. She was right and McGee wrote a new scene. The actors did some improvisation based on the new scene – and finally it was rewritten. (Carnegie 1990:207)

In this situation it can be hard for the playwright to hold onto their performance vision through these fast and intense interactions. The playwright David Geary describes the advantages and disadvantages of this kind of collaboration:

The best thing is that the team can take you to places you'd never get to by yourself. On the other hand, collaboration can involve compromise, dilution, distortion, and in the worst-case scenario, destruction of vision. (Geary 2008)

In this scenario the 'performance vision' is the writer's individual, vivid idea of the work, which is perceived through their imagination. Geary refers to the Irish writer Sebastian Barry who said 'our plays are first performed in a little theatre at the back of our skulls' (Geary 2008). In literary theatre the writer often works with the function of dramaturge as script advisor and the performance vision only becomes collaborative when the written text is finished. In this work the dramaturge does not weave the development of multiple texts to shape a collective process.

At one point in the *Foreskin's Lament* workshop, when McGee became totally overwhelmed by the collaborative process, the dramaturge David Carnegie told him 'If you can't hack it, give it away!' (McGee 2008:12). McGee later gave this line to the character of Clean in the final draft of the play (McGee 1981:85). Carnegie implied that McGee should let the company take control of the writing if he was not willing to work in this way. McGee took the intervention as a sign of commitment from Carnegie: 'he was saying that this is hard

work, do you want to benefit from the process or not?' (McGee, interview 2010). McGee decided to accept the challenge and continued writing inside this collaborative methodology.

At another point Thompson invited the actors to improvise the script and opened up a discussion forum for the observers. As Thompson worked through their ideas, trying them out and asking for feedback from the playwright, McGee felt himself 'sinking gradually in a quagmire, with my play on top of me' (McGee 2008:12). The balance between challenging and supporting the writer in these moments is a delicate tightrope to be negotiated by the dramaturge. The playwright often works in isolation when creating the first draft and a group of observers can suggest numerous alternatives but they may not share the playwright's intentions. The writer can then become completely lost in a sea of possibilities and find it very difficult to hold onto their performance vision and confidence.

Carnegie believed it very important that observers should have a role within the workshop process (Carnegie, interview 2010). He thought the idea of a closed rehearsal very 'precious' and that the playwright would benefit from an exchange of views. An open rehearsal also provided access for students and other practitioners to learn and develop their theatre skills. At the end of each session Carnegie would facilitate 10-15 minutes of comments from the observers. They were often desperate to speak and he had to mediate their contributions (Carnegie, interview 2010). As McGee 'felt himself sinking' from this feedback he received a handwritten note from playwright Roger Hall saying 'Plays are not written by committee', which gave him the confidence to request that the company return to his script. In this example the dramaturge possibly allowed too many contributions and did not protect the writer. Carnegie wanted to use the workshop for educational development but did not consider the impact of so many interventions. At the same time, McGee was enormously grateful for the attention: 'I felt enormously privileged to have all this experience and intelligence brought to bear on my words' (McGee, interview 2010).

Carnegie described the necessity of the editing process ‘as McGee quickly realised that he had his characters explaining their emotions rather than leaving the actors to portray them’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). He described how the structure and order of scenes was revised in act two ‘giving a much more direct line through and avoiding the need for any set changes’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). These changes followed through the agenda already agreed by Carnegie and Thompson before the workshop had begun. McGee did not realise that he was being managed through a series of recommendations already agreed by director and dramaturge. He does not remember any interventions from Carnegie but recalls that ‘David and Proc (Thompson) were amazingly of the same mind, they acted as one’ (McGee, interview 2010). In this practice it could be argued that the dramaturge is supporting the director more than the writer. The only moment where McGee remembers Carnegie acting alone was when he brought a list of different titles for the play but McGee decided to hold onto his original idea.

Overall, McGee valued the possibilities offered by the collaborative workshop methodology and wrote that it was one of the defining weeks of his life: ‘it felt like life lived on a different level of intensity, inquiry and engagement’ (McGee 2008:13). Good – or bad – this could often be a consequence of the workshops. Mervyn Thompson admitted that ‘at the end of that workshop I felt less alone than at any time in my working life’ (Thompson 1984:12). Writing his autobiography in 1980 he described it as his most satisfying week in theatre ‘Greg McGee’s *Foreskin’s Lament* is the only New Zealand play I wish I had written myself’ (1980:157). Carnegie describes how the actors were ecstatic to be part of the team, ‘they felt very privileged and passionately shared the politics of the work’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). He remembers that the company felt like ‘theatre crusaders’. At the end of the workshop Thompson declared:

What we are claiming at this workshop is nothing less than the right to stand up tall, take our own bit of space, and say with all New Zealanders ‘This is us. We have a history. We matter.’ (Rees 1984: 29)

He believed that *Foreskin’s Lament* had articulated and challenged New Zealand’s national identity at this moment in time. The statement assumes that this identity embraced all New Zealanders when it actually represented male Pākehā experience. There is a sense that the play was riding the crest of the wave and no-one wanted to stand in the way of exciting new work.

In 2010 Carnegie described the dramaturgical practice as being ‘quite timid’ because they did not want to lose the power of the writing (Carnegie, interview 2010). McGee agrees that the Playmarket workshop was very benign: ‘we addressed some things and I realised that the dialogue was working but it was just a reading so we did not have to address the problems in the script’ (McGee, interview 2010). There was a tension between celebrating the writing and taking it apart in the process of development. Sometimes the workshop process does not reveal the real problems in a text because the creative team work very hard to ‘paper over’ the surfaces to make it function for a reading. This is the reason why Rees had recommended that the focus of the workshop should not be a final presentation. The pressure to perform in front of an audience starts to restrict development opportunities as the team are forced to find fast solutions. McGee believes they may also have been a little scared to have this larger than life rugby player in rehearsal: ‘if things got nasty they’d be in trouble!’ (McGee, interview 2010). This may also explain why Thompson and Carnegie did not share their recommendations with him at the beginning. There are many contradictions in this collaborative account of the workshop process, and the interview process enables a re-telling informed by hindsight. What remains clear is that all the participants wanted to make the



work as strong as possible in a robust and collaborative development process that critiqued a play about national identity.

What happened in this methodology was the development of a very strong dialogue between practitioners. Bohm describes dialogue as a ‘stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us’ (Bohm 1996:6). In this process all the practitioners were collaborating in the ‘here-and-now’ to develop the text. Bakhtin writes about how knowledge is gained and argues that it is shaped in dialogue (Holoquist 1990). In a collaborative process the dramaturgy is developed as ideas are exchanged between different group members. A dramaturge can question how the performance vision reflects the ‘habitus’ (or embedded dispositions) of society so that choices of composition are informed and deliberate. In this workshop there was a collective attempt to identify what the work was doing and how it could be improved. In his author’s note before the publication of *Foreskin’s Lament* McGee (1981) described ‘the intense cooperative atmosphere’ at the workshop. Gurevitch refers to the importance of time spent in dialogue and the passing of the topic through the semiotic chain ‘that belongs to neither one nor the other but is dialogically owned’ (Gurevitch 2001:98). The work became greater than the individuals involved and all the practitioners had a sense of group ownership which is demonstrated by Carnegie’s comment ‘if you can’t hack it, give it away’ and by Thompson’s wish to have written the play himself. This collective ownership can be a problem for the playwright if this means forgoing all possibility of acting as the guiding influence on the written text.

Daniel Wegner and Betsy Sparrow describe dialogue as ‘co-action, it is not always possible to know who is leading and who the author is. The puzzle of co-action is open to multiple possible solutions at every moment’ (Weger and Sparrow 2008:17). Some writers enjoy the possibilities of this methodology and embrace the collaboration with a sense of

moving ‘beyond them-self’ but others become overwhelmed and lost within the multiple voices. Bohm describes the creative potential of dialogue and ‘its capacity to reveal the deeper structures of consciousness depend on sustained serious application by the participants themselves’ (Bohm 1996: ix). The group has to be reflexive and transparent in their process to remain cohesive and open to all possibilities. The American feminist magazine, *The Second Wave*, published in 1972 observed:

As long as the structure of the group is informal, the rules of how decisions are made are known only to a few and awareness of power is limited to those who know the rules. The rules of decision-making must be open to everyone, and this can happen only if they are formalised’. (cited in Wandor 2008:75)

It was the first New Zealand Playwrights Workshop, and the rules and decision-making process was not transparent. This sometimes undermined McGee’s sense of ownership and satisfaction with the final script. Nonnita Rees argues that ‘the dramaturge has to set the “right” rules for the “right” project’ (Rees, interview 2010). However, at this point New Zealand was establishing the rules for the game.

The final presentations in front of the conference audience placed enormous pressure on the playwrights but also meant that the work had a very high profile. In 1993 Murray Edmond observed that in every conference:

There is a dominating mindset which actively seeks out the ‘hit’ of the workshop and the ‘scapegoat’, that particular play which should never have been chosen and is so totally politically incorrect it makes you want to slaughter the author. (Edmond 1993:56)

This statement reveals an edgy competition between practitioners that Rees had wanted to avoid focusing on constructive feedback from the dramaturge. McGee writes that the actors had made incredible progress in 4 days and knew their lines without the script; however, he

remained very apprehensive about the workshop presentation and discussion. Once the reading had finished, the Wellington lecturer and critic Ralph McAllister began to criticize the lament. McGee had been afraid that this might happen and had prepared his argument ‘that the lament sprang out of the play and was not a coda’. However, the writer did not want to have to defend his work in front of more than a hundred people ‘and all these academics who were used to this kind of discussion’ (McGee, interview 2010). Before McGee could respond Professor Don McKenzie gave a passionate speech defending the play and requesting that they should not tear it apart. This intervention framed the discussion because from then on each criticism became answered by other audience members.

Some years later McGee realised that by this stage the play was actually no longer his property and ‘that if you remain the sole guardian of your work it probably means little to anyone else’ (McGee 2008:15). At the end of the discussion McGee thanked the workshop participants for their contributions but then told them that he would make the final decisions. He had been open to feedback from many different sources but now asserted his right to hold onto his performance vision and story (McGee, interview 2010). The interventions of the dramaturge can be crucial in supporting the balance between taking risks and sustaining confidence. The truth was that Don McKenzie had wanted to be the dramaturge on *Foreskin’s Lament* but had been asked to work on another reading (Carnegie, interview 2010). In the large group evaluation discussion he made a very powerful dramaturgical intervention that protected the work.

The workshop process did not mark the end of the development work on *Foreskin’s Lament*. The play was to be staged at Theatre Corporate in Auckland but the Artistic Director Raymond Hawthorne continued to believe that there would be problems staging the second act and that the text required detailed editing. In conversation with Hawthorne, McGee

realised that the Playmarket workshop ‘had disguised the fact that the second act could not be staged’ (McGee, interview 2010). The workshop performance had made the play ‘work’ on the day but had not provided the detailed script advice needed to move the written text forwards. McGee spent 4 hours each day for 2 weeks going through every word of the play with Hawthorne and making major changes for the production draft (McGee, interview 2010). McGee got rid of the child Graham who was Clean’s son in the workshop draft and conflated a character called Prick with Larry the masseur. Both of these changes had been suggested at the workshop by Carnegie and Thompson but had not been followed through. This feedback was overtaken by a desire to stage the drama, within the time available, for the presentation. Hawthorne also recommended that the different settings of the second act should be replaced by one location. The after-match party became voices off stage, thus reducing the number of characters and making the play more likely to be performed throughout the country.

McGee realised that Hawthorne’s feedback was good and that he wanted the play to work (McGee, interview 2010). He described Hawthorne as ‘relentlessly intense but charming and I grew to admire his breadth of knowledge and the generosity and fierce intelligence he brought to the editing process’ (McGee 2008:75). McGee enjoyed being taken seriously and Hawthorne’s rigour: ‘my law background really helped, I had to learn to read hard and pay attention to detail. This process was familiar and I was happy to do it’ (McGee, interview 2010). Five months after the workshop, rehearsals began and McGee watched as Hawthorne took over the role of director from Roger McGill. Hawthorne believed that he understood the play and knew how it should be produced. These were very strong interventions from a dramaturge and director that had his own performance vision. Workshop dramaturge David Carnegie supported the changes made by Hawthorne, stating that ‘we were too timid in the workshop because we did not want the writing torn apart by criticism’

(Carnegie, interview 2010). He argues that the changes improved the play and made the production more economically efficient by cutting two roles:

The overall effect, then, of the revisions made to *Foreskin's Lament* at and after the workshop, and during its rehearsal at Theatre Corporate, is a stronger, tighter and more resonant play. Every dramaturgical loss is for the sake of a clear gain ... All the revisions are consistent with the dynamic of structure and meaning in the original workshop script. (Carnegie 1990:210)

The collaborative process was not able to sustain this detailed line-by-line analysis within the time and structure of the workshop. At this point McGee needed the function of the dramaturge as script advisor to question each moment and make final draft decisions. This situation shows how different interventions are required as the development process unfolds. However, in the published version of the play McGee then re-instated certain Theatre Corporate cuts and continued to experiment with different production re-writes for various professional theatres in 1985 and 1986. In 1993 the workshop dramaturge David Carnegie argued that changes made by McGee after the 1981 production undermined the strength of the drama:

He has attempted to update the play, to make it more relevant to a new mood of racial tension and class antagonism in New Zealand. I believe that he has in the process lost the strength and structural dynamic of the original work. (Carnegie 1990:204)

McGee had originally set the play in 1976 but in the 1985 and 1986 versions it now occurred at an unspecified time after the 1981 Springbok tour. This was an intense moment of politicization for New Zealand. Carnegie (1990) observes that the rewrites were inspired by 'the heightening consciousness about domestic racism', which now became the centre of the play. McGee wanted 'to factor in what had happened on the 1981 tour so that if theatres put it on it would be as relevant as possible' (McGee, interview 2010). Carnegie argues that these

rewrites changed the balance of the play, by specifying that Clean should be Māori and by reducing Foreskin's rhetoric. There are now two central protagonists who can swear and attack. Foreskin accuses Clean of being 'Fucken Uncle Tom!' (Carnegie 1990:213). Carnegie observes that Foreskin is no longer the outsider who can 'see more' (as his name Seymour suggests), the camaraderie of the rugby team has been lost to focus on racial tension. At the Downstage production Clean pulled out a police PR24 riot baton when Foreskin said 'What's that I hear you say madam? Some of your best friends are Māoris?' (McGee 1981:40). Foreskin now enters the final fight and threatens Clean with a broken bottle before realising what he is doing. The final lament reduces the poetry and rhetoric to finish with one rendition of 'Whaddarya?' rather than the six moments where it is repeated in the published version.

Carnegie speculates that McGee was influenced by a recent course in writing for television 'where the craft is directed towards spare dialogue serving a narrative-driven plot structure' (Carnegie, interview 2010). McGee was continuing to respond to the advice of script advisors because he wanted to achieve a definitive version of *Foreskin's Lament* that would realise his individual performance vision. He wanted his play to reflect the important times that he was living through as well as New Zealand passed through a time of transition. In this development Carnegie argued that the play lost the dramaturgical strength of the original structure, characterization, language, and themes. Carnegie believed that the play captured an historical moment and remained most powerful as a period piece. McGee wanted the play to stay contemporary and cutting edge, he did not want it to become dated.

This raises the question of whether the writer knew his play most or the dramaturge understood it better. Here the dramaturge is able to stand 'outside' the writing process and make an individual critique, but the writer remains 'inside' the text and can continue to re-write for ever. Mervyn Thomson wrote that after the workshop of *Foreskin's Lament* everyone knew that a piece of theatrical history had been made:

We had a play that was to be one of the great landmarks of New Zealand theatre, we had a system of workshopping that would ensure that the playwrights of the future would receive encouragement on a scale never dreamed of by the dramatists of earlier generations; we had palpable proof that the foremost practitioners of New Zealand could work together in harmony. (Thompson 1984:12)

However, this statement does not acknowledge the tensions within the process. The director and dramaturge decided their 'master plan' before the workshop process began but did not achieve all their objectives. The writer participated throughout the workshop process but then continued re-writing for several years. I suggest that the development process required a non-hierarchical, open, reflexive, and transparent methodology.

McGee recognises that the timing for *Foreskin's Lament* was crucial. Not only was New Zealand 'ready' to hear his critique of rugby and the country but the professional theatre structures had also been established to support his play. He argues that 'five years earlier the play would not have been done' (McGee, interview 2010). Edmond (1993) also points out that the workshops had an important role in the marketing of new works and the creation of a forum for learning and debate. While there is no doubt that the workshop methodology on *Foreskin's Lament* created a very strong New Zealand drama, the process raises important questions for the development process: In the workshop process should the playwright become scribe to a collective performance vision? What is the role of the dramaturge in this collaborative methodology? Who owns the writing and is feedback provided through answers or questions?

McGee went on to write *Tooth and Claw* (1983a), *Out in the Cold* (1983b) and *Whitemen* (1986), but none of these works matched the success of *Foreskin's Lament*. It is very hard for a playwright when their first production is their most successful work and the desire to re-write can also be about not letting go of this acclaim. McGee expressed this

experience through the character of Billy in his play *Me and Robert McKee*. Billy has writer's block and realises that writing a successful screenplay once is no guarantee that he can do it again. Black observed that 'when McGee branched out on his own with collectives, he missed the expertise that might have questioned the changes to *Foreskin's Lament*' (Black 1990:200). McGee kept re-writing *Foreskin's Lament* until the late '80s when he finally decided that it was a period piece. He then used the play again in 2005 to write a film script of the play which was screened under the title *Skin and Bone* (McGee, interview 2010).

McGee states that the film version is not an update or an adaptation – it is 'about asset stripping the original play' (McGee, Screenworks Website, 2010). This version was produced by Screenworks, a production company founded by McGee, Chris Bailey and Christopher Hampson. On their web site McGee writes that he was never completely satisfied by any of the theatre productions and hoped that the film version would be closest to his individual vision. At this point he was attempting to create the story independently without a supported development process. The publicity for the film makes no mention of the Springbok tour or racial politics, the focus is now rural decline. The film is pitched through the plight of a small run-down town and the need for sporting heroes:

I wanted to take certain elements and characters and put them in an era of professional rugby. I wanted to look at them through that prism and see how it worked. (McGee, Screenworks Website 2010)

In this version the central characters are Skin (he is all skin and bone) and his rich girlfriend Moira, their relationship provides the through-line. Moira is responsible for making Skin miss his law exam and for providing the drugs that result in him being fired from a professional rugby team. The storyline is that she follows him back to his small home town where she is almost gang raped by the local team but then discovers that he is the local hero and they live 'happy ever after'. The politics of race and New Zealand in transition have gone from the



work. The film challenges the masculine violence of the rugby culture and the individuals who can ruin the game. However, in the end the team pulls together, they win the competition, and the 'beautiful game' is restored to its prime position.

McGee was deeply unhappy with the film and found the project very problematic. The network had enormous influence over the filming and although he was part of the production team he lost influence over the production vision. McGee wanted the film to be about a dying town but the necessary shots were never filmed. He now thinks it should have been Clean's story 'about a man trying to escape his town' (McGee, interview 2010). The film was screened in 2005 during the Rugby World Cup and as a response to rugby at that time. In the last lines Skin praises the history of the game and how 'they can't take that away from us' (McGee, 2005). The final image before the titles is Skin holding onto the cup. Was this McGee making peace with the rugby fraternity after his devastating deconstruction of the national game or was this the network celebrating rugby within the world cup? The published script of the play remains most powerful in capturing national identity at a specific time of crisis and reflection in New Zealand. It was the result of an intense collaborative development process where the writer needed a dramaturge: 'their role is to protect the playwright, to make sure that they continue writing' (McGee, interview 2010). The dramaturge can also suggest when the work is finished.

### **The development of the dramaturge and workshop methodology**

By 1994 Craig Harrison argued that Playmarket assumed too much control over the process of playwriting and promotion of plays in New Zealand:

The Playmarket prescription for the acceptable play is laid down in a booklet in which two academics, neither of whom are playwrights, lay down the formula for the way to write plays. If these academics, or their cohorts, also act as dramaturges for

Playmarket, then a system has evolved which could easily become prone to coercion or even nepotism. (Harrison in Playmarket 1994:9)

From 1976 to 1993 Playmarket had been located in free accommodation at Victoria University and many of the dramaturges employed at this time were male academics, for example, David Dowling, Phillip Mann, David Carnegie, Mervyn Thompson (from 1977 to 1989 at Auckland University), Don McKenzie and Sebastian Black. The booklet by Dowling and Carnegie was published in 1980 and titled *Playwriting and Playing it Right – A guide to the writing and presentation of play scripts*. Carnegie now describes the text as ‘a collection of truisms – Playmarket needed a publication which would provide necessary information for emerging playwrights’ (Carnegie, interview 2010). The text suggests basic strategies for writers in theatre, film, television, and radio. Carnegie and Dowling used quotes from Roger Hall’s *State of Play* (1978) to frame a discussion of form, process and production. In Hall’s play a disillusioned playwright teaches students the rules of writing the well-made play. In this booklet Carnegie and Dowling provide ‘a few basic ground rules and the failure to follow them can lead to serious problems’ (Carnegie and Dowling 1980:5).

Harrison was concerned that the workshop method could be used to train writers to work in this way and that the dramaturge would become a cultural gatekeeper. In this process the dramaturge is ‘the objective theorist’ with ‘the master concept that can explain and rationalise the work’ (Behrndt 2010:192). The concept is often worked out before the development process begins and can sometimes limit artistic freedom and the potential for discovery. It is a corrective process where the dramaturge is imposed on artists as an ‘articulate intellectual who, in a manner similar to the scholar, deploys knowledge, analysis, theory and insight in order to explain and account for a (coherent) interpretation and argument’ (Behrndt 2010:192). As Harrison observes, this can create a political process of legitimization, validation and control.

Nonnita Rees observes that academics could be very good in the dramaturge role, ‘they could use their skills in new ways and unlock a box’ (Rees, interview 2010). However, it seems that they sometimes worked through prescribed solutions rather than open questions. Their interventions could be led by ‘dramatic theory’ rather than a creative praxis between practice and theory. Jean Betts was working as an actor in the late ’70s and experienced the introduction of the dramaturge as ‘a layer of management and expertise that was employed over the actors. There were these people who called themselves dramaturgs who had no experience of the industry’ (Betts, interview 2009). The tension here comes from an idea that academics write about theatre while practitioners make it. In Betts’s experience the academic dramaturge would introduce an ‘expertise’ or discourse that would frame the process in new ways and take the performance vision away from the practitioners. Betts argued ‘We were putting the power into those who cultivated the image of “I am a dramaturg” rather than those who were really good at it. They can be actors, directors or playwrights’ (Betts, interview 2009).

As discussed in Chapter One, this tension is not unique to New Zealand and has also been an issue in America (Cardullo 1995) and Canada (Rudakoff and Thompson 2002), where dramaturges have been trained in the university system. American dramaturge Leon Katz argues that the goal of the dramaturge should be to resolve the antipathy between the intellectual and the practical in theatre: ‘fusing the two into an organic whole’ (Cardullo 1995:2). The Dutch dramaturge Hildegard De Vuyst observes that the challenge is ‘to be intellectual without being guilty of intellectualism. To reflect and provide insight in the most transparent way without getting in the way of yourself’ (Turner and Behrndt 2008:157). Nonnita Rees recognises mistrust between academics and practitioners in New Zealand but realises that analysis and practice are needed in balance and the key to success is mutual

respect (Rees, interview 2010). In Chapter Seven I investigate how contemporary practice-led research is creating different relationships and new strategies for development.

### **Mapping Developments**

Rees (1984) argues that *Foreskin's Lament* played an important role in changing attitudes to New Zealand playwrights. There were the successful box office returns, but most of all 'actors and directors discovered the special rewards of working on a fresh-minted text that spoke to their audiences clearly and unambiguously' (Rees 1984:29). The play mirrors a time of transition when New Zealand's national identity was also contested as a postcolonial consequence of Britain's entry to the European Union. *Foreskin's Lament* paved the way for other playwrights and dramaturges to ask questions about New Zealand's national identity. The success of the play reflected a crisis about male Pākehā centrality in New Zealand identity and in the theatre production process. This was the first successful New Zealand play that experimented with the methodologies of the dramaturge. If *Foreskin* had asked New Zealand dramaturges 'Whaddarya?' at this time the answer would have been Pākehā male academics who want to develop mainstream New Zealand literary theatre. At the end of the 1982 Second New Zealand Playwrights Workshop Nonnita Rees called for dramaturges and writers to be employed in every theatre throughout New Zealand. After 1980 New Zealand dramaturges facilitated script development at every biennial workshop until 2009. Murray Edmond has documented the influence of the workshop process upon New Zealand theatre throughout the eighties:

There have been two major products: plays and playwrights. At first, plays dominated; latterly it is playwrights who have emerged to produce further and stronger plays after being at a workshop or returning with a new work at another workshop. (Edmond 1993: 53–54)

In *Foreskin's Lament* the development process benefited from the work of six dramaturges that each had different functions. Without Adrian Kiernander the writing would not have been recognised and selected for development, so the dramaturge needs the experience to *assess the work*. David Carnegie was the workshop dramaturge and provided *suggestions, analysis, support and documentation* within the workshop process. Mervyn Thompson was the *facilitator* of the workshop providing *practical offers* for the 'performance text'. Don McKenzie *defended and protected* the writing in the final discussion and *framed the evaluation process*. He also was responsible for the *publication* of the 'dramatic text' (Carnegie, interview 1010). Raymond Hawthorne worked in great detail as *script advisor* to edit and extend the written text. Greg McGee *guided* his writing through this collaborative process and continued to make his own re-writing choices. At least four of these dramaturges were employed as academics while they made their interventions. The words in *italics* demonstrate the multiple functions of the dramaturge. In this case study they were performed by six different individuals as the role of the dramaturge became established.

In her thesis on the role of the dramaturge in Australia, Louise Gough identifies the most important functions as being research, recommending work, observation (being an outside eye), enlightenment (or education) together with the assessment, facilitation and translation (Gough 2009:22). In this case study of *Foreskin's Lament* the dramaturge was needed to identify potential within the work, to support and defend the writer, to facilitate analysis and make practical offers, and to guide the re-work process through different stages of development. None of these dramaturges had been trained for the position but they each wanted to support the development of this important text. The role of dramaturge was inventing itself in New Zealand through their collective practice.

My argument is that the different functions of the dramaturge can converge together through one professional position and five actions of dramaturgical transition. When the

dramaturge *listens* to the work they are observing, assessing, evaluating and analysing, when the dramaturge *reflects* the work they are framing, contextualising and documenting, when the dramaturge *questions* the work they are testing, defending, enlightening and protecting, when the dramaturge *facilitates* the work they are supporting, collaborating and translating, when the dramaturge *suggests* they are guiding, offering, editing and extending. These dramaturgical actions can be used at any stage of development, when the dramaturge works with an individual writer, and inside a collective creation process. At the Royal Court Theatre in London the literary manager, Ruth Little, argues for a convergent theatre which shifts;

dramaturgical practice away from linear, strictly causal models towards a recognition of the play as a living system, subject to complex and subtle feedback from within the play and beyond it (in its relationship with its audience). (Turner 2008:194)

This ‘living system’ recognises the collaboration between practitioners in the creation of the performance texts. It realises that written text is one part of performance dramaturgy and that the writer can collaborate throughout the production process. The development process on *Foreskin’s Lament* created a convergent practice that challenged notions of national identity in New Zealand.

### **Chapter 3. Narrative Structure: The Dramaturge as Architect**

*Playwriting and Playing it Right – A Guide to the Writing and Presentation of Play Scripts* was an attempt to simplify the writing process and identify a set of strategies for the creation of plays in New Zealand. The Dowling and Carnegie publication satisfied Playmarket's desire to articulate the architecture of drama for writers working in theatre, radio, film and academic courses. This chapter examines the structures that have influenced dramaturgical feedback and what 'playing it right' can mean in performance development. In this analysis I use the metaphor of the dramaturge as architect to evoke the ideas that have shaped the scaffolding of drama. Turner and Behrndt argue that the dramaturge creates the architecture of performance and quote the architect Bernard Tschumi who believes 'our experience becomes the experience of events organised and strategized through architecture' (Turner 2008:5). The architect designs the building and guides the building process. I examine established practice and the way that structures become repeated. Massumi writes that 'a building can be a way of placing relation against relation, towards inflected variation, but the application of previous structures can result in predictability' Massumi (2002:203). Narrative structures have influenced literary theatre or what Lehmann (2006) calls 'pure drama' where the written text is privileged through the function of dramaturge as script advisor with the individual playwright. In Chapter One I analysed different agendas that inform the interventions of the dramaturge and how the role has changed over time. Now I investigate the epistemology of the dramaturge, or their way of knowing, to identify its ontology or way of operating in practice. Another way of saying this is that I aim to unpack and deconstruct the dramaturge's 'tool box' to investigate the implications of different structural interventions.

I am interested in different kinds of architecture and the ways they may be both discovered and imposed. I examine how the dramaturge as architect experiments with

different ways of constructing, and how their practice can be influenced by ‘building regulations’. The development of the dramaturge in New Zealand can be made clear through tracing the policy changes of Playmarket. In many ways the organisation has positioned itself as a kind of über architect and master builder in the development of New Zealand plays. The work of New Zealand script advisor and playwright Gary Henderson will test the metaphor of dramaturge as architect. Henderson has been employed by Playmarket to work with various playwrights. In 2007 this included a weekly development course for fifteen writers hosted by The Edge in Auckland (where I was a group member). In this analysis I employ Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘habitus’ and ‘doxa’ to analyse the subjectivity of the dramaturge, what is taken for granted in their way of working and what happens when ‘rules’ are imposed.

### **Pure drama**

Aristotle argued that dramatic poetry requires a coherent complete plot that imitates human experience: ‘the whole is that which has a beginning, middle and end’ (Aristotle 1996: xxiii). In the *Poetics* the tripartite structure provides a logical order: ‘to the confusion and plenitude of Being’ (Lehmann 2006:40). Lehmann observes that the flow of time becomes controlled and surveyable by representation of the world which is dominated by the written text and a totality of plot:

In the name of this ideal ‘surveyability’, the right length of dramatic action is determined according to the time it takes for a reversal, a peripeteia, to take place. A rise and fall, in other words: time of the logic of reversal. Drama brings logical structure into the confusing plethora and chaos of being. (Lehmann 2006:160)

Aristotle believed that human beings respond to likeness and take pleasure in the recognition and representation of their experience:



Understanding is extremely pleasant, not just for philosophers but for others too in the same way, despite their limited capacity for it. This is the reason why people take delight in seeing images; what happens is that as they view them they come to understand and work out what each thing is. (Aristotle 1996:7)

The audience experience a recognition that leads to resolution and learning through mimesis. Aristotle's structure moves through set up, crisis and resolution to satisfy the human desire to know and understand. It is a linear sequence where one event leads onto the next retaining unity of action, time and space. The plot remains self-contained and results in closure. This narrative structure has had enormous influence over the development of drama and literary theatre: 'the Aristotelian line won out and came to define the ideas of theatre in modern times' (Lehmann 2006:160). Aristotle argued that in tragedy the tripartite structure purges pity and fear so that the audience are released by their identification with the journey of the individual protagonist. Story analyst Robert McKee, who studied Aristotle in his PhD thesis, argues that this structure results in a satisfying resolution and closure:

A story climax of absolute, irreversible change that answers all the questions raised by the telling and satisfies all audience emotion is a closed ending. (McKee 1998:48)

The linear through-line creates a temporal order of events that present the journey of the central protagonist moving through challenge, obstacles, turning points and crisis. There is a process of development, recognition, and learning which is structured through thesis/antithesis/synthesis. This model and construct has been taken up and adapted over time to create a 'pure drama' that privileges the written text: 'through language, namely through the form of stage dialogue; and the relevance of individual human behaviour in society' (Lehmann 2006:48).

Eugenio Barba describes how performance actions are shaped between the two poles of concatenation or simultaneity (Barba and Savarese 1991:69). The concatenate follows

Aristotle's structure and has a logical coherent linear through line and causal connection between scenes. The simultaneous structure has several fragmented actions happening at the same time without reference to a causal relationship. Conventional literary or dramatic theatre tends to favour concatenation and performance (including interdisciplinary practice, dance and performance art) is more simultaneous:

When a performance is derived from a text of words, there is a danger of the balance in the performance being lost because of the prevalence of the linear relationships (the plot as concatenation), causing damage to the plot understood as the weaving of simultaneously present actions. (Barba 1985:76)

Lehmann argues that Aristotle's tripartite structure functions to uphold society's inner coherence, 'the social 'glue', the solidarity or at least the deeper symbolic unity of the society' (Lehmann 2006:182).

### **The Tool Box**

Aristotle's structure continues to dominate the tool box of narrative development in drama and film. Over time his ideas have been adapted by formalism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, and anthropology but the literature of story development remains strongly anchored to Aristotle. Joseph Campbell's journey follows Aristotle's tripartite structure through set-up, crisis and resolution and has shaped the development of the Hollywood film narrative (Field 1982, Vogler 1998, McKee 1999). As an anthropologist Campbell analysed the structure of stories and myths in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and concluded that there is only one story, which he summarises as:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. (Campbell 1968:30)

Influenced by the terminology and archetypes of Carl G. Jung, Campbell's ideas draw on the formalist ideas of Vladimir Propp (1928) and the structuralist analysis of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1978). Propp deconstructed fairy tales to classify different kinds of story and identify a chronological linear sequence of events. Lévi-Strauss used this work to develop a structuralist approach to myth which identified the narrative building blocks and meaning. Campbell's ideas have been further illuminated by the anthropologist David Lan:

In every story a character exists. Something about that culture is making the character suffer. Something happens that makes the character realise that they need to do something to ease the suffering. They embark on a journey. They attempt to do or get something to ease the suffering. They confront opposition. They succeed or fail and in that success or failure they either learn about self or other. Or the audience do. (Lan cited by Stephens 2008)

The concatenate structure has determined the construction of conventional film-making and literary theatre. The link with popular culture is explicit in George Lucas's use of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* for the *Star Wars* film trilogy.

In his book *How Plays Work* Edgar also supports Aristotle and argues for a story structure that reflects human experience with familiar mechanisms and techniques. Edgar pioneered the teaching of playwriting in Britain and founded the Playwriting Studies course at Birmingham University in 1989. The book grew out of playwrights' self-help groups and, like the booklet from Carnegie and Dowling (1980), is about "play righting" and playwriting: 'getting it right and getting it good' (Edgar 2009:xiii). He describes playwriting as an activity which is 'subject to the constraints of reason' (Edgar 2009:xi). Edgar operates as architect dramaturge to provide structure for the playwright. He believes there is 'an underlying architecture' that is vital to make plays work: 'without that fundamental geometry in place – the whole thing collapses' (Edgar 2009:5). Edgar argues the pattern of the logical linear concatenate structure is 'hard-wired' into human beings in their journey through life and they

are satisfied by this performance journey. This argument is a monolithic singular analysis that imposes order on chaos. In this methodology the dramaturge as architect builds ‘well crafted’ conventional plays that result in closure. While recognising that some practitioners challenge this linear framework, Edgar believes that human beings need these connections and ‘the straightforward progressions of cause and effect’ (Edgar 2009:111). This practice is an essentialising force that reduces human subjects as disciplined by the same forces and dreams. It is a homogenizing structure that constructs human subjectivity to sustain a form of social control.

The American playwright David Mamet also argues for the necessity of the tripartite structure where the audience see themselves as the individual protagonist and hero: ‘the theatre is about the hero journey... a person undergoing a test that he or she did not choose’ (Mamet 2000:16). Mamet describes how the hero dramatizes human experience and the audience want to ‘get it’, to identify with the hero and to know how smart they are in understanding the journey: ‘that is why the drama that is second-rate, that is not structured as the quest of the hero for the single goal, is forgettable’ (Mamet 2000:31). Whether the dramatist works through five acts, the tripartite structure or a one-act play, the argument here is that the performance journey should move through set-up, crisis, climax, and resolution. Mamet argues for a dialectical process of learning and understanding:

Dramatic structure is, similarly, an exercise of a naturally occurring need or disposition to structure the world as thesis / antithesis/ synthesis (Mamet 2000:66)

The writer and film maker Anthony Minghella (2005) describes how the tripartite structure has become an index for measuring what ‘works’ and how structures which do not conform with this formula are then dismissed:

I don't think a screenplay comes in three sections any more than a house needs two bedrooms or five bedrooms. It depends on who is living there. (Minghella 2005:13)

He observes that there are many ways to create performance but 'we have confined ourselves to the middle road' (Minghella 2005:13). The architecture of the tripartite structure has become a blueprint for the construction process. The playwright Phyllis Nagy argues that gender has an enormous influence on structure and that men are more likely to write the 'closed' thesis play while women often leave structure open ended:

Men have a need for closure and anal-retentive methods of reaching conclusions. Women don't; although it doesn't mean that the work is any less rigorous or patterned or structured. (Nagy 1997:21)

This essentialist argument may offer some insight into the lack of female representation when the logical linear concatenate structure becomes an index for judging 'good work' and what will be commissioned. Most of the writers who have 're-invented' Aristotle are white middle-class male Anglo-Americans (McKee 1997, Edgar 2009, Mamet 2000, Vogler 1998), and the individual linear journey through life without interruption reflects a certain kind of hegemonic masculinity.

### **The development process in New Zealand**

Over the last 20 years most of New Zealand script development initiatives have been made by outside 'experts' offering different versions of Aristotle's tripartite structure. The model is dominated by one hero on a chronological journey towards redemption. As a playwright in Britain I was encouraged by various dramaturges to follow this model. These ideas have become a prescriptive template in the hands of script advisors that require simple answers. Hestor Joyce (2003) documents how the New Zealand Film Commission began script development initiatives in the late '80s to teach the structure of successful Hollywood

narrative. The Film Commission aimed to improve New Zealand storytelling and gain access to international markets. The first invited 'expert' was the Hollywood scriptwriter Robert McKee, who in 1988 gave a series of story structure lectures to film and theatre practitioners in Wellington. He used the concatenate structure to introduce a five-part story design of inciting incident, progressive complications, crisis, climax and resolution. Joyce argues that within weeks McKee's ideas pervaded script development through New Zealand's small performance industry and the concatenate structure quickly became the standard organising concept. In her research Joyce demonstrates how McKee's model resulted in institutionalised processes and formal guidelines for structure.

There was little questioning of whether this formula was right for New Zealand stories. Joyce writes that *Ngati* (1987) was the first New Zealand film to be made by a mainly Māori production team, and the director Barry Barclay described McKee's response to the structure:

A man from Hollywood, Robert McKee, came to New Zealand recently to lecture the industry on how to write successful drama scripts. Of *Ngati* he said the problem was that there were three intertwined plots which did not link together. In my view he missed the point. The linking was under the umbrella of community. Life goes off in different directions in a community. The link is that it is all happening at the same time without pat linking devices. (Barclay cited in Joyce 2003:17)

Joyce notes the potential for imperialism when one performance journey is applied across all stories. The residual imperialist tendencies of the concatenate structure countered the push for postcolonial visions. Gilbert and Tompkins (1996) argue that the universalist view does not respect cultural or gender differences and how indigenous theatre avoids fixed sequencing and prefers a temporal circularity. She documents how indigenous work has a cyclical notion of time and structure can be nonlinear, multidirectional, fragmented, and unpredictable. Performance journeys are shaped by many different experiences and one model can only

restrict the possibilities for development. However, McKee writes that the classical story design is a ‘mirror of the human mind’ and the same quest across cultures:

It’s still the same story: a human being whose life is radically upset by the force of some event goes on a quest against the forces of counter-action to put their life back in balance. (McKee cited in Joyce 2003:179)

In 1989 the New Zealand Film Commission brought script editor Linda Seger to train selected key practitioners on script assessment and development. Joyce documents how these sessions influenced the language and structure of New Zealand performance, the power of script advisors, the commissioning and development decisions, and the criteria for success. Seger’s sessions concentrated on the re-writing process and provided strategies of practical application for McKee’s concepts. The new script consultants became nicknamed ‘the Segerettes’ and encouraged writers to map their structure according to graphic diagrams.

In 2009 Greg McGee wrote the play *Me and Robert McKee* which shows the impact of these initiatives on the individual writer and how ‘the weak take refuge in conviction, while the strong live with doubt’ (McGee 2009:4). McGee satirises the prescriptive rules that restricted performance experimentation as writers laboured to make their stories fit inside the formula:

There’s a lot of bullshit about structure. Anyone with half a brain can manipulate plot points and turning points so that they happen on the correct page, according to Robert. Does that make them good scripts? Didn’t help Robert. So forget the page count and look after the moments. Moment by moment. Keep it simple: structure is determined by the release of information. That’s it. That’s all it is. (McGee 2009:22)

His argument is that the writer has to sustain their voice and connection with the story rather than make it fit within a prescribed structure.

Other outside ‘experts’ who have influenced the development of New Zealand dramaturgy include the Australian script consultant Linda Aronson. In 2005 the Film Commission enabled her to work with a group of writers to explore multiple protagonists, flashback, time jumps, parallel stories, voice over, and non-linear stories. Aronson (2001) recognises that the contradictions of our times are not always represented through the single protagonist and the hero’s chronological journey towards redemption. In 2008 Playmarket organised a series of national scriptwriting workshops with Simon Stephens, a British playwright who was writer in residence at The National Theatre in London. Attending the session on structure I noted that Stephens used the ideas of anthropologist David Lan to argue that there is only one story that can capture human experience. He then described the individual hero moving through a tripartite structure of thesis, antithesis and synthesis to achieve learning.

In August 2010 Michael Vogler presented his analysis of story structure to the Romance Writers of New Zealand Conference in Auckland and for a New Zealand Film Commission ‘Script to Screen’ Master Class in Wellington. The Romance Writers Conference was aimed at writers of prose, but film and theatre writers were targeted for the Vogler sessions. He offers his work as a tool for story development across different media but he does acknowledge that stories vary between cultures (Vogler, presentation August 2010). He began working in film as a story analyst and then wrote *The Writer’s Journey* (1998). His analysis drives the story through the individual linear journey of the central protagonist or hero who passes through twelve phases of development within a tripartite structure. This structure also draws on the formalist ideas of Propp (1928) and the structuralist analysis of Lévi-Strauss (1978). In Vogler’s model the hero separates from the ordinary world, descends to a special world, experiences initiation and then returns to the ordinary world. He acknowledges his debt to the mythic studies of Campbell and the psychology of Jung. Vogler



examines archetypes as returning patterns of human behaviour and identifies the characters of the hero, the shadow (villain), mentor, herald, the threshold guardian, shape shifter, trickster, and ally. He argues that the hero 'is human' and could be male or female but it is an individual linear journey and rite of passage most often acted out through the male central protagonist. He describes the structure as a non-prescriptive tool for the writer who must then judge the needs of the individual story (Vogler, presentation 2010).

Maureen Murdock (1990) and Kim Hudson (2009) have challenged the hero's journey by arguing for the journey of the female heroine and the journey of the virgin. The heroine's journey is written for a female audience as Murdoch argues that women do not always want to be 'the prize' at the end of the journey. Hudson recognises the representation of female experience within the virgin's journey but argues that it is not gender specific. Murdoch and Hudson have provided alternative possibilities for structure within the development of conventional film-making but they still follow the individual linear quest. Their work is shaped by Aristotle's tripartite structure, as interpreted by Campbell and Vogler, who have been influenced by Propp, Lévi Strauss and Jung. From a feminist perspective these models do not dismantle or destabilise patriarchal vision but make the dominant model capable of containing the female journey within a masculinist apparatus. Vogler did not describe these alternative models or discuss the masculine bias within the parameters of the hero's journey in his Auckland presentation.

Lehmann writes how European drama was developed through Aristotle's model of structure as 'observations were reinterpreted as normative rules, the rules as prescriptions, and the prescription as laws – description was turned into prescription' (Lehmann 2006:160). He argues that only when the concatenate structure is questioned does it become possible for a society to challenge social truths. Joyce (2003) concludes that the most successful screenplays in New Zealand have been those that were allowed to develop in their own ways.

The choice to develop New Zealand theatre through the written text and closed narrative structure supports a sense of order and social cohesion. Lehmann describes how drama can ‘delude itself with the illusory comedy of a society that allegedly no longer has such internal conflicts’ (Lehmann 2006:183). New Zealand theatre often creates the image of a settled society which is relaxed about its national identity. Falkenberg writes that mainstream New Zealand theatre, unlike film, ‘tries to deny its postcolonial anxieties by hiding behind a facade of ease’ (Falkenberg 2007:296). This argument reveals the importance of *Foreskin’s Lament*, which shattered that image of a settled society.

### **The New Zealand dramaturge**

Lester McGrath was New Zealand’s first professional dramaturge employed in 1985 on a one-year training scheme by Nonnita Rees at Playmarket. He organised the script reading service and the writing of one-page reports for a play submitted by a playwright. Playmarket facilitated monthly workshops or readings where writers could develop their work. McGrath argues that by 1987 Playmarket had established the ethics of good practice through long discussions about the needs of the writer and the objectives of a workshop. Each time they had to identify what the writer wanted from the workshop and how this could be facilitated. This conversation then influenced the choice of dramaturge and how they would work with the writer and the rest of the team (McGrath, interview 2011). They established a group of experienced actors who understood the workshop process and were committed to developing New Zealand plays. McGrath argues that ‘we became very good at identifying what was at the heart of each process and managed to set up good healthy working situations’ (McGrath, interview 2011). The matchmaking process was vital and each time they had to find a dramaturge that had the right vision, personality and skills set.

In 1987, the year before Robert McKee visited New Zealand, David Carnegie organised a 3-day dramaturge's workshop in Wellington. This was an opportunity to evaluate different methodologies after the experience of four national playwright workshops. The workshop aimed to create a dialogue for the development of the dramaturge in New Zealand. In his conference report Carnegie defined his objectives as:

1. To define the role and function of the dramaturge.
2. To provide a forum for discussion of training, employment opportunities and the future direction of the dramaturge.
3. To provide workshop experience and guidance in dramaturgical skills: script assessment, workshops, liaison with writers. (Carnegie 1987:1)

The workshop was funded by the Queen Elizabeth II Arts Council, Playmarket and registration fees. Carnegie planned the workshop sessions so that different kinds of dramaturge would work on the same text to compare and contrast methodology. He needed a New Zealand short text, where the writer was dead, so that the participants could be free to experiment without offending the writer. Carnegie chose *The Cradle and the Egg* by Frank Sargeson, which was sent to all participants along with other dramaturgical readings. Sebastian Black (from the University of Auckland), Philippa Campbell (actor/director), Lester McGrath (Playmarket's resident dramaturge), and Roger Hall (playwright) were asked to take the role of dramaturge in the workshop development process. Carnegie (1987) describes how the workshop began by discussing the role of the dramaturge. This dialogue was dominated by the playwrights Roger Hall, Rachel McAlpine and Raewyn Gwilliam who wanted to establish the role through on-going trusted relationships.

Only two female directors (Philippa Campbell and Lisa Warrington) were part of the workshop process. Warrington operated as a director in the workshop process and became very defensive about the position of the director in relation to the dramaturge (Carnegie

1987:2). The Dunedin dramaturge Alistair McDonald defended the role as a crucial resource for the director in the development process. Carnegie notes that ‘the script assessment overnight by participants was less than wholehearted in some cases, partly because of a general reaction that Frank Sargeson’s play was not worth the effort’ (Carnegie 1987:2). This doubt about the potential of the writing indicates a lack of belief in the work that echoes the experience of Thompson and Mason in Chapter Two. The vulnerability of the writer in the workshop process was articulated by Roger Hall (1998), who argued that inexperienced and young writers could be overwhelmed by older and well-known directors. Hall does not workshop his own plays and argues that he can do the work himself through individual conversations with directors and actors. In this methodology the writer maintains complete control of the written text and does not benefit from practical experiments with other theatre practitioners in the development process.

Carnegie wanted the ‘dramaturg tutors’ to guide the development of dramaturgical skills and explore different ways of working (Carnegie, interview 2010). Each group had to prepare a script assessment of the Sargeson play for the writer. Hall focused on the best way to deliver feedback to writers, Lester McGrath explored the writer’s world and intentions before examining theatre craft and structure, Sebastian Black examined the historical significance of the time in which it was written (characters and motivation), Philippa Campbell analysed what the play was about, staging problems, the vision and philosophy of the theatre and how it might be produced (Carnegie 1987:2–3). Their development choices reflected the concerns of mainstream literary theatre and their individual professional training. Their interventions privileged the written text and focussed on structure. For example, Playmarket’s resident dramaturge McGrath began from the writer but then offered possibilities for structural development. McGrath states that his methodology starts with ‘the bare bones of the story, once you identify the structure and the elements which make it up

then the rest falls into place' (McGrath, interview 2011). Carnegie notes that in every process the groups came to respect the play. Their negative first impressions changed as they explored the possibilities within the writing. Their first response and lack of confidence in the writer might demonstrate the often stated need for the dramaturge as 'protector' in New Zealand. However, the Dutch dramaturge Maaïke Bleeker argues that the protector is often;

associated with pre-given concepts that have to be fulfilled, rules that have to be imposed on the artistic material, prescriptions that have to be carried out – or to, put it simply, with limitations imposed on artistic freedom (Bleeker 2003:164)

This statement articulates the potential power of the dramaturge and echoes Craig Harrison's fear that the dramaturge can become a cultural gatekeeper. When the dramaturgical exercise was completed discussions concluded that 'assessment and criticism could only be useful to writers in the context of mutual respect, on-going dialogue and a real possibility of theatre production' (Carnegie 1987:3). Roger Hall argued that the writer must maintain sole responsibility for all development choices. This 'master' vision reflects Derrida's description of the playwright as remote controller who is unwilling to collaborate but uses 'interpretive slaves who faithfully execute the providential designs of the 'master' (Derrida 1981:235–236). Campbell pointed out the importance of preliminary meetings and setting out clear objectives for a development workshop. The focus here was again protecting the writer from the pressure of the director.

Carnegie documents that at one point McGrath, when representing the writer, had a 'huge slanging match' with the director. In Roger Hall's group the director (Lisa Warrington) began to take over the role of dramaturge. These agendas and power struggles echo other New Zealand workshop experiences and the 'tensions over turf' between writer, director and dramaturge. I have already documented the struggle for ownership at certain moments in the *Foreskin's Lament* workshop. McGrath believes that the writers welcomed the work of the

dramaturge but it was the Association of Community Theatre directors who were most threatened: ‘a couple of these directors did not value New Zealand stories and when they did choose to direct New Zealand plays there was an enormous rivalry between them’ (McGrath, interview 2011). McGrath recalls that they also did not like academics: ‘they were thought to have no working knowledge of theatre’ (McGrath, interview 2011). This way of seeing probably undermined Carnegie’s organisation of the workshop and may explain why only Campbell and Warrington attended. Campbell also acknowledges the friction between academics and practitioners over ‘the one way to do it’ (Campbell, interview 2011). This comment suggests a power struggle for authority and knowledge. The tension echoes the history of the dramaturge in America but the profession was then adopted and American universities created many opportunities for practical and theoretical training.

The final discussion of the 1987 Workshop concentrated on the word ‘dramaturg/e’. New Zealand has always used ‘dramaturg’, the staccato Germanic spelling of the word, rather than the French flowing ‘dramaturge’. The participants began to see the ‘dramaturg’ as a threat to the writer and to theatre itself when there were few resources. Nonnita Rees argued that this was not the case and that New Zealand practitioners needed greater development, dialogue and experimentation. Dramaturges could play an important role in this process:

There is a need for development within theatres too, for incentives for highly skilled people to work in theatres, encouragement of exploratory and rigorous first productions, possibly residencies for dramaturgs in theatres. (Rees in Carnegie 1989:4)

This speech finished the workshop on a positive note for the dramaturge but Carnegie observes that:

Although the conference wanted to develop the skills of the dramaturge they did not want to invest in the training of a new profession. There remained a resistance to risk, shifting roles and innovation. (Carnegie, interview 2010).

In his report Carnegie recommended a further seminar with artistic directors but this never happened. Carnegie acknowledges that they could not shift the cynicism about the role of the dramaturge to find new partnerships between practice and theory (Carnegie, interview 2010). This workshop is the only specific initiative that has attempted to deconstruct and develop the practice of the dramaturge in New Zealand. Attempts to open discussion and dialogue about the role of the dramaturge have floundered through internal dissension and disagreement.

In 1990 Playmarket decided to bring the theatre community together through a national hui (meeting) in Nelson that addressed the needs of the writer. There were more than a hundred theatre practitioners, including 47 playwrights. The conference was organised by a committee including Playmarket staff, Murray Edmond, Miriama Evans, and Lee Hatherly. This hui took a new direction that was inclusive, participatory, and culturally inquisitive. The workshop aimed to expand the experience of the playwrights working with a choreographer (Jamie Bull), a composer (Philip Dadson), and a sculptor (Matt Pine):

By confronting and attempting to resolve the problems of shape and structure in another discipline the playwright may return refreshed to deal with those problems in his or her own craft, armed perhaps with previously unconsidered possibilities for their resolution. (The Playmarket 1990 workshop proposal by Simon Garrett)

This was the first attempt to make new creative connections between playwrights and other theatre practitioners. Red Mole Theatre Company also ran workshops that explored the free-form development of ritual within narrative structure, and there was a workshop of a community play titled *Save our Railway* by Carol Markwell. The range of practice was culturally inclusive and ensured ‘that the mana of the tangata whenua is acknowledged by

having the cultural focus of the hui firmly embedded in the forms and practices of the marae' (Playmarket Report 1990). He Ara Hou, the Māori performing arts group led by Roma Potiki, performed *Whatungarogaro*, and The Pacific Theatre Group, led by Justine Simey-Barton, worked on a new script by John Bower. The feedback was very positive as participants enjoyed the 'non-competitive and non-hierarchical spirit of the conference' and found the work to be 'unexpectedly stimulating' (Playmarket 1990). The conference provided opportunities for writers to extend their practice, make new connections and explore the possibilities of performance. The forum began the same kinds of dialogue which were developed later in Britain through initiatives from Claire MacDonald and Catherine Turner. Building on the success of the hui, dramaturge Simon Garrett wrote a document in 1991 which questioned the future of Playmarket and observed that:

Under the present arrangement the commercial potential of scripts, at least implicitly and perhaps subconsciously, is a prime consideration in the selection of those scripts we choose for developmental work. It fails to leave room for the experimental, the literary, the non-scripted play. In other words, we take a very narrow view of what constitutes New Zealand drama. The result is that we may be seen to be encouraging an uninteresting and even reactionary theatre rather than anything else, and ignoring and even discouraging forms of New Zealand drama and specific playmaking practitioners that should form an essential part of our constituency. (Garrett 1991:3)

Unfortunately Garrett's intervention had little impact and the hui remained a one-off event. However, it can be argued that the gathering paved the way for the development of Māori and Pacific theatre in the '90s. The biennial workshops returned to the format of developing specific scripts considered to have commercial potential. This was the safe choice that followed established practice to serve the market and create more revenue for Playmarket (which is also the main agent for New Zealand playwrights). The unscripted and experimental work was less manageable and more risky with multiple collaborators and less



potential revenue for Playmarket. In 1992 five plays were chosen for the first ever joint workshop between New Zealand and Australia in Canberra. Thirty Kiwi practitioners presented *Yo Banfa* by Stuart Hoar, *Think of a Garden* by John Kneubuhl, *The Common Day* by Michael Gilchrist, *Glad and the Angels* by Bernadette Hall, and the well-received *Lovelock's Dream Run* by David Geary.

Until 2009 Playmarket continued to employ dramaturges but their function in New Zealand was to be a script advisor for the playwright. In this time the linear concatenate structure served a demand for educational packages and publications which was created by university courses and the market of the self-help creative industry. The function of dramaturge as script advisor came under increasing demand from pressure for standardised marketable solutions. The methodology of the architect was positioned at the centre of this construction process providing structural expertise in various publications (McKee 1997, Vogler 1998, Mamet 2000, Edgar 2009). The dramaturge as architect became a commodity that could satisfy the requirements of the market. These publications encouraged dramaturges to create a formula that could be taught and tested. Ian Jervis describes how the institutional framework undermined creative experimentation and encouraged artists to create an 'alibi' in order to 'fit' educational and market-led expectations (Jervis, presentation 2012). To be successful, certain kinds of architecture had to be employed. However, in Chapter Seven I show how post-structural strategies were, at the same time, challenging these ways of thinking and working.

In 2010 Playmarket replaced the term 'dramaturg' with 'script advisor' and the 'workshop' with 'script clinic'. This decision commits the organisation to a restricted practice that concentrates only on work of the writer. There is no attempt to see the writing as one contribution to a collaborative performance development process. The former director of

Playmarket, Mark Amery, and script development officer, Jean Betts, argue that there was too much confusion around the term ‘dramaturg’:

No-one can define it. No-one knows what it is. Too much authority has been invested in the position and certain individuals have cultivated the role without practical experience (Betts, interview, 2009).

This response again seems to be a Playmarket decision against the dramaturges that were also academics. Betts argues that ‘if the dramaturg takes power away from a writer it is no good, they have to instil confidence. The idea that the dramaturg knows more than me is intimidating’ (Betts, interview 2009). This anti-intellectual way of seeing and experiencing the role suggests that Betts is envisaging a conservative ‘expert’ architect who imposes the master concept without listening to the client. Behrndt observes that ‘to the practitioner’s ear, this amounts to getting rid of the live process’s potential for discoveries’ (Behrndt 2010:193). However, Playmarket have also decided not to employ the collaborative workshop for that process of live discovery. Amery notes that Playmarket is a writer’s agency and script development service:

A script advisor works alongside a playwright providing advice and challenges in the development of their script. The conversation does not involve anyone else. In a workshop situation they are an advocate for the writer. (Amery, interview March 2009)

The re-definition means that the dramaturge’s role is reduced to one function as the script advisor. This practice focuses on the individual rather than a living system of convergent relationships. The current director of Playmarket Murray Lynch argues that different interventions are needed for each process and there should be a continuum of development possibilities for the writer:

It is possible to over-develop new work and some plays arrive ready for rehearsal. Playmarket don't want to use their development resources to begin a rehearsal process. We may offer a reading and discussion, a day with a script advisor or a meeting to discuss the play with a script advisor. (Lynch, interview March 2012)

Playmarket have decided that it is not their business to provide the venue for a biennial national theatre gathering. The organisation will now spread their resources through many small playwright interventions rather than the collaborative workshop process. This decision is influenced by funding but also reflects a business and marketing ideology which prioritises the individual over the community. My research indicates that the New Zealand script advisor is most likely to develop the writing through the architecture of the concatenate structure: 'we try to talk about structure – that is the most important thing – the arc of the story – if you get that right – then the beats will shape the story' (Lynch, interview March 2012). There is now little opportunity to collaborate with other artists, experiment with form and try alternative strategies of composition inside Playmarket's process. My argument is that structure can become formulaic if always guided by the same model. Cummings (1997) writes that a text may be chosen for being original and ground-breaking but then the development process becomes normative with conventional ideas of practice. Young playwrights may not be aware of this tendency and grateful to be chosen for development they submit their work to a process and lose their original vision. Cummings argues that the process of script development is simultaneously radical and conservative:

The process simultaneously authorizes and infantilizes the playwright. That is, the commitment to serve the playwright empowers him or her to define how the process will be conducted (within reasonable limits); yet, the process defines the work and, by extension, the playwright as (professionally) immature and in need of care. (Cummings 1997:383)

Playmarket have chosen a restricted practice, between the script advisor and writer, which creates the 'blueprint' for conventional drama. The script advisor can become 'the protector of a concept that has been worked out prior to rehearsal which can eliminate chance, co-incidence and risk of the unknown' (Behrndt 2010:192). This methodology echoes the way in which the New Zealand Company in London drew plans for New Zealand's cities and towns before they had actually stepped foot on the land. Lynch cites Picasso to argue that 'writers need to know the rules in order to create visionary art' (Lynch, interview 2012). Unfortunately, there is rarely time to move beyond 'the rules' in a one-day development process.

### **The building inspector**

Gary Henderson is a writer and director considered by Playmarket to provide best practice as a script advisor (Mark Amery, interview 2009). Henderson chooses not to use the term dramaturge and describes himself as a 'script advisor who works only on the text to privilege the writing' (Henderson, interview 2011). He has also taught the writing component of the performing arts degree at a higher educational institute in Auckland and is currently setting up an independent writing course. He supports the Playmarket view that many practitioners in New Zealand are unsure about the work of the dramaturge 'so it is clearer and cleaner to use the term script advisor' (Henderson, interview 2011). He has never worked as dramaturge in a collaborative devising process but has been employed several times as a writer in this situation. He believes the script advisor must make sure the script is honoured throughout the development process and so he works as an advocate for the written text. In his teaching Henderson does not use literature on the theory of writing but concentrates on specific play texts. He examines how the conflict plays out within the drama and asks the students to analyse structure. He describes a teaching methodology where he makes the students:

do things and then go back and examine what it was they'd done and try and articulate what they had done by instinct so they were aware that's what they were doing. And then they could actually be conscious of it and use it. (Henderson, 2007:144)

This way of working demonstrates the role of the dramaturge in education where Henderson facilitates learning through a dialectical process of questions and answers. At the same he admits that his work is influenced by the screenwriter Dan O'Bannon (who wrote *Alien*) as he analyses how conflict works:

The audience must understand the conflict by the end of the first act, in the second act the consequences of the conflict are developed to the point of no return and the third act leads to resolution. (Henderson, interview 2011)

Henderson is teaching his students through the narrative of the tripartite structure. He has a degree in mathematics and likes 'to reduce things to simple principles with wide ranging affects'. He admits that this structure is formulaic but a writer can then add complexity and subvert the rules. At the same time he states that 'you don't break the rules because that implies that you don't know what you are doing' (Henderson, interview 2011). He uses the metaphor of the architect to describe the role of the writer and sees the script advisor as 'the building inspector':

The script advisor has to be someone who can spot the weak points in the architecture of the text. Using the analogy of building I know that the roof is sagging but it's not the roof's problem it's because the piles underneath are wrong. A good script advisor will look at a script and say that the ending is wrong – it is the right ending but it has not been set up somewhere else. It is like referred pain. (Henderson, interview 2011)

Henderson uses the questioning process and believes this methodology allows the writer to articulate and discover their own vision for the writing. He states that writers need to go away and make their choices after reflection. This view is also supported by the British writer

Michele Wandor who argues that the dramatic writing process is not collaborative but results in later teamwork:

Writing takes a long time; it entails thinking, imagining, thinking, writing and thinking and re-writing. A great deal – if not all – of this takes place away from the rehearsal floor. All dramatists know this. (Wandor 2008:21)

In this methodology the playwright works alone to create a written text that is later embodied through a separate cooperative production process. Henderson recognises that the script advisor's questions are vital but the writer must work out their own answers. He advises students in a workshop not to answer straight away if they are not sure: 'if you don't know just say 'I don't know YET'. This gives them space to re-think and work out their choices. He suggests that they write down all feedback and type it up later. It is important to 'address' each question but the writer may then choose to ignore a question. He notes that people in workshops often say how they would write the play themselves. He tells his students, 'don't listen to *what* they are saying but *when* they are saying it in the text – that is probably *where* you need to do some work' (Henderson, interview 2011).

He believes that a workshop is for the writer so they can see and hear what they have written, and the script advisor should make sure that everything that happens is serving their needs. Again this suggests a somewhat binary position of writer as the 'mind' of the work and actor/performer as the 'body' of the work without any negotiation between these roles around authorship. In the past Henderson has focussed on the needs of the script but now he concentrates on the writer themselves because it is this 'individual' who shapes the text. He notes that the choice to present in front of an audience at the end of a workshop can dominate how the work unfolds. Like Rees, he believes that when there is no presentation there is much more space and freedom to experiment and take risks.

Henderson argues that it is most important for the script advisor to understand the writer's intentions and he does this again through the questioning process: 'you have to find out what the writer is trying to do and then help them to achieve that' (Henderson, interview 2011). Sometimes it is about finding the right 'trigger' for the writer. He provides an example where he was working with a student over many weeks. She was not able to finish the sentence 'My play is a story about ...' After trying this provocation several times he used 'My play is mediation about ...' She was finally able to articulate her vision. Henderson believes that the writer needs 'a cold outside eye that is not invested in the work to identify other possibilities' (Henderson, interview 2011).

In his own practice he has worked many times as writer and script advisor with the writer, script advisor and fellow writing lecturer Ken Duncum: 'In the development process we both ask similar questions of the writing but we value having another writer to represent the writer's voice' (Henderson, interview 2011). Henderson also often works without a script advisor and believes that he can provide his own inside/outside balance. He describes himself as a slow writer and does not do many drafts because he is constantly re-writing throughout the process. Using another construction metaphor he describes how the bricklayer needs to get the first layer right before building on top: 'you have to make sure you have the right number of weight bearing walls'. He argues that 'the building inspector' script advisor needs to know the most common mistakes that a person will make when building a house, for example:

- Is the conflict in front of us on stage? Is it presented rather than described?
- If the ending doesn't work – where is the problem in the set up?
- Does a subplot have a different theme? Is this another play?
- Does the play have one central theme? How can this occur?

(Henderson interview 2011)

The script advisor here looks for the most common weaknesses and applies the ‘master’s tools’ for re-construction. Indian Ink Theatre Company employ a similar methodology when they work with their dramaturge Murray Edmond. They describe the dramaturge as being ‘like the mechanic you call up when your car is making an odd noise’ (Rajan and Lewis 2005:13). The dramaturge comes in to ‘fix’ the engine and get it working by asking lots of questions. In his questioning process Henderson uses ‘What if?’ or ‘In that case – what about?’ to make suggestions. He notes that the most difficult work is when a writer will not listen and is not open to suggestions. In this situation the script advisor becomes redundant.

This methodology supports a vision of the script advisor as an expert gatekeeper who applies the rules of construction as the ‘building inspector’. In the following three chapters there are many examples where writers and other practitioners reject the role of the dramaturge after working in this way. Henderson says that the writer has to work out their own choices but his reference point remains the tripartite structure. The ‘building inspector’ metaphor implies that there are right and wrong answers and certain rules which must be applied before permission is granted. Here script development has become an industrial and educational practice. This methodology illustrates Lehmann’s description of ‘normative rules, the rules as prescriptions, and the prescriptions as laws’ (Lehmann 2006:160).

The dramaturge Steve Waters (2010) re-enforces this way of working when he describes the playwright as architect producing ‘blueprints for a work that they will need others to realise’ (Waters 2010:193). This is ‘Writer’s Theatre’ and he cites Ibsen’s notion of the play as a home for other people to live in: ‘for those who will finally realise and inhabit it’ (Waters 2010:193) In Henderson’s practice the script advisor supervises the construction of the house to check that the structure is safe. However, Waters recognises that there are many different ways to build a house and ‘the architect who designs a building that is complete in itself risks stifling the life and changes that human habitation will bring to the



project' (Waters 2010:196). He realises that interdependence is central to performance creation and that very rarely does the performance vision belong to one individual. The dramaturge can develop that collaborative vision and weave the multiple texts of performance. New Zealand theatre director Stephen Bain, who first trained as an architect, prefers the metaphor of dramaturge as town planner to that of architect:

The director is the architect dealing with the subcontractors but the dramaturge is more conceptual. Even as the foundations are going in they question how it is going to be heated in twenty years' time and what is the importance of a house today. (Bain, interview 2012)

Here the dramaturge questions 'normative prescriptions' and explores different kinds of architecture.

### **Mapping Developments**

Performance composition involves a process of assemblage and countless choices about how material will be shaped, edited and juxtaposed. In 'writer's theatre' or Lehmann's 'pure drama' there has been a proliferation of story development courses and a literature that uses narrative structure to serve a market within the creative and educational industries. Most performance development in New Zealand focuses on the written text with the writer positioned at the center of the creative process. At Auckland Theatre Company the Literary Manager Philippa Campbell observes that 'the New Zealand writing community can be very inflexible and quite distant from other theatre practitioners' (Campbell, interview 2011). Having been part of many New Zealand script development initiatives, Campbell observes that often scripts are 'well-structured but extremely dull, the work is unimaginative and unambitious' (Campbell, interview 2011). This suggests the employment of formulaic structures and little collaboration with other performance practitioners.

The theatre designer Dorita Hannah writes that it is important to recognise that architecture ‘mutely incorporates power systems into the built environment – defining, regulating, and limiting our daily practices’ (Hannah 2011:59). It is important to challenge the habitus and doxa of established practice to stimulate new ways of seeing and doing. The producer and dramaturge Catherine Fitzgerald observes that the script advisor as architect can be about ‘coming up with the answers and showing how clever you are. Sometimes they can forget to question what kind of house you want. And that you may need a kitchen’ (Fitzgerald, interview 2010). In this chapter I have described the architectural structures that have influenced the development of pure drama in New Zealand. It is important to acknowledge the political assumptions that are at work in this research. The interventions of the dramaturge can support the status quo or unsettle established practice. The concatenate structure provides a predictable and tested formula that simplifies assemblage to create a safe and familiar order. In the context of increasing neoliberalization, it has become a conservative and market-led tool that can guarantee box office receipts and academic creative writing tuitions. I now explore how dramaturgical practice can question this composition process to create new kinds of architecture.

## **Chapter 4. Feminist Practice: The Dramaturge as Midwife and Navigator**

We have built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the house. (Lorde 1984:123)

Here I investigate how feminist dramaturges have challenged the tools and created new architectures for performance construction. The metaphors of dramaturge as midwife and navigator are used to analyse the influence of feminist theory on practice when 'feminist theory can become the provocation to think otherwise, to become otherwise' (Grosz 2011:83). The writer Micheline Wandor (1987) has documented how gender affects our imperatives on the stage. Gender is the way we are socialised into masculinity and femininity, and a primary building block within our personality and psychology. However, Judith Butler argues that the complexity of gender 'requires an interdisciplinary and post disciplinary set of discourses in order to radicalise the notion of feminist critique' (Butler 1990: xiii). I explore how the analysis of gender and feminist theory can create new concepts and ask different questions. I propose that that feminist practice is not a historical movement but a dramaturgical methodology for new kinds of performance development.

The methodologies of six leading professional female dramaturges in New Zealand are examined to analyse how gender and feminism have informed their practice and the impact of their work on the field. The dramaturges are Kate Jason-Smith (producer, director and dramaturge for Hen's Teeth Theatre Company), Jean Betts (National Script Advisor for Playmarket and dramaturge), Fiona Samuel (writer and dramaturge), Catherine Fitzgerald (producer and dramaturge), Philippa Campbell (Literary Manager at Auckland Theatre Company), and Carol Brown (choreographer, performer, academic and dramaturge). They

have all made dramaturgical interventions that have influenced New Zealand performance. They have shaped company policy and developed their individual practice in theatre, film, dance and interdisciplinary collaborations. I question how their experience of gender and feminism has influenced their dramaturgical methodology and their assumptions about how the work is done.

Historians have described different waves of feminism. First-wave feminism was feminist activity during the 19th and early 20th century that focussed on gender equality and suffrage. In 1893 New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote in parliamentary elections. Second-wave feminism began in the '60s and attempted to establish a women-centred agenda for development. In this context I review the ideas and literature which influenced the development of feminist performance in the seventies and eighties. Deborah Shepard (2009) writes that feminism in New Zealand has undergone a series of transmutations and phases of development. The '70s was a pro-active period creating a commonality among women and crucial connections. In the '80s women became established in the academy, essentialist notions of women were deconstructed, and identity politics focussed on differences among women. In the '90s she describes a state of 'flux' that was characterised by debate on diversity and self-reflexivity.

I suggest that second-wave feminism has most influenced representation, re-presentation, the collaborative process and ownership in New Zealand performance development. I document how these dramaturges have attempted to challenge the status quo through their re-presentations of female experience and how they have created more opportunities for women in performance. I examine how Kate Jason-Smith created the feminist cabaret company Hen's Teeth, and compare their collaborative process with the work of Monstrous Regiment Theatre Company in Britain. The politics of ownership are explored through the work of Jean Betts at Playmarket and in her play *The Collective*. This is

a feminist interpretation of the relationships between Bertolt Brecht and his female dramaturges.

Rebecca Walker (1992) coined the term third-wave feminism to embrace cultural and sexual diversity and to reject the essentialism of gender binary. This analysis is influenced by postmodernism, post-structuralism, and post-colonial theory. I examine the recent emergence of post-feminism as the politicised women's movement of the '60-'80's has given way to a more diffuse agenda. For Irigaray, 'the sexuete subject' is constructed through spatial, material and textual politics, and politics is a positive ethical and political subjectivity for both men and women. Sexuate difference recognises that there is more than one sex and that negations of sexual difference are the core base for sexuete futures.

The practice of Carol Brown has been most influenced by post-feminism through her training, international interdisciplinary collaborations and practice led-research. Brown's work engages with the writings of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, and Elizabeth Grosz among others. In Chapter Seven I analyse her collaboration with the dramaturge, but here I am interested in how feminisms shape her dramaturgical composition. Much has changed in the last 30 years but Jason-Smith (2003), Graham (2005) and McAllister (2010) continue to document the gender imbalance in New Zealand performance. It is important to assess the impact of feminist practice and what may be possible in the future.

### **Second-wave feminism**

New Zealand theatre in the '70s was influenced by the new wave of feminism that was challenging the status quo around the world. Publications such as the 1949 book *The Second Sex* (1989) by Simone de Beauvoir, *The Female Eunuch* (1970) by Germaine Greer, and

*Sexual Politics* (1970) by Kate Millet were encouraging women to find their own voices and challenge patriarchy. Adrienne Rich (1979) argued that feminism must recognise the inadequacy and distortion of male-created ideologies and proceed to think and act out of that recognition. Elaine Aston (1995) writes that in this period feminist practitioners began to question representations of the past and discover how they had been hidden from history. The idea that ‘the personal is political’ was central to feminist theory and practice. In New Zealand, the socialist feminist writer Renee explored women’s resistance to injustice through revues such as *Asking for It* (1983), about domestic violence and rape, and *Groundwork* (1985), which addressed divisions between Māori and Pākehā women during protests against the 1981 Springbok tour (Croft 2001:213). Helene Keyssar (1984) argued that feminist theatre might explore women’s everyday world and experience, challenging stereotyped gender roles, affirming women’s strength, challenging women to use their own power better, and creating plays where women transform their situation to reach a new understanding in their lives. Croft (2001) notes that Renee’s best known-work, the 1985–1991 trilogy of *Wednesday to Come*, *Pass it On*, and *Jeanie Once*, maps the lives and battles of working class women across four generations of one family. In Keyssar’s view feminist theatre is one of ‘the most tenacious and resonant forms of discourse about sexual politics’ (Keyssar 1984:167).

In Britain Susan Bassnett (1989b) called the period of the mid-’70s the ‘organisational phase’ for women’s theatre. Bassnett raises some of the issues that were central to the development of a ‘women’s theatre’ at that time: the need for cooperative company structures that did not place technical work in a lower category, the question of whether a director was necessary in a cooperative culture and if so, what the role of a woman with an alternative notion of power hierarchies might be, the marginalisation of women from positions of management, and childcare problems faced by women. Throughout this period the British

socialist feminist theatre company Monstrous Regiment aimed to explore feminist culture, resurrect women's hidden history, give women opportunities for work, put real women on the stage and attempt a theory and practice of collectivity (Hanna 1991:ixx). This was a prototype model for a feminist production process that challenged content, form and process. The early work of Monstrous Regiment aimed to reflect the fragmented 'stop start' experience of women in their cabaret shows *Floorshow* (1977/78) and *Time Gentlemen Please* (1978). Company member Gillian Hanna (1978) argued that the combination of Stanislavsky's method and Brecht's Epic style enabled an original examination of male-female relationships. The company wanted to challenge the traditional and sexist forms which portrayed women as objects. They explored the role of the female performer and their relationship with the audience. The cabaret placed women centre stage and explored female humour – often at the expense of men. Music was used in a then experimental fashion to comment on the action and draw parallels. The critic Catherine Itzin (1980) wrote that the company had to 'dare not to be nice' in order to crack the form of cabaret and inject a different sort of content.

At the same time in 1975, New Zealand Kate Jason-Smith produced *The Carefree Show* cabaret at Bats Theatre in Wellington. Encouraged by Jean Betts, Jason-Smith had 'gathered a bunch of feminists' and decided that their first work would be 'about the taboo subject of menstruation' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). Here the personal became political when second wave feminists represented female experience. Jason-Smith argues that her role was 'to get everything together', which included the management of content and production. As producer she managed the employment contracts and funding but as dramaturge she influenced the choice of material and composition process. She contracted Dianne Cadwallander to write a series of sketches that aimed to 'break down the walls around speaking about women's experiences and do so in an entertaining way so that people would

listen' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). The second-wave feminist theorist Nancy Harstock (1979) argued that a feminist focus on everyday life and experience would transform social relations, both in consciousness and in reality, because of its close connection to needs. Here twenty female actors performed a series of humorous sketches about their experience and their audiences recognised themselves within the stories.

At the end of 1978 the QE11 Arts Council gave Jason-Smith a grant for comedy workshops in New Zealand. The idea for an all-women's comedy company came from a season of *Women Comedians at The Gap*, which Jason-Smith had seen in Sydney. She wanted to increase female representation and provide work for female practitioners and performances for female audiences:

Almost every research I know that has been done on theatre audiences, show that the majority of the audience are middle aged, middle class women. And we thought that's it. That's who we want. (Jason-Smith, interview 2010)

Stand-up comedy was dominated by men and took place in pubs; Jason-Smith wanted to create a different form and a different audience.

### **The collaborative process**

Collaborative structures, cooperatives, and communal decision making was the radical model of the time in the sixties and seventies. For many feminists a vertical 'top down' hierarchy of leadership was characteristic of the patriarchal organisation of power. The British director Clare Venables argued that patriarchal structures are organised in pyramidal forms: 'it is about individuals pushing boundaries forward – the drive is always from one person' (Venables in Graham 1992:34). Micheline Wandor (1981) articulated the importance of clearly articulated power relations in the collaborations between theatre companies and writers:



Either, the writer was servicing the company, and had to refer always to them, or the company was servicing the writer's script. These would be the base lines, I felt, and it seemed to me that if you knew where you started from, then that actually opened up the way to real collaboration, based on a clear understanding of who had final control over the script. (Wandor 1981:188)

This statement clarifies the lines of convergence to honour the collaborative process. It was very important to establish who would make the final decisions and credit all contributions. Jason-Smith describes how the content of the work at Hen's Teeth was completely influenced by feminism but the group did not operate through collective decision making: 'I ran the show because my experience had shown that a cooperative theatre piece needed (a) lots of time and (b) people who had similar experience and abilities' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). This comment implies that the company had to work very quickly in a tight production schedule and that group decisions were not cohesive without her leadership. Jason-Smith 'considered everyone's views' but ultimately made the final decisions:

I often said that Hens' Teeth was a benevolent dictatorship, with me as the dictator. I answered only to the members of Hens' Teeth – this was quite practical, because unless the majority of the A-list agreed with something, then it wouldn't happen. Before making an important decision, like whether to do a season, I would always check with these people: Lorae Parry, Lee Hatherly, Kate Harcourt, Sue Dunlop, Prue Langbein, Rose Beauchamp, Helen Moulder, Carmel McGlone, Bub Bridger, Cathy Sheat, Pinky Agnew (pretty much in order of importance). I needed at least six of them to mount a show, but could replace two with B-list if needed. After each show I sent out detailed financial reports to all who were in the show. We were always paid on a cooperative split – depending on the length of your performance in the show (Jason Smith, interview 2010)

Jason-Smith retained a top-down management structure as the producer and dramaturge for Hen's Teeth. As midwife she facilitated a collective process but she also maintained control throughout the birth. Monstrous Regiment attempted to work through a

collaborative decision making process but were aware of the hidden hierarchy that can lie beneath the surface of a group: 'we were always conscious of it and struggled and argued and discussed the question endlessly' (Hanna 1991:xxi). They maintained a radical collective structure until The British Arts Council forced the introduction of an Artistic Director in the late '80s. The collective process was central to their socialist feminist principals but the new management structure reflected 'the material changes in the structure of the company and the world in which it works' (Hanna 1991:xiv). In New Zealand, Jason-Smith acknowledged these influences from the very beginning. As the producer and dramaturge she provided leadership but she also facilitated a cooperative spirit.

The collective feminist process was perhaps most developed in New Zealand through the work of the organisation Magdalena Aotearoa. Introduced during 1997 by Sally Rodwell and Madeline McNamara, Magdalena is an international network for female performance practitioners with local organisations in each country. It was first set up by Jill Greenhalgh in Britain during 1986 and has worked for greater female representation through artistic development, training possibilities, and alternative economic structures. One of the projects aims was to articulate:

The problem of whether there might indeed be some specifically female form of theatre that has never come into existence, but which might have latently been there through all the centuries of patriarchal domination. (Bassnett 1989b:226)

In New Zealand, a small group of women, based mainly in Wellington, have worked for 13 years organising networks, workshops, newsletters, festivals, and performance events to facilitate female and feminist performance practice. There is no formal hierarchy within the organisation, which is led by a trust of six core members who encourage both individual and collaborative projects. If Playmarket is unofficially and anecdotally considered to be the dramaturge to New Zealand's (mainly male) playwrights, then Magdalena might be

considered to be the dramaturge for female performance practice. However, most of Magdalena's work is located outside the mainstream and has thus been considered 'marginal' and given little funding support. For this reason female theatre practitioners, who chose not to identify as 'women', often chose not to join Magdalena.

Hen's Teeth and Monstrous Regiment both used a cabaret format and music to 'break up the work and relax the audience' and the humour provided 'the thin edge of the wedge' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). It challenged the idea that feminists had no sense of humour and made the work less threatening and more accessible. Unlike Monstrous Regiment, Jason-Smith argued that it was important to be nice: 'we wanted to seduce the audience into agreement. Abusing people seldom makes them see your point' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). It is interesting that 'not being nice' is assumed to be abuse and that the language of seduction is used to describe the relationship with the audience. She describes how she once asked a male director why there were not many interesting roles for women in New Zealand theatre. He replied that it was because only men did interesting things. These positions demonstrate the degree of sexism that dominated the New Zealand theatre industry in the '70s and provides a context for the development of *The Carefree Show*.

Monstrous Regiment aimed to develop the traditional touring circuit in Britain to find a new working class female audience. They had a radical agenda that was shaped by socialism as much as feminism. The name Hen's Teeth was chosen because 'women comedians were as scarce as hen's teeth' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). Their work aimed to prove that women could be funny and develop their 'comedy voice'. Jason-Smith notes that the women agreed not to degrade men (as men's comedy often did to women) but 'to comment on their own lives and experiences and those of other women'. This was a second-wave feminist agenda which represented female experience and placed women centre stage. Kaplan (1981) has described the way in which the sign 'woman' is constructed by and for the

male gaze. Hen's Teeth were creating representations of 'woman' constructed by and for the female gaze. Jason-Smith (2009) argues that the work was subversive because political messages were communicated through comedy. In laughter there is recognition that challenges gendered power relationships. She argues that comedy comes from fear, and acts as a form of release:

One of the most potent functions of laughter is the release of fear. By laughing at things we are afraid of, which can generally be grouped under the headings of Sex, Death and Difference, we diminish their power over us and release anxiety. Hen's Teeth provides a forum for this transaction, addressing issues which have particular relevance to the lives of women, and disarming terror. (Jason-Smith 2009:17)

They used humour to articulate and recognise female experience but the laughter also challenged the audience's conception of gender relations. The company explored Māori Pākehā relations, sexuality, age, gender, housewives, women's roles in the workforce, class, and AIDS.

Hen's Teeth ran for 13 years, till 2003, with more than one hundred actors and a very diverse group of women. Jason-Smith remained producer and dramaturge throughout this period, influencing the choice of material, the running order for the sketches, and who would be involved. Other women directed individual sketches, for example, Jean Betts worked with Lorae Parry and Carmel McGlone on the two new-age male characters of Digger and Nudger. Throughout the production period Lee Hatherly was the compere and her job was to warm-up the audience and to introduce the different sketches. Jason-Smith remembers two occasions when the work of the company was 'blocked'. Circa Theatre believed that 'no-one would go to see the work' and New Zealand TV 'would not agree to a televised performance' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010). In Britain the comedians French and Saunders together with Victoria Wood dominated British television throughout the '80s and '90s with very similar material.

Without access to internal communiqués it is impossible to know why the work was not supported in New Zealand but the TV executives obviously thought that it would not work. When *Hen's Teeth* finally did play Circa 'there was a queue for the tickets right down the street' (Jason-Smith, interview 2010).

Throughout the '70s and '80s *Hen's Teeth* provided a theatre of transformation and political subversion that developed the skills of female performers to offer employment opportunities and alternative representations of female experience. As a feminist dramaturge, Jason-Smith prioritised female stories and experience, challenged the idea of male dominance through comedy, and supported female practitioners through child-care allowances. It could be argued that Jason-Smith operated as a midwife to feminist theatre in New Zealand, creating conditions for the birthing process. As a dramaturge she made it possible for many female performers to find their individual and collective voice. She supported their development and provided clear directions and guidelines. However, the metaphor becomes limiting because Jason-Smith claimed a rightful ownership of the baby.

### **Representation and re-presentations**

Despite these developments theatre remained engendered along traditional lines and divisions demarcated by patriarchy. Studies from Wandor (1987), Hague (1992), Thomas (1992), Stephenson and Langridge (1997) have shown that women played a predominantly servicing role within a male-dominated industry. Wandor argues that is reflected both in the un-equal distribution of power and the under representation of women in theatre content. In the early seventies most of the work in New Zealand had been written, directed and produced by men and there was a strong resistance to female writing. As the satirical voice of Clean says in *Foreskins Lament*, 'It's a real shame that you couldn't bring your ladies – or that we had to. Joke, joke.' (McGee 1981:56). Helen White (1985) writes how Moira, the only significant

female character in the play, is a stereotypical ‘talking-back talking-board’ feminist. She is dismissed by Clean as ‘edjimated fluff’ (McGee 1981:63). Jock Phillips (1987) discusses how the game of rugby contained the masculine spirit and the pioneer virtues that defined the Pākehā male stereotype. In Chapter Two I demonstrated how *Foreskin’s Lament* exposed a misogynist culture of rugby and the male-dominated New Zealand of the ’70s. The dramaturge and playwright Jean Betts reiterates the trivialisation of women as fluff when she described the plays at that time as having ‘no women in them or the women were bits of fluff’ (2008:185). In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* fluff is defined as ‘soft, light, feathery material’ (Allen 1990:453).

In 1985 Helen White wrote an essay titled ‘Paths for a flightless bird: Roles for women on the New Zealand stage since 1950’. White documents the lack of female roles throughout the ’60s and ’70s, but she also identifies key women-centred texts that paved the way for future development. She uses a quote from Renee’s play *Setting the Table* to show how some women ‘got the table ready’ for future female practitioners. White cites Ngaio Marsh (in Christchurch) and Nola Millar (in Wellington) as being good early role models for women working in theatre, and there was also Maria Dronke and Sunny Amey. However, Sue Dunlop (2002) has also written a series of biographies that document the important early work of Rosemary Rees, Kioire King, Elizabeth Richmond Blake, Amy Kane, Violet Targuse, Isobel Andrews, Kathleen Ross, Mary Scott, Maria Dronke, and Roseanne Rutherford. White argues that until the mid-’70s the only real female leading role was that of Katherine Mansfield in *The Two Tigers*, written by Brian McNeill in 1973. She observes that Theatre Action most empowered female actors to experiment with gender in the ’70s and their piece *Circuit* (1975) explored sexual roles and expectations.

In the ’80s women’s theatre began to gain momentum in New Zealand, with examples including *The Stationary Sixth Form Trip* (1980) by Rachel McAlpine, *Between*

*Night and Morning* (1980) by Frances Edmond, *Outside In* (1982) by Hilary Beaton, *Objection Overruled* (1982) by Carolyn Burns, *Strip* (1982) by Lorae Parry, *Living In* (1982) by Susan Battye, *Revenge of the Amazons* by Jean Betts (1983), and eight plays from Renee between 1982 and 1987. These female writers challenged representations of the past, explored female experience, and questioned gender roles to prioritise female stories and characters. They did not all identify themselves as feminists but they were immediately branded in this way by the dominantly male critics. The Playmarket National Playwright Conferences supported feminist representations with work from Rachel McAlpine (1980), Hilary Beaton (1982), Caroline Barnes (1982), Renee (1984), Barbara Anderson (1984), Raewyn Gwilliam (1986), Bernadette Hall (1988), and female dramaturges such as Lisa Warrington, and Philippa Campbell. In 1978 Michael Neill claimed that ‘women’s theatre, drawing its energies from the born-again fervour of radical feminism, is probably the most vital force in New Zealand today’ (White 1985:105). However, this feminist challenge to the male-dominated theatre industry also resulted in tension and confrontation. One example occurred when a group of six women assaulted university lecturer Mervyn Thompson and made accusations of rape.

In 1984 the Wellington Actors Equity Caucus identified the predominance of men in New Zealand theatre, the stereotyped roles for women and the poor role models for young girls. Led by the dramaturges Philippa Campbell and Fiona Samuel they made a submission to ‘The Royal Commission in the Broadcasting Act and Related Telecommunications’ about the inequitable representation of women in the dramatic media. They argued that the commission:

Must re-evaluate the representation of women in our media, reflecting the diverse reality that exists, and no longer giving credence to out-dated stereotypes and myths

about women. The women of New Zealand are waiting to see their lives portrayed with insight. (Wellington Actors Equity Caucus 1984, cited in Jason-Smith 2003)

This submission was a feminist intervention that directly challenged the politics of representation in New Zealand. Kate Jason-Smith believes that this action resulted in the commissioning of the first female TV drama *Marching Girls* by Fiona Samuel (Jason-Smith, interview 2010).

In *Ophelia thinks Harder* (1994) and *The Collective* (2005) Jean Betts critiqued female representation in theatre but at the same time she was criticised by radical feminists for directing men's plays. She wrote *Ophelia Thinks Harder* to create more roles for women and to challenge the idea that women or 'feminists' have no sense of humour (Betts, interview 2009b). This accusation had enormous influence on the form and content of New Zealand feminist performance, as has already been demonstrated in the work of Hen's Teeth. The play was commissioned in 1993 by a Women's Festival in Wellington that celebrated the centenary of women's suffrage in New Zealand. The group formed to produce the festival was WOPPA (women's professional playwrights association) and included work from Vivienne Plumb, Rose Beauchamp, Fiona Samuel, Lorae Parry, and Cathy Downes. In the same year they also formed The Woman's Play Press, which published their plays; they are still being performed. Betts chose to write *Ophelia Thinks Harder* without a dramaturge, arguing that 'it was written in the old fashioned way, entirely on my own' (Betts, interview 2009b). She had been thinking about the project for several years and it took about 8 weeks to write the play with six drafts (including a post-production draft):

I am great believer in a writer developing their own outside eye. Until premiere I use the outside eye I keep in my own head; then the first audiences take on that role and then I write the final draft. The only other 'final draft' I do is for publication – I put some cuts back in for the reader, and to give potential directors more choices if they want to cut. (Betts, email 2009c)



Betts always directs the first production of her plays and, like Kate Jason-Smith, retains control of the collaboration and chooses to develop the work through her individual performance vision. The Women's Festival created a strong momentum but New Zealand was not sure about female playwrights: 'the criticism that we received was unbelievable, the work was seen as a threat' (Betts, interview 2009b).

Fiona Samuel is another dramaturge who has worked as an actor, director and writer. Her first play, *Blonde Bombshell*, was written for radio in 1983 and she has most recently directed her television play *Bliss* about the life of Katherine Mansfield. She does not define herself as a dramaturge but has been employed in the role for several projects including work for Playmarket with a group of Auckland Playwrights in 2008. She describes the dramaturge as 'writers advocate' in a development process where the writer can be overwhelmed with feedback. She argues that the job is:

To ensure that the writer gets the best possible version of the play they want to write. You know when you have arrived at the form which satisfies you when you can express what you want to express. (Samuel, interview 2010).

Like Betts, she does not choose to work with a dramaturge on her own writing but 'talks to other writers' about her work. She does not like 'someone solving my problems and telling me what to do' but this is not how she describes her own methodology as a dramaturge. She works through questions and attempts to 'enable the writer to make their own discoveries' (Samuel, interview 2010). It would seem that as writers, Betts and Samuel have decided not to work with a dramaturge because they do not want the expert master dramaturge imposing their vision on the work. Samuel does not think about being a feminist as she is working but acknowledges that her gender and experience always frame her choices and the stories that she wants to tell. She is interested in both women and men but writes the stories that she

would want to see (Samuel, interview 2010). In 1988 she spoke about her motivation for writing *Marching Girls* and the creation of new roles for female actresses:

If I saw ‘giggle’ once more as a script direction, or had to roll around on a bed again, or lick my lips suggestively, I felt I was going to be sick. I felt that I deserved better than that and that the other women of my generation did too, and it’s been a source of happiness to me to make their lives better. (Samuel, cited in Hardy 1988:36)

Samuel has written fully rounded female characters located at the centre of the drama that represent female experience and create meaningful roles for female performers. Her most recent work, *Ghost Train*, provides a contemporary insight into the politics of gender representation. This play was inspired by the true New Zealand story of Louise Nicholas who was raped by three policemen. Samuel followed the story throughout the court case and recognised that what Nicholas most needed was that her experience be recognised and that she be given an apology. In her play the rape victim arrives at the house of one of the policemen as they are having a dinner party with their wives. Samuel was most interested in the wives of the policeman and how they had managed to live through deception, lies and ugly behaviour. The central protagonist in *Ghost Train* is the ‘plump policeman’s wife’ who is trying to make sense of what has happened.

Samuel describes how she had often played the ‘plump wife’ as an actor and that this character is never the central protagonist in drama. She argues that ‘just because you are average does not mean that you do not have a crisis or cannot be the main character’ (Samuel, interview 2010). Samuel wants these ‘average’ women to come to the theatre and see themselves as someone with a genuine moral crisis and not ‘that stupid woman’. At the time of the interview (2010) Samuel could not get any established theatre company to produce the play and wanted to stage an independent production. She describes the irony of this situation when women are the main theatre subscribers but theatres remain run by men: ‘these men are

trying to read and second-guess those women but they often underestimate and patronise them' (Samuel, interview 2010). She believes that they look at *Ghost Train* and think that women will not buy the tickets: 'they think it is confronting and harsh and will make them think about their marriages and their husbands will not want to come' (Samuel, interview 2010). The *Ghost Train* example reveals how women's stories are often not chosen by the dominantly male gatekeepers who shape the programming of theatre. It is ironic then that theatre audiences are dominated by middle-class middle-aged women who buy the tickets (The Policy Studies Institute 1991). Samuel believes these women are interested in provocative, interesting, and engaging material. Female writers often receive development funding but then hit a glass ceiling when it comes to production. Influenced by second-wave feminism Samuel continues to challenge gender representation in New Zealand theatre.

The practice of the dramaturge requires an ability to work 'in the moment' and walk beside a production process. The American dramaturge Toni Haring-Smith (1997), who writes on gender and the methodology of the dramaturge, describes the need for a 'mind meld' with the director so that the dramaturge can see how the director sees. In this way she can influence the production in a constructive and non-competitive manner. Describing collaborative praxes, the dance philosopher Anna Pakes (2009) writes that 'a creative sensitivity to circumstances as they present themselves' is required. This form of wisdom she calls *phronesis*:

A kind of attunement to the particularities of situations and experiences, requiring subjective involvement rather than objective attachment; and it has an irreducibly personal dimension in its dependence upon; and the fact that it folds back into, subjective and intersubjective experience. (Pakes 2009:10–22)

The choreographer Carol Brown describes the attunement between practitioners as 'being with rather than doing to, allowing something to happen, allowing it to be' (Brown 2012:8).

Haring-Smith notes how this methodology has been seen by psychologists as a ‘feminine’ way of working through empathy or connected knowing. Nell Noddings (1984) calls it ‘engrossment’ and recognises that this is a vital strategy in changing people’s minds. Fiona Samuel describes the process of ‘reading’ a playwright during development as ‘an emotional and intuitive process’ (Samuel, interview 2010). She argues that it is possible to know when they are not happy with the work ‘from the sound of their voice and body language’. This emotional intelligence is often encouraged in girls as they are socialised to ‘step inside someone else’s shoes’ and imagine their feelings. This can mean that girls are ‘trained’ for a deep listening process. Cris Bowler from *Monstrous Regiment* observes that:

Women tend to identify with other points of view; they put themselves in other people’s positions and try to find the subtext. They listen to what is underneath – that is the nature of female relations. (Bowler, in Graham 1992:19)

These listening skills and the ability to ‘read between the lines’ are very important for the practice of the dramaturge. Luise Eichenbaum and Susie Orbach (1983) describe this female social role as developing ‘emotional antennae’. The producer and dramaturge Catherine Fitzgerald acknowledges the importance of emotional intelligence when describing her interventions and realises that the dramaturge cannot know the full impact of their feedback. She describes ‘the secret tools’ of empathy and intuition which are based on experience, feelings and alternative choices. Fitzgerald recognises the process using the metaphor of flight:

I take people to the edge and see if they can fly. Some will only flutter. There are others that you know can fly but you have to give them the confidence. (Fitzgerald, interview 2009)

Haring-Smith argues for this way of working to be balanced against a more ‘masculine’ distanced critique and outside perspective or separated knowing. She writes that

women can make better ‘androgynous dramaturgs’ because they have already learned to ‘act like a man’ in order to be successful in a patriarchal culture. Men are not encouraged ‘to act like a woman’ and can often think that their work is diminished through collaboration. Haring-Smith argues that the dramaturge needs both these complementary modes of thought within their practice. My research supports her feminist argument that the dramaturge can be a ‘consummate collaborator’ at the centre of this communication web. Haring-Smith believes that the very employment of a dramaturge values collaboration within the production process.

### **The dramaturge as midwife**

The dramaturge / midwife guides the text in the journey from ‘inside’ to ‘outside’, through the different development transitions and stages of labour. (Graham 2009:210)

The process of production and the politics of ‘birthing’ are very important for the feminist dramaturge when female practice has often been under represented and made invisible. As the daughter of a doctor, the dramaturge and producer Catherine Fitzgerald knows the importance of a good diagnosis and listening. At the age of 11 she answered the telephone when no-one else was at home and provided strategies for a woman who was distressed in labour. At this point she realised that she could be steady and supportive offering good advice in a heightened situation. She acknowledges the metaphor of midwife to describe the role of dramaturge but also observes that very occasionally there is the need for an obstetrician: ‘when you get to the heart of the drama there may be an emotional crisis which requires further support’ (Fitzgerald, interview 2010).

Fitzgerald works through the questioning process offering multiple possibilities and enabling the group to work well together:

I know where I want to go. I try to take the writer there through questions. However it has to be their journey and their discovery. They may choose to go somewhere else which is much more interesting. That is the joy of the creative process. (Fitzgerald, interview 2010)

She stresses the importance of building trust and the value of good listening skills. She is not interested in defining people's potential in terms of their gender, race, physical and mental abilities but states that:

Feminism for me is about realising and recognising the potential of women to contribute to the wealth of life and society, and not merely in material terms. It is about valuing and validating different points of view. Art and entertainment is a way that our feelings and ideas about ourselves and the world we live in can be both challenged and affirmed. (Fitzgerald, interview 2010)

The way that she works as a dramaturge is directly influenced by her experience as a producer:

As a producer, I try and find the core premise of a project, and therein the intrinsic values of it and hold true to it in every aspect of the production. If I know what the play or film could deliver to an audience, from first impact to exploring it into its depths, then I can strive to realise that potential. What I try and do for the writer as a dramaturg is to analyse the strengths of the text and the writer from a craft point of view, search for the most original elements and potential in the text and the talent – and then build on them. As a producer I try and do that for the whole production. (Fitzgerald, interview 2010)

She recognises a sign of success at the moment when the dramaturge and producer become not needed and invisible within the production process:

I would like to think that all the dramaturgy I have done had some impact. The less the writer credits it, perhaps the more effective it has been! The point of dramaturgy is to energise the writer to go deeper, wider and higher in their creativity. It is not to overwrite or co-write – that is a different job. So if I can, having analysed the problem

in a way that I can provide the right question, then the least the writer will come up with is my solution to the problem but at best will use their own imaginative strengths to find a new route into a new place for the writing. (Fitzgerald, interview 2010)

Here Fitzgerald demonstrates how the right question can be a catalyst for change. Her emphasis on humility and emotional intelligence reflect the work of the midwife and the mind meld described by Haring-Smith. However, this approach can also invisibilise the contribution of the dramaturge. At the start of this research I believed that the midwife was the most appropriate analogy for the methodology of the dramaturge but in writing this thesis I have recognised the limitations of this metaphor. As my research has developed I have recognised that the dramaturge also influences the shape and form of ‘the baby’ and it is important that these contributions are credited. The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas have created employment guidelines that mediate the dramaturge/employer contracts to negotiate the dramaturge’s credit and compensation for their contribution to the production process:

The dramaturgs contribution to story, structure, or staging, along with the dramaturge’s research understanding of the world of the play, can leave an indelible creative imprint on the script, production, creative team and cast. (The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas 2012:4)

In New Zealand in 2005, Jean Betts wrote *The Collective*, after reading John Fuegi’s *Brecht & Co. – Sex, politics and the making of the modern drama*, which exposed how Brecht had not credited his mainly female dramaturges. In Chapter One I argued that Brecht functioned as the ‘chief dramaturge’, mediating dramaturgical contributions for assemblage. Betts was horrified by Fuegi’s research and the exploitation by Brecht. As a socialist feminist she was deeply affected by Brecht’s betrayal of Marxist principles and failure to acknowledge the contributions of his female dramaturges in the collaborative process. She had worked on a lot of Brecht’s plays and always questioned the flow of the writing. Reading Fuegi she suddenly

realised that ‘the writing was fractured because several people had written it’ (Betts, interview 2009b). She read Fuegi’s book just after she had finished her first devising theatre project in Taupo where the director had taken all the credit for the written text. *The Collective* was written ‘to expose the situation of women who have frequently found themselves used in this way’ (Betts, interview 2009b). Fuegi and Betts reclaimed Brecht’s female dramaturges and demonstrated how their work had been denied.

After writing *The Collective* Jean Betts became very dismissive of the role of the dramaturge and described them as the ‘housewife of theatre’ who does all the jobs that no-one else wants to do and receives no credit (Betts, interview 2009b). As Script Advisor for Playmarket she has written a pamphlet that attempts to protect the rights of co-writers, devisers and co-creators who work together in collaborative devising projects. She argues that ‘anyone who contributes to the final script of a theatrical production is a playwright’ (Betts 2009a:1). This means that if the dramaturge contributes writing to the project they would be credited as a playwright on the project and would be eligible for royalty payments. The team have to negotiate a formal agreement about project expectations and different roles. The dramaturge is normally employed to facilitate the creative process and should be properly credited for this role. Betts proposes two agreements between participants in a group devised project. The first agreement is made before the work takes place and sets out the project so far, the intended process, credits, royalties and a commitment to the second agreement. All participants sign this agreement and Playmarket will assist and advise in the event of any dispute. The second agreement takes place at the end of the project and reviews the original intentions with an account of what actually happened to clarify and agree any changes in personnel, credits and royalties. Betts argues that entering into this kind of agreement makes it much easier to identify everyone’s individual contribution and to ensure that they are all treated fairly.



The issues of ownership, collective practice, and crediting have been very important for feminist practice in New Zealand. The dramaturge and producer Catherine Fitzgerald describes her methodology as ‘leaving no shadow on the work’ so that she has a private knowledge of having made a difference: ‘the work itself is the prize’ (Fitzgerald, interview 2009). However Betts argues that it ‘doesn’t matter if they have left a shadow or not, if they have been in there then their role should be acknowledged’ (Betts, interview 2009b). Haring-Smith questions why many women are drawn to the dramaturgical role when it is so badly paid and poorly credited. She observes that often the role of dramaturge allows women access to a male-dominated creative process and enables theatres to tick the box of female representation (Haring-Smith 1997:143). It also enables a woman with other commitments to be part of a creative process without being present for every moment of a long rehearsal process. It is clear from my research that many women are deeply committed to the collaborative process. In *Group-devised Work* Betts demonstrates how credited collective collaboration should acknowledge a shared intellectual ownership that does not diminish the individual contributors. The metaphor of dramaturge as midwife is limiting because it does not acknowledge the dramaturge’s contributions to the shape and form of the project. It also operates as an essentialist metaphor when only associated with the female body.

It is ironic that, despite their invisibility from the production credits, the female dramaturges who worked with Brecht have contributed to a feminist methodology for performance development. Keyssar (1996) observes how from the early ’70s feminist writers often connected socialist and feminist politics through a Brechtian style of dramaturgy. Elin Diamond (1988) argued that feminist theory can re-radicalise the theories of Brecht to recognise the signs of gender in theatre. She uses texts from Caryl Churchill, Franca Rame, and Holly Hughes to demonstrate how gender can become ‘alienated’ and revealed through gesture, words and ideas. Reinelt observes that for feminists ‘Brechtian techniques offer a

way to examine the material conditions of gender behaviour and their interaction with other socio-political factors such as class' (Reinelt 1996:36). *The Collective* uses these techniques to deconstruct the politics of gender and representation in the composition process. As a socialist feminist Jean Betts has re-presented female experience and challenged the politics of authorship through collective ownership.

### **The dramaturge as navigator**

Toril Moi (1985) argued that Anglo-American feminist criticisms foreground political theory but do not generate a new methodology or analytical procedure. Moi writes that this analysis stays inside male-centred humanism, placing the focus on female experience in a binary opposition that replaces male values with female. Throughout the '70s and '80s a group of French feminists developed a theoretical debate about sexual difference and feminist ways of knowing. *Écriture féminine* influenced feminist art and theory to place women at the centre of life and power to challenge logocentric ideology. These women included the writer and cultural theorist Hélène Cixous, the philosopher Luce Irigaray, and the psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. Through a number of key texts, Irigaray (2000) has critiqued the singularity of the masculinist subject and created a theory of sexual difference that is centred on sexuate subjectivity. Carol Brown writes:

I have returned to Irigaray's writings many times because I find her texts a way of knowing that acknowledges desire, jouissance and the 'mechanics of fluids' from a sexual position that is without subjecting sexual difference to something mechanistic, singular or reductive. These writings suggest openings, pluralities, the multitudinous potentialities of bodies, they are unbound texts. They give opportunity for opening together. They resist singularities, end point. (Brown, 2012a)

Irigaray's writings offer rhizome connections to feminist practitioners who want to challenge the politics of the gendered body in space. Cixous creates an imaginary utopia for the female

writer with her feminist theatrical manifesto '*Aller a la mer*' ('Going to the sea'). She argues that theatre requires 'one woman who stays beyond the bounds of prohibition, experiencing herself as many, the totality of those she has been or wants to be' (Cixous 1984:546). Transformation is at the centre of this postmodern vision of feminist theatre. Her analysis of creativity and the 'call to write' challenges the core of patriarchy and logocentric subjectivity providing permission for female practitioners to experiment:

Let yourself go! Let go of everything! Lose everything! Take to the air. Take to the open sea. Take to letters ... dare what you don't dare. (Cixous 1991:40)

Jean Betts describes how the Women's International Festival in 1993 gave her 'permission' to experiment' and that 'we all need permission however much we think we don't' (Betts, interview 2009b). Cixous challenged women to write themselves out of the world men constructed for women and experiment with the female form (Tong 2008:276). In the early '90s these ideas had enormous influence over my own practice when I received my first commission and decided to abandon a lecturing post to concentrate on performance writing. Cixous describes 'jouissance' as the break, the rapture that comes from the expression of the female voice and creativity. However, some female practitioners have responded negatively to the notion of a 'female form'. They do not want to be marginalised by an essentialist vision and feel that if they choose to work in traditional forms their work is then not perceived as feminist. Kristeva refused to accept this binary essentialism and defined the feminist struggle as being historically and politically three-tiered:

1. Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality.
2. Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.
3. Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical. (Kristeva, cited in Moi 1985:12)

Kristeva's third tier provides a new analysis where there is no theory of female form but rather a desire to challenge marginalisation through subversion and dissidence. Kristeva is interested in how the marginal can be subversive. Third-wave feminism is a term first coined by Rebecca Walker when she published the article, 'Becoming the Third Wave: I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave' (Walker 1992:39). This movement has challenged the essentialism of female identity and embraced diversity with no all-encompassing feminist idea: 'women are of many colours, ethnicities, nationalities, religions and cultural backgrounds' (Tong 2009:284–285). Judith Butler (1990) has critiqued the binary frame and performance constructions of gender that result in female essentialism. She aims to radicalise the feminist critique so that a performative theory of gender can disrupt categories of body, gender and sexuality. These ideas are developed by Braidotti who argues for a nomadic perspective:

the notion of a 'nomadic subject' to suggest an exploration of gender that doesn't settle on a signifying label ('woman') but moves through layers of identity, looks at their interrelation: nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through. (Braidotti 1994:33)

A nomadic subjectivity can navigate the interventions of the feminist dramaturge in a kinetic practice that resists certitude and depends on motion for its effect. This way of working offers an ethical process with rhizome connections that challenge the notion of 'master' tools and concepts. As a theatre maker Cixous describes herself as 'the border crosser, but also the nomad ... the one who is unattached, is not tied and obliged to belong to this or that house' (Cixous 2004:16). Inspired by the French director Simone Benmussa, Elaine Aston captures this nomadic perspective when she describes feminist theatre practice as

A sphere of disturbance. It is not categorised as one type or style of theatre, as a 'theatre of the body' as 'visual theatre', aural physical or devised but as a practice that steals or draws on whatever is necessary, from whatever is needed, to oppose

categorisation, to disturb the processes that engender meaning and representation, to activate a sphere of doing for the process of undoing. (Aston 1999:18)

In New Zealand, Philippa Campbell, the Literary Manager at Auckland Theatre Company (ATC), has established a more nomadic subjectivity through a collaborative practice with a range of practitioners. She describes her methodology as dramaturge using the metaphor of 'navigator' (Campbell, interview 2011). The navigator is the person who provides direction and conducts explorations. Campbell is interested in a development process that 'acknowledges the play at the heart of play making' (Campbell, interview 2011). As a dramaturge she is familiar with structural theories but follows her intuition: 'I believe in everything and use all possibilities to develop the work'. She argues that 'plays are free spirited beasts and can work in quite magical ways. They can unfold in ways that almost shouldn't work' (Campbell, interview 2011). Lester McGrath, at present the manager of ATC, extends the navigator metaphor when he describes a new theatre work as being 'like a map that you have to learn to read' (McGrath, interview 2011).

Campbell argues that the dramaturge must do a huge amount of homework on the writer and the text to understand the writer's aspirations for the work. She works through the questioning process asking: Why write this play? Why does this story need to be told? What are the deep connections between the writer and the story? She believes that the writer must know the answer to these questions so that the work can grow. The dramaturge has to be able to 'say the unsayable and to ask questions' (Campbell, interview 2011). For Campbell the most important thing is to ensure that risk taking is encouraged as much for the writer as for the other artists: 'in the workshop this is about establishing safety and giving permission for a laboratory space'. She stresses that the writer is responsible for the final decisions about the script but the workshop is a space for collaborative experimentation. Campbell tries to make her feedback 'as conspiratorial as possible' so that the writer will take risks (Campbell,

interview 2011). I suggest that this collaborative, questioning, and conspiratorial methodology reflects her feminist perspective. The navigator provides a compass for exploration rather than fixed structures for construction. This dramaturgical metaphor captures a nomadic feminist subjectivity that works 'in the moment' and is open to hybrid connections and an expanded practice. However, Janet McAllister points out that in the last ten years ATC have produced 31 main bill New Zealand plays of which only 2 have been written by women (in 2009 and 2006) and 2 (in 2008) had input from both sexes (McAllister 2013). It would seem that Campbell's nomadic feminist methodology has not yet created more opportunities for female playwrights.

My feminist analysis now shifts from theatre contexts to dance and interdisciplinary practice as, 'dramaturgy is not tied to one discipline or ideology' (Behrndt 2010:196). Since the 1980s choreographers and dancers in Europe and North America have become increasingly interested in working with dramaturges. The collaboration between dramaturge Raimund Hoghe and Pina Bausch with Wuppertal Tanztheater, between 1980 and 1989, 'is often cited as one of the first examples of a dramaturg in the field' (Behrndt 2010:186). The ideas of Irigaray, Kristeva, Cixous, and Butler among others have influenced the nomadic subjectivity of the choreographer and dramaturge Carol Brown, together with the spatial thought of architects including Daniel Libeskind, Le Corbusier, Bernard Tschumi, and Zaha Hadid. Brown argues the necessity of the dramaturge because the choreographer becomes part of an inter-corporal dialogue with the dancers and the dramaturge provides a critical distance. She describes the process of working with a dramaturge as;

the suturing of bodies and ideas that you are trying to express in a non-verbal way. The dramaturge questions the sequence and structure to examine the coherence of the movement in relation to the central ideas. (Brown, interview 2010a)

Collaboration pulls the choreographer in many directions so the dramaturge checks that the work stays true to the performance vision:

This fresh pair of eyes is a consulting role in concept development. The dramaturge articulates the concept as precisely as possible and looks after it, they identify what is the piece that wants to be made'. (Brown, interview 2010a)

She argues that the work of the dramaturge involves moments of interception at key points with feedback and support for the performance vision: 'they are a reflective agent offering an inside / outside perspective' (Brown, interview 2010a). The outsider can unsettle the work to create new thinking – 'thought is a confrontation or encounter with an outside' (Grosz 2001:65). Brown becomes the dramaturge herself in her teaching of choreography and supervising practice-led PhDs in Dance at the University of Auckland. This work, like Henderson's in Chapter Three, builds on Brecht's description of the dramaturge as teacher, and locates the role in educational practice.

In the early 1990s Brown completed a practice-led PhD exploring the intervention of feminist theory in relation to choreographic practice. She realised that her practice had been characterised in dance reviews as 'fluid and feminine' and decided to challenge these movement habits with feminist strategies. Using Laban analysis she worked on opposite characteristics towards a more risky physicality and embodied theory:

That is, as a way of knowing which averted the traditional character of knowledge by refusing to distance thinking from moving, knowing from being, thought from the material specificity of bodies. (Brown 2003:8)

Building on the third-wave ideas of Butler, this research analysed and challenged how gender is performed and constructed through dance:

What feminist theory did for me in terms of practice was to radically alter the corporeal style of my choreography. For a feminist perspective on movement

awareness techniques, in particular Laban's effort shape analysis, created a method for learning to move Other-wise. (Brown 2003:9)

Over the course of a year she worked to deconstruct the gender traces in her corporeal style, attempting to analyse her embodied dispositions: 'following the work of Butler, such a process can be said to unravel the stranger at the heart of the self through a relearning of embodiment' (Brown 2003:10). In this practice-led research Brown attempted to deconstruct the habitus of gender and challenge the doxa of her composition process, which she had perceived as the 'natural' way of doing. Her performances were then described as edgy, frenetic, mesmeric, and savage rather than lyrical and lithesome. Using the ideas of Irigaray she critiqued dominant representations of women. After addressing the content of choreographic composition at the level of bodily movement, she turned her attention to the apparatus of performance itself in addressing performer /audience relationships. She began to question the architectural spaces for dance that have been 'inherited models from the traditions of the spoken word ... that privilege perspectival vision and passive spectatorship' (Brown 2003:14). Her epiphany occurred on tour in Romania when Brown 'felt trapped in a beautiful but stagnant theatre'. She decided to work in different ways and has since collaborated with architects, visual artists, and non-theatre art forms opening different kinds of space and encounter. This interdisciplinary and nomadic subjectivity can 'feel like being a trespasser in a foreign landscape, one who has to quickly learn the rules of a new and unfamiliar context to resist being exiled from what one already knows'(Brown 2013:4). In this process the dramaturge as navigator responds 'in the moment' to explore the possibilities for movement.

Brown's dramaturgical process reflects her feminist perspective and attempts to establish horizontal non-hierarchical relationships through a dialogue with her dancers. She believes that this way of working is informed by an ethical position that values the dancers as



co-creators. Pina Bausch also involved her dancers in the creation of the performance dramaturgy by ‘asking them to respond to questions rather than choreographing ‘onto’ their bodies’ (Behrndt 2010:188). Brown does not prioritise a female audience but has always considered their responses when developing new material. In dance there is a constant engagement with female bodies and Brown often questions female dancers about artistic process and their need to dance: ‘the passion to dance is not enough’. From her dancers she expects:

- a desire to address the immediacy of the moment with all its complexities without being fettered to the legacies of acquired technique or discipline
- to address what is becoming in the moment, rather than what we think we are, who we have been, or what we should be doing
- a sharpened perception and articulation
- a directness of engagement
- an opening to what is going on in the room between us
- an unravelling and letting go
- an oblique strategy to access what is unsaid, unspoken and potentially uncoded
- to create a break or a rupture in the fabric of the social that opens a potential for change, difference, the unexpected and that allows for previously unseen connections to be made. (Brown, 2012b)

These expectations enable the dancers to collaborate as creative artists and follow the instructions of the choreographer. They are required to be open to risk, to have a critical engagement with the work in progress and to have a desire to move beyond what is already known. Brown avoids the role of ‘mother’ within her company and believes that it is important to maintain a separate identity with clear boundaries and expectations. The director Clare Venables has critiqued the mothering role and the way that it can confine artistic relationships inside the stereotype of what is ‘known’ about women:

To use the 'mother' image makes leadership respectable for women perhaps, but it also encourages a queasy archetype which maintains women as proponents of the 'gentle' arts, defines them again in relation to others, and so contains their rebellion. (Venables in Graham 1992:40)

As a feminist choreographer and dramaturge Brown challenges her dancers and students to critique and re-present their experience of gender through movement.

### **Mapping developments**

The methodological metaphor of dramaturge as midwife captures a supportive feminist process which facilitates development. However, the metaphor is restricting when it refers only to the female body and does not acknowledge the creative contributions from the dramaturge. In this research I have realised that every action has a re-action and the dramaturge's interventions shape and form performance texts. In feminist practice it is very important that all contributions are credited in the creative process. The metaphor of navigator captures a feminist methodology and nomadic subjectivity which guides development and is not restricted by one position.

This chapter has shown how feminist ideas have shaped the interventions of the dramaturge in New Zealand. The interviewed practitioners have been influenced by second-wave feminism to challenge the politics of representation through re-presentation and collective collaboration. The work of Carol Brown has also been influenced by post-feminism and offers female and male dancers the opportunity to develop a sexuate subjectivity that operates outside the binary oppositions of feminism and patriarchy. Some feminist scholars object to the description of feminist development through the 'wave construct' because it ignores progress between the different waves and is dominated by the

ideas of American feminism. This research has attempted a journey between multiple feminist positions as I have acknowledged the different waves of feminism.

These New Zealand dramaturges have campaigned for equal representation in all performance roles and for fully developed female characters with a complex psychological base at the centre of the action. There has been an interest in female audience responses and the idea of playing to 'the female gaze'. In their individual methodologies there is a strong desire to collaborate through a reflexive positioning which does not assume power but facilitates dialogue and credits all contributions. Each of these dramaturges has facilitated innovative feminist practice and greater female representation. For example, Jean Betts has challenged the politics of ownership so that all devised work can be properly credited in New Zealand. Fiona Samuel has challenged the male gatekeepers over what women want to see and created strong female roles. Carol Brown has deconstructed the politics of the gendered body in space, while Catherine Fitzgerald demonstrates a dialectic methodology balanced between empathy and critical distance.

These individual dramaturges have made a difference but, in her article describing the glass ceiling that restricts female performance practice in New Zealand, Janet McAllister (2010) writes that 'equality is something we're still often seeking, and worse, occasionally losing'. The dramaturge Morgan Jenness believes that women in America have made inroads in performance but have not 'penetrated the inner sanctum' (Rudakoff and Thompson 2002:202). It is the same story in Britain where women get development opportunities at the lowest levels but representation becomes smaller and smaller as they move up the ladder (Graham 1992:2). In 2010 McAllister observed that in Auckland 30–40% of the work at the minimally funded Basement Theatre was written or directed by women while there were no female directors or writers at Auckland Theatre Company and no directors at The Silo (both of which had substantial funding from Creative New Zealand). Two year later McAllister

reviewed the situation again and found that little had changed. In 2012 The Silo Theatre and Auckland Theatre Company each staged two plays written by women and employed one token female director. In 2013 none of the plays to be staged by both companies are written by women:

As well as restricting what its audience sees, ATC is also restricting the opportunities for female playwrights in this country. The gender balance is far better for judges, Cabinet ministers and public-service CEOs than for New Zealand playwrights produced by the ATC main bill. (McAllister 2013)

Women remain under represented and remain cautious about describing themselves with the 'f' word. Stephenson and Langridge (1997) note how female practice is often identified with feminism and then forgotten or ghettoised.

Perhaps the most important challenge to established practice comes from a questioning process that explores new architectures and employs feminist concepts to analyse how gender is performed. All these dramaturges use questions framed by feminist theory, for example: How does gender shape the content and form of the performance? How is space conventionally and architecturally understood and how does this shape what kinds of performance are enabled? How does the story unfold in gendered time and space? Is it possible for space to be seen and represented in new ways? How does the assemblage reflect and challenge gendered experience? How does the work transform gendered experience? Samuel, Brown and Fitzgerald describe how the questioning process enables practitioners to make their own discoveries: 'it is like a good therapist asking the right questions' (Samuel, interview 2010). In the future these feminist questions can catalyse 'new practices, new positions, new projects, new techniques, new values' (Grosz 2011:83). The questioning process creates a rupture in the fabric of the social to open the 'potential for change,

difference, the unexpected and that allows for previously unseen connections to be made’  
(Brown, 2012b).

## CHAPTER 5. MĀORI PRACTICE: THE DRAMATURGE AS CONSERVATIONIST

When the questioning process unsettles practice there can be a strong resistance to change. While working with Māori playwright Briar Grace-Smith, the dramaturge Jean Betts asked feminist questions that challenged the actions of a female character that had been proposed by the kaumātua (Māori male elder). These questions offended the kaumātua and upset the playwright. In the evening Grace-Smith rang Betts to say that she was very worried about what happened and she had ‘thrown up’ when she got off the train on the way home (Betts, interview 2009). Betts’s interventions had challenged the ‘habitus’ (embedded dispositions) and ‘doxa’ (established practice) of Māori tikanga (customs). Betts decided that she would not make this kind of intervention again. Although she believed it was very important to challenge the representations of women – ‘I knew I was banging on a door that mattered’ – she realised that her questions had created a very difficult situation for Grace-Smith (Betts, interview 2009). Betts had forced Grace-Smith to choose between a Western feminist perspective and her cultural beliefs. Halba captures the implications of this situation when she writes: ‘to lose sight of one’s ordinary position, one’s whakapapa (genealogy) and one’s tikanga (Māori customs) is to lose oneself and to be cast adrift and blind’ (Halba 2007:10). Betts decided that her most important job as dramaturge was to support the well-being of the writer rather than challenge the views of the kaumātua (Betts, interview 2009). This example reveals the tensions between conservation and new connections when a Western feminist perspective is applied to Māori practice.

In this chapter I use Melanie Beddie’s methodological metaphor of the dramaturge as conservationist to analyze such a tendency in Māori performance development:

Conservationists have a feeling of responsibility towards looking after the species, whilst also separately nurturing diversity and ensuring that new landscapes and evolving environments can flourish alongside the established ones. (Beddie 2006:4)

This description acknowledges a need for the conservationist both to protect established practice and to experiment with new possibilities in the development process. In this research I investigate how Māori dramaturges find a balance between the preservation of tikanga (Māori customs, values and practices) and the pursuit of innovation. The choreographer, visual artist and dramaturge Moana Nepia argues that:

Tikanga are appropriate values and practices determined by context and tradition. They are not necessarily fixed rules but subject to modification and negotiation over time. (Nepia, email 2013a)

In this chapter I consider how kaumātua (elders) and kaitiaki (spiritual and cultural guardians) may be engaged in performance development while incorporating the five actions of dramaturgical transition as part of my research methodology. I *listen* to the work to identify key influences and ways of operating. I *reflect* and contextualize the habitus and doxa of established practice. I *question* performance assumptions to provoke new ways of thinking and *facilitate* a dialogue between different dramaturgical strategies. Finally I attempt to make new connections and *suggest* developments for the future.

Rachel Swain argues that in indigenous theatre new forms of listening are required to engage actively with place and community:

The dramaturgy is about giving weight to hierarchies and information; it is about sequence and revealed revelation. Indigenous performance is polysemic and operates on many levels. It is important to hold the gaps – the intercultural gaps and salvage the stories. The surface is informed by the underlying stories. (Swain, presentation 2011)

My research attempts a deep listening process that aims to reflect and map the habitus and doxa of the work. As a new citizen of Aotearoa I am a manuhiri (guest) in Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) and my encounter with this work begins from the surface as an outsider. Halba argues that Pākehā research into Māori practice risks legitimizing ‘the colonial project by othering Māori as interesting subjects for the colonial gaze and Māori knowledge as curios to be consumed abroad’ (Halba 2009:194). She argues that it is important not to homogenize different iwi perspectives and to acknowledge each iwi has distinct histories, narratives, protocols and knowledges. My research examines multiple possibilities for development in Māori and bicultural performance. Interviews with different Māori dramaturges provide inside perspectives but I aim to use my outside position to provide an open, reflexive and transparent analysis:

To be outside (something) is to afford oneself the possibility of a perspective, to look upon this inside, which is made difficult, if not impossible, from the inside’. (Grosz 2001:xiii)

This next section is not an historical overview of Māori theatre practice but examines selected moments within it that represent shifts and transitions in Māori performance development processes and practices.

### **The roots of Māori performance**

The performance heritage of New Zealand begins with the stories, music and dance of the first people of Aotearoa. Kouka (1999:10) notes that in traditional Māori society the European concept of theatre did not exist, and Balme writes, ‘traditional pre-contact Māori society knew no form of specialised dramatic enactments’ (Balme in Pavis 1996:181). The research of Te Ahukarumu Charles Royal (1998) would seem to contradict these statements.



Royal has researched and developed the importance of the *whare tapere* in pre-contact Māori life:

It was a building set aside for the purposes of entertainment and storytelling, but in other cases it represented a particular area, like an island, that was set aside for the same purpose. In all cases the *whare tapere* stood for a collection of discrete activities whose overall description might fall under the title of entertainment. (Royal 1998:8)

In his PhD thesis Royal recognises that the concept of mimesis, where one person takes on the persona of another, was not part of the *whare tapere*. He argues, ‘mimesis is not present in Māori culture and because it is not present I found this defining concept discounted my use of the term theatre in the title of my thesis’ (Royal 1998:12). The argument here is that in Māori performance the participants did not imitate or pretend to be someone else but remained themselves: ‘when you are considered the living face of your ancestors there is no need to pretend - you are already the living manifestation of them’ (Nepia, email 2013a). It is impossible to know whether performers used different voices in their storytelling and exactly when different protocols were established.

Royal identifies six performing arts which are central to Māori culture – storytelling, songs, dance, musical instruments, adornments, and games. They offer performance opportunities which do not use the writer or written text. Māori storytelling in pre-European contexts was an extensive oral tradition. The film maker Merata Mita acknowledges that Māori theatre began from oral storytelling:

The *marae* is/was the theatre of the Māori – the gesturing of the *whaikōrero*, the grace of the action song, the ferocity of the *haka* – all evolved from the ancient oratory of story. (So there’s the foundation, aye?). A means of exposing social and cultural conditions through our eyes (Mita, quoted in B. Potiki 2010:9).

These different activities celebrate Māoritanga, the traditions and rituals that confirm Māori culture and identity. Royal argues that they have been shaped by the concept of Te Ao Mārama and the paradigm of Ranginui (the sky father) and Papatuanuku (the earth mother): ‘their separation is the central act in the Māori account of creation of the world’ (Royal 1998:51). The group performance of Māori dance and songs has always taken place on the marae but in the thirties Sir Apirana Turupa Ngata (Ngāti Porou) worked to conserve and protect these performance traditions ‘as part of a political agenda to improve the emotional, social, educational and economic well-being of his people’ (Nepia, email 2013c). Princes Te Paea Herangi of Waikato brought together the waiata, karakia, haka and patere so that different groups could perform together in festivals. In the eighties this work became known as the kapa haka (Nepia 2013c).

In his research and performance practice, Royal has recovered and developed many traditions in an attempt to renew the whare tapere institution, utilizing whakapapa (genealogies) to establish connections between the present and the future. He uses whakapapa (genealogy) to develop a holistic view of Māori culture and find new connections between the past and the present. He argues that the whare tapere: ‘must look to the past for guidance but always with an eye on the present into which the future flows soon through’ (Royal 1998:212). In this practice-research Royal’s approach can be read as dramaturgical when he devises performances that conserve past art forms and identifies experimental possibilities for the future.

### **Marae Theatre**

Marae are social and architectural spaces within the heart of Māori communities, providing a venue and focus for important gatherings, meetings and ritual. In most instances they include an area of land and groups of buildings – a wharenuī (big house), wharepuni (sleeping house)

or whare tupuna (ancestral house) acting as the main focus, a whare kai (dining room), kitchen and bathroom facilities, sometimes a church and adjacent housing. The whare tupuna is conceptualised metaphorically as an ancestor and the carved poupou inside represent the honoured descendants (Farrimond in Maufort & O'Donnell 2007:410). In the late 1980s artists such as Jim Moriarty, Rangimoana Taylor and Roma Potiki began to develop marae theatre, a Māori dramaturgy where the whole theatre space is transformed into a marae. These performances are influenced by customary marae ritual and protocol including the meeting between tangata whenua (people of the land) and manuhiri (guests). Marae can also be created through ritual interaction of people and adaption of available facilities in the absence of customary architectural structures.

Pōwhiri (meeting ceremonies) were sometimes used to shape these performance journeys. In this formal process, two sets of people meet and greet to establish a dialogue and the protocol ensures a safe passage through the marae. Matenga-Kohu & Roberts (2006:6) write that the word 'pō' can mean to venture into the unknown and 'whiri' to experience the exchange of knowledge. In many ways the pōwhiri resembles the mission of the dramaturge through a journey into the unknown and a return with new knowledge. There is a communion between the performers and audience as they travel together and make shared discoveries. The ceremony includes the karanga (a call), the wero (a challenge), whaikōrero (speeches from orators), waiata (songs) and hongi (completing the ceremony with a sharing of a breath and minds). The dramaturgy of this ceremony can be compared with the structure of the quest which was analysed in Chapter Three and moves from inciting incident, through obstacles, crisis and resolution (McKee 1998, Vogler 1998). In both journeys the visitors/audience mediates different states of being until they experience a final transformation and sense of arrival. In marae theatre Moriarty describes how the karanga and haka pōwhiri greet the audience as they enter the space. This is punctuated by waiata (songs) and an opportunity to

meet the audience to mihi (talk back to the performers) after the show. There is karakia (prayer) and kai (food), which usually end the proceedings (Moriarty, quoted Nixon 2007). The dramaturgy reflects Māori tikanga (Māori custom) and the advisor on these matters is the kaumātua who may also be an experienced theatre practitioner. Mead notes that for many people tikanga Māori means ‘the Māori Way’ or ‘done according to Māori custom’. He argues that the tikanga provides rules of thought and understanding that organise behaviour and govern how certain activities are carried out:

They provide templates and frameworks to guide our actions and help steer us through some huge gatherings of people and some tense moments in our ceremonial life. They help us to differentiate between right and wrong in everything we do and in all activities we engage in. There is a right and proper way to conduct one’s self. (Mead 2003:12)

Māori tikanga demonstrates how ‘habitus’ can engender thought to conserve and reproduce past structures. The kaumātua has the status to interpret tikanga and create the ‘doxa’ of Māori performance practice where ideas of custom become naturalized and taken for granted. Metge writes how tikanga is used to describe ways of doing things that have been handed down from the ancestors and have been accepted as proper, right and typically Māori (Metge 2010:79).

Jim Moriarty (Ngāti Toa, Ngāti Koata and Ngāti Kahungunu) is an actor and director who has worked in New Zealand theatre and film since the 1970s. In 1989 he set up the Wellington based charitable trust Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu (The Fruit Tree of the Sacred Forest) to work with rangatahi (young people) through theatre. In this work Moriarty adopts the role of kaumātua to guide the development process when working with disenfranchised young Māori: ‘the ritual element of tikanga – draws the rangatahi (young people) back into a

place of safety and one-ness with themselves' (Moriarty in Nixon 2007:2). This is a process which confirms their confidence and identity as Māori:

The theatre marae, the rituals and manners, the creativity, the wellness, not only serve us in the bigger theatrical sense, but they are also part of a pathway back to a place of knowing, and confidence, and permission to be Māori, for a lot of the clients we work with. (Moriarty, in Nixon 2007:5)

This work has established a te Reo Māori theatre which is based on tikanga and structured through the dramaturgy of ritual. Māori engage in a dialogue with the past and the concept of *Anga ā Mua* (facing the past in front of you, with the future behind). Metge argues that this is 'not living in the past; it is drawing on the past for guidance, bringing the past into the present and the future' (Metge 1976:70). This is illustrated by the proverb:

Kia ū ki tōu kāwai tupuna, kia mātauria ai i ahu mai koe i hea, he anga mai a hea.  
Trace out your ancestral stem, so that it may be known where you come from and where you are heading. (Metge 2010:44)

Metge interprets this as being that 'from your ancestors you inherit a store of mana, your own particular abilities and your roots in the land. They provide you with models and guidance for the future' (Metge 2010:44). The *kaumātua* operates as a conservationist that protects, reinforces and promotes Māori culture. The past and the legacy of the ancestors inform these interventions in the present and advice for the future.

Ideas of tikanga raise questions about what constitutes a Māori dramaturgy and whether this can only occur through the employment of a Māori dramaturge and/or *kaumātua* who speaks Te Reo Māori. The playwright Teina Moetara argues for a theatre based on Māori principles so that the identity of Māori can shape performance. This view supports the work of Kouka who campaigned for a national theatre devoted to Māori work:

I see it (theatre) as another means of tinorangatiratanga (empowerment/self-determination) for Māori. Aotearoa is the only country in the world where my people exist. We are the tangatawhenua (indigenous people of the land). We call the whenua (land) our tūrangawaewae (place to stand) and, even in today's modern world, many of us hold onto this belief (Kouka, in Maufort and O'Donnell:243)

Moetara argues for a theatre about Māori, in Māori and for Māori where the participants are engaged physically, emotionally, ethically, morally and spiritually in the development process (Moetara 2011:26) This argument provokes a dialogue about what it means to have a Māori theatre and what it should be. Kouka argues that Māori should develop their own stories:

Let it be us who lead and not you (Pākehā); let it be us who decides and directs our own future. Pākehā writers who believe good stories belong to anyone in particular I feel are wrong. What they don't see is what we Māori have to live with all our lives, that this story is always part of us and not something that you pick up when you want to make a buck, get recognised or get your work overseas. (Kouka, in Maufort & O'Donnell 2007:244)

Roma Potiki writes that Māori theatre has a longing for what is past, lost or been taken and the Māori dramaturge fights to conserve Te Ao Māori (the Māori world): 'it is our ancestors who remind us of who we are, where we belong and why we have been given the gift of life' (Potiki, in Kouka 1999:9). On the marae the audience move through different ceremonies as they are welcomed and accepted. There is a circular dramaturgical movement from pōwhiri (the welcome) to poroporoaki (the farewell) creating opening and closing rituals. For example, the 2012 Taki Rua production of *Michael James Manaia* began with a karakia (prayer) and finished with the sprinkling of water across the stage (to bind the living with the dead). Spiritual forces influence everything and cultural forms such as karanga (the welcome call), waiata (songs), and haka (war chant) are part of the narrative. Roma Potiki describes how:

You are never alone, your tūpuna are always with you, whether you know them or not, whether you have full knowledge of family or not. Those presences and energies are still with you. We can't say we did it ourselves, our tūpuna are with us, but we have to do the work to make this happen. (Potiki interview 2012)

These ceremonies 'keep safe' the present and 'settle the spirits' of the ancestors (Grace-Smith 2007:281). The kaumātua sustains these beliefs and conserves established traditions.

### **Developing Māori Practice**

In the work of the dramaturge the listening and reflecting processes are supported by the dramaturgical action of questioning. Each practitioner has to decide how they want to develop their work and what will be the balance between conservation and experimentation. Roma Potiki argues that the central questions for Māori practitioners remain: 'Who am I? Where do I come from? Where do I belong?' (Potiki, interview 2012). However, Moana Nepia asks: 'What are we doing? Where are we going? What kind of future can we envisage?' (Nepia 2013c). My research indicates that Māori practitioners are likely to choose a confluent and collective development process. Halba (2007:27) points out that this has been a decolonising strategy in opposition to the single authorial figure. The following questions have informed my research and may be useful to Māori practitioners when creating new work:

1. What are the roles of dramaturge, kaumātua and kaitiaki?
2. Which stories need to be told and why?
3. Whose knowledge is authorised in the work?
4. How does the developer listen to the work?
5. How does the process nurture, support and validate Māori practitioners?
6. What is the dream (performance vision) of the work?
7. What are Māori ways of seeing and knowing within the work?

8. How does the work conserve Māori tikanga and weave new possibilities?
9. Who is the audience for this performance how do they have access to meaning and representation? How can the work be polysomic (providing multiple meanings)? How can the audience reply to the work?
10. How does the work engage with the Māori community over time?
11. How will te Reo be used in the performance and why?
12. How will the structure reflect Māori notions of mythic time, non-linear stories and different generations?
13. How will the structure reflect Māori notions of space and patterning?
14. How are land and loss and colonisation represented?
15. How is the work influenced by previous performances?
16. What is the relationship between fantasy and biography?
17. How does the work create new ways of seeing and being for Māori audiences?

These questions may provoke collaborative dialogue and new knowledge. In the last 40 years Māori and bicultural performance has created a continuum of development opportunities. I now facilitate a dialogue between several ‘landmark’ productions to investigate different kinds of dramaturgical intervention.

### ***Te Raukura (The Feathers of the Albatross)***

The '70s are often seen as a period of political upheaval and protest, with the Māori Land March in 1975, the Raglan protest in the late 1970s, and the Bastion Point protest in 1978. Māori theatre practitioners such as Rowley Habib, Don Selwyn, Roma Potiki and the poet Hone Tuwhare began to recognise the power of political theatre to challenge the status quo. In 1972 *Te Raukura* told the story of the Taranaki land confiscations of 1881 and the imprisonment of Māori from Parihaka. This work is very important because it presents key questions for Māori people and performance practitioners in New Zealand. Should Māori remain separate and maintain Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) or should they embrace the opportunities of biculturalism and multiculturalism? Should the dramaturge conserve past



structures and ways of working or should they experiment to find new possibilities? *Te Raukura* was the first and only play written by Māori leader and Race Relations Conciliator Harry Dansey. The play was requested by Arthur Thomas (Director of Auckland Festival) and inspired by Dansey's wife and family who came from Parihaka. With a cast of forty it tells the story of how two Māori men resisted the occupation of their land by British soldiers using very different strategies. Te Ua was the prophet who waged war and Te Whiti was the preacher who wanted peace. Whether warlike or peaceful these Māori leaders lost their land and Parihaka was taken. In the play the Chief Justice, Sir William Martin, acknowledges the injustice of the situation:

History will decide that at this time justice was not done, and the seeds of our injustice will continue to sprout, and indeed grow, for centuries to come through the society we are now trying to build. (Dansey 1974:23)

The story is framed by discussions between two narrators who represent different ways of seeing and reacting to the past. Tamatane is the young radical who wants political action: 'mine the role to query, question, break anew if need be, build anew the world' (Dansey 1974:1). Koroheke is the older tribal elder and kaumātua who is interested in what can be learned from this story today: 'how the deeds of those long since departed on the spirit path reach back to us to warn and teach and guide us in this day and age' (Dansey 1974:1). Tamatane supports Te Ua and holds the sons of the Pakeha men accountable for their father's sins:

And so I hold their sons to answer for their father's sins, and thus I justify what I may do in this my day and age. (Dansey 1974:56)

His choice is not to cooperate with Pākehā and to fight for Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) to conserve the past and protect the future. Koroheke supports Te Whiti and the end of fighting, there must be a way to move forward in peace: 'Enough ... On earth peace ... Good will

towards men' (Dansey 1974:61). The play debates two strategies. As race relations conciliator, it can be argued that Dansey questions how it is possible to 'look after the species whilst also separately nurturing diversity and ensuring that new landscape and evolving environments can flourish alongside the established ones' (Beddie 2006:4). He creates a balance between conservation and new opportunities which connects the past with the future. A vibrant and living tikanga can value traditions and embrace development possibilities.

When developing the text Dansey did not work with a kaumātua but his practice involved a long period of research with his wife's family and his community of Māori elders. For example, he checked the details of the poi dance with the people of Parihaka: 'oh yes, it was checked out with them by telephone' (Dansey 1974:xii) and spent a long time researching the Hauhau chants to understand their function. Dansey describes how one of his actors would tangi for the real dead each night, which demonstrates the strong connection between the performance and Māoritanga. He wrote the first draft of the play in Māori and then 'recast in English':

I would ask myself the question: "How would people say this?" And I found this best answered by letting them say it in Māori first. (Dansey 1974:x)

Including passages in Māori created a polysemic access for Auckland Festival audiences and Māori speakers. This decision also prompted Māori actors to continue in te Reo: 'once the Māori began flowing from their lips, (they) could seldom resist the temptation of carrying on in Māori' (Dansey 1974:xi). The play was one of the first works written in both Māori and English. The play began a dialogue about the future of Māori performance and the development process. Dansey was later told, by various elders, that he should have worked with kaumātua to access the voices of the whakapapa (genealogy) in the composition of the work (Dansey 1974:xii).

## **Maranga Mai (Wake Up)**

My second ‘landmark’ production is *Maranga Mai*, which was first performed at Bastion Point in 1978 and told the story of the Māori protest movement. It was agit-prop performance that dramatized Māori oppression and aimed to change New Zealand society: ‘it held its own with other political theatre of its day’ (R. Potiki, cited in Pavis 1996:173). Walker (2004) describes how the performance dramatized Māori attitudes to Waitangi Day, Bastion Point, and land protest activity in Raglan. Using direct address and a series of songs and sketches, this passionate and personal work was performed by a collective of ten young men and women. Walker argues that the play was ‘an open challenge to the ideology of ‘one people’ and a contradiction of the myth of New Zealand as a racial utopia’ (Walker 2004:226). This performance enabled Pākehā audiences to see Māori from a Māori perspective and understand how Māori saw Pākehā. The Māori filmmaker Merata Mita argued: ‘let them see us as we see ourselves and how we see them’ (Mita, in B. Potiki 2010:9).

Brian Potiki was part of the collective that created *Maranga Mai* and has written an account of the work that includes personal anecdotes and memories from other company members (Potiki 2010). Potiki had directed a production of *Te Rakura* for Te Reo Māori Week at Victoria University in 1975. The momentum of a Māori development process was sustained through the casting of Josh Gardner who had played Te Whiti in the Auckland Festival production. All the actors from *Maranga Mai* were involved in the 1975 Land March. Roma Potiki writes that the collective;

saw themselves as activists rather than as theatre practitioners. It was a way to say something and maybe this would be a really effective way. They had extremely strong musical skills and a commitment to the issues (R. Potiki, in Pavis 1996:174)

In the performance they told their stories as activists delivering a message. These were young people who were tired of injustice and wanted to speak out. The song ‘Maranga Mai’ meaning ‘wake up’ was a Māori call to action. The piece used a kuia (woman elder) as the narrator who connected the stories and brought in ‘the spiritual dimension’ (R. Potiki, in Pavis 1996:173). The work toured marae, schools, universities, and black power gatherings throughout the country but a bottle-throwing incident during a performance in the parliament building dominated the press and restricted further performances. Walker describes how the play was ‘a direct threat to Pākehā definitions of reality and as such became the target of crude attempts to suppress it’ (Walker 2004: 226).

The dramaturgy of *Maranga Mai* was developed through a collective process between the group as they improvised their songs and sketches. This democratisation of dramaturgy created a process that belonged to everyone, and reflected their collective struggle. The director was Brian Potiki but the process was very open and collaborative. The profession of the dramaturge was not yet established in New Zealand but I suggest there would have been resistance to one outside individual shaping the work. There is no reference to a kaumātua but the group invited members to step outside the work to provide feedback. Arthur Harawira gave dramaturgical notes about the order, pace, staging and delivery of the material. He asked the questions: ‘what are we doing? How are we looking? Standing?’ (B. Potiki 2010:34). These provocations enabled the group to establish a collective performance vision through dialogue. The questions also enabled the group to stand ‘outside’ their practice and see the work with fresh eyes. In this methodology Māori theatre began to experiment with the ways in which a dramaturge might facilitate a collaborative dramaturgy. The theatre critic and academic Michael Neill wrote:

Neither crudity of construction nor lack of technical polish should disguise *Maranga Mai's* importance; it extends the ephemeral tableaux of seventies street theatre towards genuine popular drama. (Neill, cited in Potiki 2010:67)

One of the supporting members in *Maranga Mai* was the writer and director Roma Potiki, who travelled ahead of the performances doing publicity and audience development. She describes how the company already knew each other well from their community base but this very diverse group of people came together because they had a shared kaupapa:

The kaupapa was the drive and a commitment to engage with the need for those stories to come out into a broader community. It was a wake-up call to action which was part of the activism for social justice and change in the seventies and eighties. (Roma Potiki, interview 2012)

She remembers a collective assemblage of material facilitated by the director Brian Potiki. Performance development is collaborative process. Roma Potiki argues that the work was not performance driven but 'had an activist heart at the centre. The work managed to achieve some things that went beyond agit prop' (Potiki, interview 2012). In this project young Māori practitioners followed the role model of Tamatane and Te Ua in *Te Raukura*. They were fighting and questioning the status quo in New Zealand: 'mine the role to query, question, break if need be, build anew the world' (Dansey 1974:1). They established a collective political dramaturgy that engaged debate and facilitated change in New Zealand society. This Māori dramaturgy creates seamless connections between the land and the people, and between the past, present and future. Roma Potiki went on to direct and facilitate the development of *Whatungarongaro* which is my next 'landmark' production. This work opened 12 years after *Maranaga Mai*, when Māori practitioners had more experience and a desire to experiment with the possibilities of theatre.

### ***Whatungarongaro* (The eyes of the people)**

*Whatungarongaro* was the first production in 1990 from He Ara Hou, a collective of 13–15 mainly Māori practitioners from the village of Paekakariki near Wellington. The work was devised by the group, facilitated by Roma Potiki and directed by Roma Potiki and Pākehā practitioner John Anderson. The production reflected their lives and experience, and in doing so introduced Pākehā audiences to the effects of urbanisation on Māori people. Having a Māori kaupapa was again very important:

It was important to have a kaupapa that tied into Māori sovereignty, taking control of one's own work and stories, making sure that the content is placed fully in the mainstream of New Zealand life, making sure that Māori theatre and cultural practice is in fact the mainstream of development. (Roma Potiki, interview 2012)

Their work was informed by tikanga: 'the correct way to do something' (Potiki, interview 2012). They wanted to make choices that were respectful to their culture but also pushed the boundaries of performance. Each meeting began with a karakia (prayer) where their spiritual life was acknowledged and the creative work was always kept separate from the sharing of kai (food). The company wanted to make work 'of value to our community which would result in well-being and artistic excellence' (Potiki, interview 2010). They wanted control over the process and did not want their stories to be exploited by others. The material came from the company over a year and a half and shows a Māori family where the father has left, the mother is an alcoholic, the son is sniffing glue, and the daughter becomes pregnant. The drama explores their relationships and the cycle of poverty for urban Māori who have lost their roots and contact with the land. They are watched over by the spirits of their ancestors and when the son dies the spirits take him home to Hawaiki. The drama leaves the audience to guess whether the savvy daughter will be able to break the cycle and make a new life for herself and her daughter.

The work aimed to weave together the old and the new through the juxtaposition of spirits with the stories of urban youth. Kouka describes how the play operates on three levels:

The outer ring wairua, spirit birds, who watch over and guide the events of the play; the life of the urban whānau, a family under stress; and the centre of the play, a son and his life with street kids and solvent abuse. (Kouka 1999:21)

This theatre built upon Potiki's experience with *Maranga Mai* and at one point the spirit birds even urge the youth to *Maranga mai!* (Wake up!). Kouka recognises that this production experimented with theatre form and demonstrates Roma Potiki's argument that Māori theatre had moved 'from anxiety to confidence' (Roma Potiki 1991:57). The dramaturgy unfolds through the karanga, whaikōrero, karaka, mihimihi and waiata but Potiki notes that in the late '80s Marae Theatre was not the main thrust of He Ara Hou. *Whatungarongaro* captured the hard-edged realism of contemporary relationships between urban youth and experimented with performance: 'we were always pushing to find innovative ways to do things that retain meaning' (Roma Potiki, interview 2012). They chose to stage a death through the termination of breathing rather than through the traditional wailing of the kuia (Kouka 1999:22). This was a new development for Māori theatre as they developed the representation of Māori rituals:

This treatment of tangi, of dying, and of the continuation of wairua is nothing new in its essence. In fact it is an old thing, one we have always known. But the theatrical elements that were chosen to illustrate that particular tangi were quite new for Māori theatre. (Roma Potiki 1991:61)

Potiki played the role of dramaturge in assembling the text and directed the work with Pākehā co-director John Anderson. The company also worked with the kaumātua Paiki Johnson to guide the tikanga of the work. The kaumātua was not present all the time but helped the company in key moments. Potiki describes how she was working with Briar Grace-Smith (as an actor in this show) to re-present the tangi and they could not find a way forward. At a

certain point they both realised what they could do and then noticed that their kaumātua had entered and was watching them:

Paiki Johnson was critical to development at certain points. He was a young kaumātua and his skill came in his deep knowledge of Māori culture but also his empathy and understanding of what we were trying to do in terms of a performative process. (Roma Potiki, interview 2012)

Johnson helped with the bird movements and took them into the bush to find the traditional Māori movements, ‘he also talked about centring yourself in the natural world and that was invaluable to the group’ (Roma Potiki, interview 2012). She describes his facility to influence things by being in the room but not saying very much. Potiki acknowledges his contribution but believes that the tupuna are always present and that she and the company were able to make most of the decisions themselves. Potiki was weaving and facilitating their different contributions:

My living room was covered with different pieces of paper. I would sit in the middle physically mapping and re-writing. Everyone contributed content but I kept a handle on it all. (Roma Potiki, interview 2012)

From this material she began to connect the writings which became the text of the play. There was a lot of experimentation and re-writing in the rehearsal process (co-directed by Potiki and John Anderson with Potiki also performing the role of Ruby). This production conserved Māori ceremonies, ritual and protocol but also nurtured a diversity of theatrical representation. The play experiments with structure and is presented through one single act which crosses time between the future, present and past. This development process built on the collective dramaturgy in *Maranga Mai* but used Potiki as dramaturge to extend the performance possibilities and Johnson as kaumātua to protect the tikanga. Here the group established a balance between experimentation and conservation. The work inspired Hone



Kouka to further advance Māori theatre skills and influenced his decision to work with a European dramaturge in the development of *Nga Tangata Toa*.

### ***Nga Tangata Toa* (The Warrior People)**

The Depot Theatre, established in 1983, began as a second stage for Downstage Theatre. It became the backbone for Māori theatre, becoming The New Depot/Taki Rua Depot in 1992, and Taki Rua Theatre Company in 1994. Colin McColl suggested that Hone Kouka should use Ibsen's play *The Vikings of Helgeland* (1858) to create a Māori adaptation of the story and Taki Rua premiered with *Nga Tangata Toa*. The backstory to this production was that McColl had directed the Downstage production of *Hedda Gabler* in 1990, which was invited to the official Edinburgh Festival and the first Ibsen Festival in Norway. After the success of this project McColl was invited back to Oslo the following year to direct *The Vikings of Helgeland*.

The production was in Norwegian and McColl worked with the Norwegian dramaturge Halldis Hoass who had spent several years as dramaturge at the Los Angeles Theatre Centre. While preparing the production McColl was struck by the apparent similarities between Viking and Māori cultures: 'both are very much warrior societies, there is a sense of utu (revenge) and respect for ancestors and Gods' (McColl, interview December 2011). He wondered if a young Māori writer could learn from Ibsen's dramaturgy and storytelling skills by adapting *The Vikings of Helgeland*: 'Hone took up the challenge, bless him' (McColl, interview December 2011). The dramaturge Halldis Hoass had a deep understanding of the Norwegian play and was also fascinated by Māori culture: 'Halldis wanted my voice, a Māori voice' (Kouka, interview 2012). McColl managed to find the funding to bring her to New Zealand because 'I knew that Hone, as a young and inexperienced writer, would benefit from a caring dramaturgical hand' (McColl, interview

December 2011). This commission enabled Kouka to work alongside an established text and a very experienced European dramaturge. Trained at Otago University and Toi Whakari Drama School Hone Kouka became inspired by Māori theatre after seeing *Whatungarongaro* in 1991. He wanted to develop the theatre making skills of Māori practitioners:

We meant to enhance all elements and have Māori theatre sit comfortably within mainstream theatre. We had proven that we were worthy storytellers, but our focus was now to lift production values, acting, design, technical aspects, etc. (Kouka, in Maufort & O'Donnell 2007:241)

This project enabled him to develop a Māori dramaturgy: 'I just did what I always do – things from a Māori point of view' (Kouka, interview 2012).

*The Vikings of Helgeland* is a four-act melodrama and tragedy set in Norway. Kouka created a sixteen-scene narrative between two warrior *iwi* (tribes) and set in the South Island of New Zealand. The play examines the power of family secrets and the action takes place in 1919 after World War One when a soldier (Taneatua) returns to his marae as a hero. The first secret is that his father-in-law (Paikea) murdered his brother to become Rangatira of the hapū (family group). The second secret is that Rongomai (Paikea's brother's daughter) and Taneatua have always been in love but Rongomai married Taneatua's best friend (Wi) and Taneatua married Paikea's daughter (Te Wai). The drama shows what happens when these secrets are confronted and revenge is taken. Paikea loses all his sons and is overwhelmed by grief: 'my heart is like the sea breaking over the reef' (Kouka 1994:47). Rongomai finally kills Taneatua and gives herself to the sea but they can never be together because he has converted to Christianity. Rongomai's last words are 'Kaua inaianei, e aku tupuna, taihoa kia korero au ki a ia, kia ata Whakaaro ano ai ia (Not now, ancestors of mine, let me talk to him, change his mind) (Kouka 1994:57).

Carnegie and O'Donnell write that the play appealed to Kouka because the Viking period lent itself to a Māori context in several ways:

A hierarchical warrior structure, a pre-Christian belief system that included a chiefly afterlife, highly developed protocols of revenge and reparation, a rich oral tradition of song and high rhetoric, and a thematic focus on the re-emergence of a sense of nationhood of people long colonised. (Carnegie and O'Donnell 2007:220)

It is an epic drama that explores the themes of loyalty, betrayal, truth, loss, fate, friendship, love, gender oppression, and what it means to be a warrior. At the heart of the story is an untold love that leads to tragedy and loss. The central message is articulated by Carnegie and O'Donnell: 'the suppression of truths about the past will lead to tragic consequences' (Carnegie and O'Donnell 2007:224). This view echoes the words of Sir William Martin in Dansey's *Te Raukura* when he acknowledges how New Zealand's past will haunt the present.

*Nga Tangata Toa* and *The Vikings of Helgeland* both build the drama through inciting incident, turning points, crisis, climax, revelation, and resolution, reflecting the linear concatenate narrative structure of Western theatre. Falkenberg argues that in re-staging Ibsen within the European model of tragedy Kouka's play has colonised itself (Falkenberg, in Maufort & O'Donnell 2007:297). However Bhabha describes how mimicry can subvert and de-stabilize Western categories to challenge colonial representations. The mimicry 'mimes the forms of authority at the point at which it de-authorizes them. Similarly, mimicry rearticulates presence in terms of its 'otherness', that which it disavows' (Bhabha 1994:91). Kouka had used the European form but created a Māori dramaturgy through incorporating elements of ritual including the use of te Reo Māori language, the ceremony of powhiri, karanga (the welcome call onto the marae), haka (the war chant), korero (speeches), waiata (songs), tangi (funeral ceremony), and poroporoaki (closing ceremony). The play reflected a Māori 'habitus' where the world view is shaped by tikanga (Māori customs) to challenge the

dominant discourse in New Zealand. In the first production, the designer Dorita Hannah created a set that was like a wharenuī (meeting house) and mirrors reflected the audience to re-enforce their presence in the reality of the moment. Carnegie and O'Donnell write that on the opening night a man started to utter a karakia (prayer) in the moment before the curtain call because he did not feel that the door to the ancestral spirits had been closed. After this event Kouka introduced a karakia before the lights came up to create a sense of closure according to Māori tikanga (Maufort and O'Donnell 2007:223).

Carnegie and O'Donnell argue that Kouka is commenting on the displacement of Māori from their land through the character Rongomai (or Hjordis in *The Vikings of Helgeland*) that revenges the death of her father. A warrior woman who can see into the future, she was played by the actress Nancy Brunning. McColl describes her as 'a wāhine toa of the wildest kind' and notes that Māori history, particularly pre-European history, is full of women like Rongomai (McColl, interview December 2011). The feminist playwright Jean Betts observed how Rongomai was driven to desperate action by humiliation and despair (Betts, cited by Carnegie & O'Donnell 2007:226). Kouka's adaptation of the story echoes Ibsen's sympathy for female characters that become trapped by their social circumstances. Kouka worked with Hoass to re-present Ibsen's drama in a narrative that reflects Māori tikanga and represents the history of New Zealand through Māori experience. *Nga Tangata Toa* exposes the colonial legacy in New Zealand by 'writing back to center', which is when the first people of a country write their own legacies and histories using the colonizers' language for their own purpose (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1990).

McColl remembers that the dramaturge Hoass first worked with Kouka on the characters and their backstories (which remained in the final published script):

She questioned and challenged and provoked (and no doubt annoyed) Hone into developing depth into character and situation. Some characters were dropped, others developed. She was very insistent on “objectives” and also in encouraging Hone to write his own story rather than follow the Ibsen play slavishly. (McColl, interview December 2011)

Kouka remembers that he wrote the play and then they re-worked it on the floor and in production: ‘she just challenged me and I challenged her back’ (Kouka, interview 2012). Hoass had already worked on *The Vikings of Helgeland* with McColl to represent Ibsen’s themes of nationalism, gender and identity in Norway. Together they had analysed the linear structure and the way the drama builds, shifting from melodrama to tragedy. In her work with Kouka, Hoass demonstrated the methodology of dramaturge as architect, offering Ibsen’s concatenate structure as the framework for narrative development. However, Kouka then adapted and re-defined the story through Māori culture and tikanga to conserve Māori values, identity and history. This dialogue unfolded in one-to-one meetings and on the rehearsal floor. In this project he learned:

To be arrogant and to change the shape of the art form, to never accept ‘no’, to know that Māori will always be on the outside of the mainstream in New Zealand theatre, to be determined to help create and develop more Māori writers, that we as Māori have a voice and sound that none of the Pākehā writers in this country have. (Kouka, interview 2012)

Kouka notes that his performance vision is informed by Māori kaupapa (philosophical principles), tautoko (support), and awhi (care) and also by how groups operate with manaakitanga (hosting), whanaungatanga (extended family) and tinorangatiranga (self-determination) (Kouka 2007:242). For *Nga Tangata Toa* Taki Rua worked with male and female kaumātua in the rehearsal and development process to establish a balance between the

outside eye, inside knowledge, European structure and Māori tikanga. McColl describes their function:

To make sure the unfolding of the story made sense in Māori terms. Also for the language as Hone (at that stage) had only a passing knowledge of te Reo. There was many a rehearsal when he got a slap from Auntie Keri Kaa (a great supporter of Taki Rua and our project) for the misuses of the language. (McColl, interview December 2011)

For Kouka, kaumātua influenced the development process through their presence and tautoko (support). He differentiates the feedback between kaumātua and dramaturges to note that kaumātua concentrate on the ‘safety’ of the work, while a dramaturge focuses on the script (Kouka, interview 2012). This ‘safety’ is about respecting Māori customs and spirituality so that the tapu (sacred) is honoured and maintained. While developing *Nga Tangata Toa* Kouka found his own balance between conservation and experimentation providing a postcolonial analysis of New Zealand. Like Koroheke in *Te Raukura* he has learned from the past but he also embraces opportunities in the present to extend and develop Māori practice in the future. In his practice Kouka has established a living tikanga but he is also able to employ the narrative structure of European theatre to tell his story and challenge his audience.

### **The dramaturgical functions of kaumātua and kaitiaki**

Kaumātua are appointed by their people who believe they have the capacity to teach and guide both current and future generations. They usually have good knowledge of tikanga, history and te Reo; and their contribution ensures that the mana of the whānau, hapū and iwi are maintained. Hone Kouka and Briar Grace Smith have insisted that kaumātua are part of their production process:

There are areas as a writer that you want to write about that you haven't actually always experienced, and are out of your knowledge zone. I would never do anything like that without having a kaumātua (male elder) have a look, or sit in on rehearsals, so for me, for my own safety, and the safety of the cast, it is really important to have an elder. (Grace- Smith 2007:276)

Here the kaumātua is assumed to be male but Metge (2010) notes that the role can be male or female and not necessarily old. In this work kaumātua are positioned between the past, present and future to represent the ancestors in the process of performance creation and offer interpretations that continue to perpetuate Māori culture and protocol. However, Nepia stresses that the role 'need not be restricted to conservation of existing knowledge and practices, but can include supporting new forms of expression, debate and exploration' (Nepia, email 2013a). The kaumātua has an enormous influence over the actions of the group and the Māori metaphor of taura whiri (the plaited rope) emphasises the unity and strength that comes from weaving people together (Metge 2010:xi). Nepia argues that if the weaving process is based on consultation, then the kaumātua is valued as integral to the performance development process (Nepia, email 2013a).

In 1995 Kilimogo Productions was founded in Dunedin by Rangimoana Taylor, Hilary Halba, Awatea Edin, and Cindy Diver. This was a bicultural theatre company that decided to use kaitiaki and Halba (2012) interprets this role as the 'guardian who watches over'. She describes how the kaitiaki was the person Māori would take with them when they had to cross the land and the kaumātua was too old to travel: 'the kaitiaki was a guide with knowledge of tikanga who could travel with them. They offered cultural protection' (Halba, interview 2012). Kilimogo were informed by the Southern tikanga of Ngai Tahu where relationships are shaped by a very particular connection to the land:

The Southern iwi were seasonally nomadic and often covered huge distances, which informed the guidance of the kaitiaki. The southern way of imparting knowledge is

that the teacher and student travel across a landscape. It is the journey between the student and teacher. Each time they make the journey there is new information as the landscape will reveal everything about itself. The teacher is the guide pointing the way. Their bodies hold the experience of the journey. (Halba, interview 2012)

In this practice the kaitiaki operates both as guardian and guide representing the kaumātua on the road. They are a performance developer that can walk beside other practitioners in an open dialogue. Nepia notes that the role of kaitiaki as both guide and guardian reflects the poetics of Māori language where words have multiple meanings (Nepia, email 2013a). In this practice the kaitiaki finds a balance between the protection of tikanga and new ways of working. At the beginning of Kilimogo's practice Rangimoana Taylor was kaitiaki for co-director Halba but later worked with a young female writer, Rua McCallum: 'she was journeying with us, alongside us, with a different kind of guiding role. She was a writer but she came on board as a cultural guardian' (Halba, interview 2012).

Halba documents how their bi-cultural practice constantly negotiated between tikanga and ideas of European theatre. She describes this field of negotiation as 'a third unstable state – in which one field of knowledge (theatre or tikanga) has provisional primacy at any moment' (Halba 2007a:37). Halba illustrates this situation using the example of a difficult rehearsal process where Rangimoana Taylor, their kaitiaki, suggested that they should stop the rehearsal and re-schedule with a complete run of the performance at dawn the next day. Halba's European theatre training led her to believe that this was not a good idea because the actors would be too tired and hungry to perform well. However, Taylor had specifically chosen this liminal time, between darkness and light, when most Māori rituals are conducted 'in the presence of the gods and the spirits of the ancestors that have passed on' (Barlow 1991:184). Halba recognised that it was an inspired intervention, 'the actors found new



possibilities and discoveries in the space between sleeping and waking, at te whaiao, the sacred time before sunrise' (Halba, interview 2012).

In 2010 Quartett Theatre, made up of six New Zealand practitioners, toured Europe with *Skin Tight* and *Mo & Jess kill Susie*, two established plays by the writer and script advisor Gary Henderson. The company here employed Rangimoana Taylor as the kaumātua for the tour and described his role as 'the listening ear' and 'the binding glue' (Halba, Tweddle and Taylor 2011:1). The choice to use kaumātua over kaitiaki would seem to grant more status honour and authority to the 'wise elder'. However, Nepia points out that the status of the kaumātua or kaitiaki 'depends on the quality of advice or knowledge that the respective person would have' (Nepia, email 2013b). Taylor advised them on their integrated casting policy and how Māori actors would change the cultural references within the plays. He also played the role of the very old man in the final moments of the love story *Skin Tight*. In their description of the process Halba, Tweddle and Taylor stress that 'elders serve as a critical link to the past in the present context to ensure cultural practices and tribal knowledge remains intact for future generations' (Ka'ai and Higgins, cited by Halba, Tweddle and Taylor 2011:4). I suggest that the kaumātua here follows Beddie's definition of the conservationist dramaturge: 'looking after the species while also separately nurturing diversity (2006:4). Taylor is both an experienced theatre practitioner who can be a sounding board for production decisions and a respected elder with a thorough knowledge of tikanga and te Reo. This practice respects Māori culture and protocol but also creates the possibility for experimentation and new connections. The kaumātua Bob Wiki notes that 'where there are two cultures like this, people start to ask how the two will work together. You could call me the go-between' (Halba, Tweddle and Taylor 2011:4). In an interview with Mark Amery, he said:

It's my job to make actors, directors and theatre managers understand that, if they want me to bring Māori protocol into the theatre, it needs to be adhered to properly. (Halba, Tweddle and Taylor 2011:4)

The director Murray Lynch describes how Wiki had to be named first in the credits for *Waiora* but 'Bob was not always black and white – he supported the process – if we were challenging tikanga he would provide a positive perspective' (Lynch, interview 2012). Roma Potiki has never experienced a situation where the kaumātua and practitioners disagree but she recognises that a company have to choose their kaumātua with care:

Just because someone is a certain age and Māori, they may or may not be helpful. There is respect for elders but they may not be great people, they are only human. We have to make our own judgements and not always kow-tow to someone who is kaumātua. Having a kaumātua who is not obstructive or destructive is incredibly helpful to the process. (Roma Potiki, interview 2012)

For Quartett Theatre Company, Taylor was a 'go-between' positioned between 'inside' and 'outside'. He was a respected elder who was able to both protect tikanga and provide tautoko (support). In this way he conserved the past and guided the future. He was also an important orator when making new connections and offering hospitality. He enabled the company to share both the cultures of New Zealand with a European audience. Halba, Tweddle and Taylor argue that 'he binds the group together, allowing us to progress as a united whānau' (Halba, Tweddle and Taylor 2011:8). In this thesis there are many examples where the dramaturge has helped to bind the group together to create a collective performance vision. The difference here is that a kaumātua has the power to censor representation if tikanga is not respected. The kaumātua also creates an important spiritual framework for the proceedings providing blessings and prayers to keep Māori integrity intact. There is the belief that spirits are always present and the performance provocation must be 'settled' or closed at the finish. Grace-Smith describes this as:

Making it noa (a state of being normal, free from tapu – the sacred), making it safe, really, calming the waves and the kehua (spirits, ghosts) that have been brought out of the woodwork. Most of my plays incorporate a waiata into the end, just to calm the oceans a bit. (Grace-Smith 2007:281)

Once again Grace-Smith stresses that it is very important to sustain Maori beliefs.

Jenni Heka was employed as Māori and Pacific Advisor for Playmarket in Auckland from 2007 to 2012. In that time Heka never worked with a kaumātua during a development process but if the role had been requested she would have employed Rawiri Paratene because ‘he would help me to know that I am doing the right thing’ (Heka, interview 2011). Here Heka connects the idea of kaumātua as respected elder with someone who is a senior theatre practitioner. Playmarket allow the writer to decide how they want to celebrate Māori protocol. A Māori writer may choose not to work with a kaumātua; they may decide to say their own karakia (prayers) or the kaumātua may only mark the opening and closing of the development process with a blessing. Each situation is different depending on what is important to the writer (Heka, interview 2011).

### **Recent development opportunities**

Heka’s post was created by Playmarket to support Māori and Pacific Island writers because there had been no new Māori plays in 2005 and 2006 and The Pasifika Playwrights Forum met only once a year (Heka, interview 2011). From 2007 to 2011 Heka helped to develop the Te Arapiki Māori Writers group and The Banana Boat Polynesian Writers group in Auckland. This occurred though a complex process that involved building trust and new relationships. Heka notes that in 2007 Māori playwrights were only interested in taking their stories to Māori television and working in film (after the success of the Māori film *Whale Rider*). She had to persuade Polynesian and Māori writers to work in theatre and to create a

first draft for development. In 2012 Playmarket sent Pākehā script advisor Stuart Hoar and Samoan playwright Victor Rodger to lead ‘Brown Ink’ writing workshops throughout New Zealand: ‘Stuart addresses structure – the how and why – the rules. And Victor provides a Polynesian perspective’ (Heka, interview 2011). These workshops teach narrative structure: ‘we were teaching them a formula – how to get from A to B – so that they could use it to tell their stories’ (Heka, interview 2011). In Chapter Three I observed how an original performance vision can be compromised when an architectural structure or master concept is imposed. Waters in Britain (Luckhurst 2006:214) and Gurney in America (Brockett 2004:309) argue that this work can be inherently reactionary if the writer becomes a construct for the script advisor and the writing becomes homogenised. In December 2012 the position of Māori and Pacific Development Officer became dis-established at Playmarket supporting a rationale of ‘greater efficiency’ (Lynch, email 6/11/2012). It will be important to monitor the impact of this decision in research beyond this thesis.

In 2001 Kouka founded Tawata Theatre Company, which grew out of the Wellington based ‘Writers Block’ writing group to work with Māori, Pacific Island and Asian emerging writers:

Tawata productions is a kaupapa Māori company, that is the company is Māori and the majority of the work is Māori related, but we take the concept of kaitiaki (guide and guardian) and relate that to working with and helping other communities to have a voice (Pacific Island, South Asian and Asian). We see Tawata Productions as a house for ‘other voices’ and as we are not part of the mainstream theatres understand difference and what is required to present this work. (Kouka, email interview 2012)

As a dramaturge Kouka now embraces the role of kaitiaki, defining the term as both guide and guardian, while developing writers from other cultures under a Māori framework. Tawata Productions is both a writers’ company (where the writer is at the centre of the creative

process) and a film company developing short and feature films. It is interesting that the written text has become privileged in this Māori development process:

The words and the text are of the most importance, I do not like to have actors improvising scenes. This takes the korero away from the writer rather than feeds into it. Understand what their needs are and use what experience I have to support and challenge them. Confidence and arrogance creates challenging passionate work and this is the strength new writing has. (Kouka, email interview 2012)

This focus on the individual and the written text comes from European literary theatre. It is very different from the *whare tapere* where cultural texts are embodied through gesture and movement. However, the emphasis on ‘finding a voice’ reflects an oral tradition and the subaltern politics of post colonialism. Kouka worked for 9 years as a script developer for The New Zealand Film Commission and Radio New Zealand, which meant that during this time he was unable to devote his time to Tawata and his own writing.

In 2010 Kouka returned to work with Tawata ‘to re energise the Māori theatre community in Wellington, as it has been dormant for the last five years with sporadic productions by Taki Rua’ (Kouka, email interview 2012). He wrote *I, George Nepia*, which was produced by Tawata and celebrates the life of an East Coast Māori boy who became one of New Zealand’s most loved rugby players. In 2012 Kouka wrote and directed *Tu* which was adapted from the novel by Patricia Grace. This is the fifth play by Kouka that has been part of the International Festival in Wellington. He took 4 years to develop the project and has realised that this process was very important when producing a new work for this festival. International works are well established before they come to the festival so new New Zealand work can often suffer in comparison. He wanted to present a mature work and had two development seasons at Victoria University and in Gisborne (Kouka, email interview 2012).

Murray Lynch (Director of Playmarket) was employed as dramaturge in the first one-week workshop. It is interesting that Kouka continues to use the workshop process and the term dramaturge when developing his practice. He has not followed the Playmarket policy to replace the dramaturge with the ‘script advisor’ and the workshop with the ‘clinic’. Although he concentrates on the writer, he remains committed to a collaborative development process between a group of theatre practitioners. Lynch had been the director of *Waiora* and had worked with many of the creative team from *Tu* in that production and also as a teacher at Toi Whakaari Drama School. He states that there was a sense of whānau (family) that enabled them ‘to be able to challenge without censoring’. His methodology as a dramaturge is informed by his experience as a director where he examines the characters’ journeys to question: ‘How have they moved? Is there a hole in the storytelling and the shape? Who is the central protagonist?’ However, he begins by asking the writer: ‘what do you need to move the writing forward?’ In the development of *Tu* he was working on his feet as dramaturge and director, staging visual offers to see what would work (Lynch, interview 2012). After this workshop Kouka decided to develop and direct the work inside Tawata without a kaumātua.

Kouka aims to be a ‘shapeshifter’ in the development process as he finds the balance between a living tikanga and performance experimentation: ‘tikanga is experimentation – our culture is always evolving’ (Kouka, interview 2012). Mead (2003) argues that tikanga is not frozen in time, ‘but consists of ideas, interpretations and modifications added by generations of Māori’ (Mead 2003:13). Kouka comes from the activist generation that had to fight to establish their voice beside Pākehā theatre. His work privileges the written text and employs a European concatenate narrative structure to present a Māori performance vision. Kouka is committed to the development of Māori practice but also operates as a kaitiaki to other voices in New Zealand. At Tawata he is currently developing new works with the Cambodian writer Sarita So and the Srilankan playwright and performer Ahi Karunahran. They work within a

Māori framework ‘but this supports and does not dominate that of the tauīwi (non-Māori) practitioner, it is their work and from their point of view and that is what we are interested in’ (Kouka, interview 2012). Kouka continues to argue that ‘the theatre remains a foreign place for Māori and there is still not a huge amount of Māori and Pacific Island work around. Māori audiences need work and development. We need leaders to access the work’ (Kouka, interview 2012).

### **Mapping developments**

There is now a range of development opportunities, and Māori practitioners are able to decide the ‘best fit’ for their practice. Roma Potiki argues for ‘the right to control and present our own material in the way which we deem most suitable, and using processes we have determined’ (Potiki 1991:57). Māori theatre as Tino Rangatiratanga (self-determination) is the philosophy of Tamatane in *Te Raukura* who argues for a separate Māori practice and future. In this work practitioners can choose to work in Te Reo Māori with a kaumātua who will interpret their performance decisions according to Māori protocol and custom. They can preserve, protect, nurture, conserve, and watch over the Māori world to reproduce past structures and ensure cultural safety. The kaumātua creates the ‘doxa’ of this practice shaped by the ‘habitus’ of Māori culture. The whakapapa (genealogy) and legacy of the ancestors informs the kaumātua’s interventions and interpretations. This way of working is a separate Māori development process which follows Te Ua in *Te Raukura* by fighting for the past and holding onto old ways. It may not nurture diversity and encourage new environments to flourish alongside established ones.

Other practitioners may choose to work with a performance practitioner (such as Rawiri Paratene, Rangimoana Taylor, Charles Royal, Moana Nepia or Roma Potiki) as kaitiaki. This role is positioned on the creative fold between guardian and guide. These

practitioners are able to push the boundaries of performance and guide Māori interpretations through a living tikanga. Bicultural theatre projects may also work in this way or choose to employ both a kaumātua and a dramaturge. In this situation the company has to negotiate a balance between conservation and experimentation. This reflects the philosophy of Koroheke in *Te Raukura* who argues for a peaceful development that honours Māori values. Balme describes these strategies under the concept of syncretic theatre: ‘the amalgamation of indigenous performance forms with certain conventions and practices of the Euro-American theatre tradition’ (Balme, in Pavis 1996:180). He believes that there must be a balance between the two poles so that the signs can be read by various cultures: ‘without forfeiting either artistic or cultural integrity’ (Balme, in Pavis 1996:186). Halba describes how Kilmogo Theatre Company later decided that two separate voices were required in the development process to represent tikanga and theatre. Rangimoana Taylor became ill when he worked as kaumātua and co-director on the Kilmogo production of *Nga Tangata Toa*:

This ill-considered deed of figuring him as both co-director and kaumātua placed an enormous strain on him as he attempted to negotiate and preside over both theatrical and life world frames, and he became ill. We learned that if a dialogue is to be set up, there must be two voices present, and therefore two experts, one presiding over te Ao Māori (on its own terms) and the other over theatre (on its own terms). (Halba, interview 2012)

Here it was too hard for one person to hold artistic and cultural integrity at the same time.

Other Māori performance practitioners may not want their work to be shaped by their cultural identity and choose to work with a Pākehā dramaturge. Most Māori performance practitioners find subtle ways to acknowledge protocol within their work and Kouka admits that ‘there is a feeling among many practitioners that they have moved past the need to illustrate the culture’ (Kouka 1999:16). Heka points out that different generations have alternative ways of seeing, and the work is not the same in Auckland and Wellington: ‘in



Auckland there has not been the same engagement with magical realism but a desire to write about poverty, how hard life is and what keeps communities together' (Heka, interview 2011).

The roles of the *kaumātua*, *kaitiaki* and *dramaturge* have evolved as Māori practitioners have gained more experience and managed the development process themselves. Many practitioners now embody a living *tikanga* in their performance decisions. These developments demonstrate the shift from anxiety to confidence, which is described by Roma Potiki when she argues for a contemporary and sophisticated Māori theatre (Potiki 1991:57). A living and embodied *tikanga* can challenge some of the idealised myths of the Māori world to 'disturb, heal and celebrate' (Potiki 1991:60). She points out that not all Māori have a strong spiritual connection, a supportive *whānau*, a worse life in the city, and a positive connection with the idea of the Māori man as warrior: 'we need to probe for a kind of objective truth' (Potiki 1991:62). Jenny Heka notes that 'sometimes being *tūturu* (authentic) Māori can hold you back or get in the way' (Heka, interview 2011), and Rangimoana Taylor observes that there is a misconception that if a practitioner is Māori, they can only do Māori things:

In some parts of the country they still don't see that if you're Māori you can play any role. Because we're brought up in this society we are very capable of playing Kings of England or the Prime Minister of Denmark. (Taylor in Halba 2007b:218)

The conservationist *dramaturge* may want to protect the species but 'there is also a responsibility to nurture diversity and ensure that new landscapes and evolving environments can flourish alongside the established ones' (Beddie 2006:4). Royal argues that Māori should not 'become lost in the past through obsessive examination but rather to render the past relevant to the present' (Royal 1998:212). The work has to evolve and develop in order to stay alive: 'you need to work on integration and extension so that the form does not become

clichéd and as dead as any other form' (Roma Potiki, in Pavis 1996:177). Kaitiaki, encompassing roles of conservationist, navigator, guardian and guide are thus positioned within a continuum of cultural innovation where conservation is best understood as dynamic rather than static.

## **Chapter 6. Multicultural Practice: The Dramaturge as Bridge-Builder**

While the government has defined New Zealand as a bi-cultural society, different waves of immigration have created a multicultural country. For well over 150 years new immigrants have been settling in New Zealand. The Chinese gold miners in the 1860s were arguably the first citizens to challenge the bi-cultural identity of New Zealand. There was a wave of Pacific migrants in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by people from other places, predominantly Asia, in the 1980s. In the '90s migrants also came from Africa and the Middle East and 'by 2006 only 67% of people living in New Zealand were exclusively European blood, compared to 90% 30 years earlier' (Government of New Zealand 2012:13). In recent decades Auckland has been one of the fastest growing regions in Australasia, growing by 12.4 per cent in the decade from 1998 to 2008. There is a wide variety of ethnicities, with people from 120 countries represented. New Zealand also accepts 750 refugees per year mandated by the United Nations. As part of the Pacific Access Category, 650 citizens come from Fiji, Kiribati, and Tonga, while 1,100 Samoan citizens come under the Samoan Quota Scheme (Auckland Council 2012:1–8). Once resident, these people can apply to bring other family members and apply for permanent residency. Braidotti observes how waves of migration change ideas of belonging and national identity:

We have to stop looking at immigration as a problem and see immigration as simply the fact of globalization. We have to start from the fact that the world will never be culturally and ethnically homogenous again; that world is over. Then, we have to think about multiple forms of belonging of subjects and map out different configurations of belongings, multiple ways in which ethnicity, nationality and citizenship can actually be combined, even within the national state. (Braidotti 2010:2)

The world has never been culturally or ethnically homogenous but Braidotti argues that human beings need to establish a collective responsibility for immigration and the environment to survive in the future. This chapter analyses how the dramaturge as bridge-builder can facilitate new connections between different cultural groups and multiple texts to create multicultural and multimedia performance.

I examine how new citizens of New Zealand have developed their stories to establish a sense of belonging and cultural identity. The case study is a community theatre performance, *Our Street*, where I was employed as the dramaturge. In this example I explore how the dramaturge can use their 'outside' eye to develop a sense of 'inside' connectedness. The Brazilian dramaturge Lepecki argues that he is an intermediary responsible for collaborative cohesion and the German dramaturge Adler comments that the role has 'to be the integrator and the communicator, and you have to mediate between all these parties' (Lepecki, in Turner and Behrndt 2008:161). The dramaturge is a role that has the potential to build bridges between different performance languages, cultures and practitioners 'to establish what each element might mean in relation to the whole piece' (Turner and Behrndt 2008:180). In multicultural performance the focus is how different cultural experiences can come together.

Before introducing my practice-led case-study it is important to examine what is meant by intracultural and intercultural performance. This lexicon is indicative of the history of multiculturalism in contemporary urban societies. In Britain Jatinda Verma (2010), director of Asian theatre company Tara Arts, has argued that the terms 'intercultural', 'multicultural' and 'ethnicity' have become words that describe, delineate, and demarcate 'us' and 'them'. They are all labels that attempt to categorise distinctive groups of people. It is important to question the relations of power and whether cultural identity is constructed by 'insiders' or 'outsiders'. Raymond Williams (1976) wrote that culture is one of the most

complex words in the English language. Most contemporary understandings of the term stress the point that it is a dynamic, fluid and interactive process that involves a continual negotiation of meaning.

Intracultural and multicultural practice attempts to maintain the unique identity of each culture within the work. Holledge and Tompkins (2000:7) describe intercultural performance as ‘the meeting in the moment of performance of two or more cultural traditions’. It is important to examine the ethics of intercultural performance when the work assimilates elements of more than one culture to create a new form. Patrice Pavis (1996) writes that it is most useful to describe the idea of intercultural exchange because it is still too soon to propose a theory of intercultural theatre. He describes how intercultural theatre ‘creates hybrid forms drawing upon a more or less conscious and voluntary mixing of performance traditions traceable to distinct cultural areas’ (Pavis 1996:8), and argues that these performances can be imitational (when a group imitates a foreign form), adaptive (when the performances of one culture are adapted to the expectations of a different audience) or universal (when a performance is considered to be acceptable by all cultural groups).

The process of cultural mediation is central to the intercultural practice of Italian dramaturge Eugenio Barba. He describes all dramaturgy as a synthesising process, a ‘weave’ or ‘weaving together’ (Barba 1985:75). Working with his international company at the Odin Theatre in Holstebro, Barba mixes different cultural traditions of performance to produce new forms. He integrates all aspects of performance within his dramaturgical process where the written text is only one component. First, his actors, from different cultures and performance traditions, have a rigorous training process to master the composition exercises. Then Barba begins the development process with a basic theme or cluster of themes and the actors respond individually according to their different performance traditions. He provides suggestions to extend the work through questions and operates as a mediator to create the

montage: ‘he combines the physical, vocal and musical elements into a single performance text’ (Watson 1993:87). The shape of the work is informed by the performers, their different cultures and traditions of practice. Barba has rejected the linear narrative to pursue the possibilities of performance and the active spectator. In Chapter Seven I investigate how these ideas have influenced ‘new dramaturgies’ in Britain and Australia.

As the bridge-builder dramaturge Barba mediates intercultural connections and new forms of performance. However, this methodology has been criticised for having a questionable reflexivity and a restricted dialogue with participants: ‘what we get is Barba’s own view of performance through the Others (i.e. Asian performers) he studies’ (Zarilli, 1988:103). This critique challenges the politics of engagement to stress the importance of ethical accountability: ‘the power to impose on people representations of themselves, or of others, on their behalf, is intrinsically oppressive’ (Braidotti 2006:13). In New Zealand it could be argued that one example of successful intercultural practice was the Māori production of Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*, which played Wellington and Auckland before travelling to The Globe Theatre in 2012. This work was a bi-cultural exchange between an English text and the culture of Māori performance practice. It created a bridge and dialogue between two cultures that honoured both traditions to create a new performance vision.

Intracultural and multicultural performance honour diversity and create a cultural mosaic rather than an assimilation of different performance traditions. In Britain Kristine Landon-Smith (2011), director of the Asian theatre company Tamasha, argues that intercultural theatre assumes a position of equality and ignores difference, while intracultural theatre embraces the diverse cultural contexts of the actors. Intracultural theatre works with the plurality of the actors, who may have a foot in two worlds, to enable them to have an authentic connection with the material and become more expressive. It is different from the

intercultural work of Barba because it retains each cultural connection rather than attempting to weave a new form. According to Pavis, a multicultural exchange is only possible:

When the political system in place recognises, if only on paper, the existence of cultural or national communities and encourages their cooperation, without hiding behind the shibboleth of national identity. (Pavis 1996:8)

### **Finding a voice in New Zealand**

The year of 1997 was important for the development of different cultural voices in New Zealand theatre. At this time there were 65,000 New Zealanders of Pacific Island descent and they had begun to tell their own stories (O'Donnell 2007:307). The Pacific Theatre Company and Pacific Underground had created opportunities for Pacific Island practitioners to create their own work. The director Justine Simej-Barton noted that: 'in the past Pacific Island culture has often been regarded on a superficial, tourist dance-and-entertainment level. Now Pacific Island theatre is offering something deeper and more meaningful' (Simej-Barton cited by Clark 1988:14). 1997 *Dawn Raids* was performed by Oscar Kightley and David Fane and *Frangipani Perfume* by Makerita Urale. In this work David O'Donnell observes the strong representations of Samoan women, the influence of television on dramaturgy, the use of comedy and the importance of family relationships as new immigrants cope with *Palagi* (European) culture (O'Donnell 2007:321). This work was followed by the writing of Toa Fraser, of Fijian descent, with *Bare* in 1998 and *Number 2* in 2000.

Lisa Warrington (2007) documents how, at the same time, Asian writers were finding a voice in Aotearoa with *Ka Shue (Letters Home)* by Chinese writer Linda Chanwai Earle in 1996 and *The Wholly Grain* by Sonia Lee in 1997. In the same year, after training at Toi Whakaari, the Indian performer Jacob Rajan founded Indian Ink Theatre Company with Justin Lewis. *Krishnan's Dairy* became the first of a trilogy of plays that explored the lives of

the Indian New Zealander through collaboration with the dramaturge Murray Edmond and the tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, masks, live music and puppetry. This work was followed by another Indian theatre company, 'Those Indian Guys' with Tarun Mohanbhai and Rajeev Varma, who used comedy to explore the Indian immigrant experience in New Zealand. Altogether, this body of work challenged the narrow conception of New Zealand as a mono-cultural or bi-cultural society. However, these examples present the separate voices of each cultural group rather than multicultural connections. My practice-led case study explores the possibilities for both intracultural performance (honouring each separate culture) and intercultural performance (assimilating different cultures to create new forms).

The dramaturge's process of cultural mediation is shown through a community theatre project in Auckland. Community theatre refers to a theatre performance made in relation to a specific community. It may be made by the community with no outside help or in collaboration with professional theatre artists: 'whereas in the USA "community theatre" usually refers to amateur theatre, in Britain the term refers essentially to professionals, based in and working for the local community' (Jackson 1992:819). This may involve the creation of plays for a specific geographical community or for a specific community of interest (for example gay theatre). Community theatre may also animate a group to create their own performance:

Despite their manifold differences of purpose and strategy ... these companies ... tend to operate within communities that are theatre-less and in other ways under-privileged ... the best companies have succeeded in creating theatre that is at once entertaining, directly relevant to the concerns of its audiences, challenging, un-patronising and, in its standards of performance, easily comparable to (if it does not surpass) most mainstream theatre. (Jackson 1992:819)



In the Auckland project a team of seven professional artists were employed by Auckland Council to facilitate the production of a community performance that was to be devised and written by the community. The aim was that different art forms would be woven together to create a work that would reflect their individual and collective identities. I attempt to analyse the bridge-building process and the ethics of performance development. As the dramaturge on *Our Street*, my role was to build bridges between the Pacific Island, Indian and Somali communities and many different performance texts. This project illustrates how New Zealand is developing an identity based on multiple ethnicities that reflects the character of its increasingly multicultural society.

### **Multicultural practice in New Zealand**

*Our Street* was a multimedia community theatre production devised and written by more than 340 residents from the suburbs of Wesley, Mount Roskill and Mount Albert in Auckland during 2008. The participants came from Australia, Cambodia, China, England, Fiji, India, Indonesia, New Zealand, Pakistan Raratonga, Rwanda, Samoa, Somalia, Sri Lanka, and Tonga. In this case study I examine how the dramaturge can be positioned between ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ to mediate multiple cultures and art forms. The project was supported by Auckland Council to encourage cultural diversity and community connections. Clare Carmody, The Auckland City Council Arts Officer and producer for *Our Street*, describes why and how the project was funded:

The diversity provided opportunity, possibility and challenges. The community lived with intercultural conflicts. There are gangs in these neighbourhoods and there have been racial tensions between the Pacific Island and Somali young men after a fight between the two groups ended in murder. This combined with a ‘media beat up’ and the fact that the street where some of our participants lived was described by Prime Minister John Key as “New Zealand’s street of shame” in his successful election

campaign. However the Mayor of Auckland supported the project and *Our Street* was funded through community arts funding and a special diversity fund. (Carmody, presentation 2011)

This description illustrates Pavis's argument that multicultural exchange is only possible when the political system prioritises multicultural connections and collaboration.

### **Developing the artists**

A transcultural team of seven artists was chosen to work on the project, including Samoan theatre director Justine Simeu-Barton, Tongan visual artist Terry Koloamatangi Klaves, Fijian musical director Darren Kamali, Samoan choreographers Sefa Enari and Charlene Tedrow, American composer Kirsten Zemke, and myself – a British dramaturge:

I wanted not just theatre makers but community artists from all forms. With enough money to be responsive to needs I was able to establish a team of artists to run over 150 workshops in forms as diverse as: creative writing, graphic design and visual art, reggae, Bollywood, traditional pacific island and hip hop dance, film making, animation and of course drama. (Carmody, presentation 2011)

One of the first objectives for the project was to establish a shared vision among the team of artists. We had never worked together before and the producers/Arts Officers from Auckland Council wanted to put us 'in the same boat as the participants to give them the shared experience of learning to collaborate with someone new' (Carmody, presentation 2011). The shared experience of working transculturally with new people meant that everyone had to step outside the familiar and take risks. There was no 'expert' overview and the team of artists had to find ways to value difference and work together. In one of the early 'team forming workshops' the producers asked the artists to draw an image to represent how we would work together. The Samoan choreographer drew a *fale* (Samoan house) held up by foundation poles. In Samoa the use and function of the *fale* is closely linked to the system of

Samoan social organisation, especially the *Fa'amatai* chiefly system. Those gathered sit in formalised positions so that the middle posts, *Matua Tala*, are reserved for the leading chiefs and the side posts are occupied by orators. The posts at the back of the house, *Talatua*, indicate the positions maintained by those serving the gathering. The choreographer explained how in Samoan community meetings everyone sits at a different pole and they hand around a kava bowl. Whoever has the bowl can speak, following a clear structure that everyone understands. He proposed that the artists should work in this way and remain by the pole where they were the expert. This would create a clearly structured cooperative process for interaction and a respect for different ways of working. By concentrating on our separate and different roles we would be able to play to our own strengths.

This was very different from how the producers had imagined we would collaborate. Clare Carmody wanted 'everyone to take a risk together and leap into the unknown, to move out of our comfort zones away from traditional roles and toward something new' (Carmody, presentation 2011). As the dramaturge I realised I had to challenge the Samoan choreographer's vision and propose a more collaborative way of working. My first intervention was through the question: *What if we experiment with new ways of working and I come to your pole or you come to mine?* I stated that my job was to visit every pole to find connections and different ways to collaborate. After some discussion this way of working was accepted by the artists and I then proposed that they might each introduce their individual art form through a practical workshop. In these workshops (for the other artists) they were able to demonstrate their individual expertise but also step outside their comfort zone to experiment with new ways of working. They introduced their individual culture and shared different ways of seeing. This intervention mediated the collaborative process creating an inclusive agenda where everyone experienced being both the expert and the beginner. This 'give it a go' ethos inside the creative team was also an excellent role model for the

participants. As the project unfolded different strategies were needed according to the needs of the development process. Carmody observed that ‘when the dramaturge was involved it was important to have the crossing, the testing, the failing and the challenging’ (Carmody 2011). In this example ‘the crossing’ was trying different forms and ‘the testing’ was taking risks and collaborating. The experience made each artist vulnerable and ‘challenged’ their thinking. When we later moved from devising to rehearsing we needed to move back to a position where each individual was strong, confident and experienced in their own culture and art form.

### **Developing the communities**

This journey of artists then informed our work with the different communities. We began by working with the different cultural groups separately ‘at their own poles’ to establish and value the identity of each group. The workshops took place in community centres throughout Mount Roskill, Wesley, and Mount Albert. Our ethical position was that in a community engagement process, community members first need to define their interests and what they want from the project. Each ‘culture’ was defined by the ‘insider’ participants within the group. Sometimes they were united by a desire to work through one art form, for example, a mixed group of teenagers worked with the visual artist to create a *Zine* (magazine). Or they were connected by the same experience, for example, the Somali mothers and children shared their stories of migration with the director and dramaturge. We wanted to provide multiple access points into the project to engage with the broadest number of people and open up the widest range of possibilities. The idea was to get everyone working separately and comfortably in their own groups before moving towards intercultural collaboration. Through this strategy we aimed to establish their skill sets and individual cultural voice before they branched out to work with other communities.

When mediating this process it was very important for the director and dramaturge to establish a transparent and reflexive methodology. Nine months of funding allowed time to build an open collaborative dialogue based on a strong foundation of trust between the artists and the different communities. As the dramaturge I began working with student members from the Indian Theatre Company Prayas. They are an amateur theatre group that perform Indian plays in English in Auckland. They began by improvising a short, written text titled *Sticky Fingers* informed by their first impressions of Aotearoa and experiences of immigration. My methodology as dramaturge was to work through questions to encourage storytelling for example: *How and why did you come to New Zealand? What were your first impressions? How are you influenced by family, community and friends? Where is home?* These open-ended questions elicited discussion and improvisation enabling them to start developing a shared understanding and group identity.

Many of participants were new to the company and had not worked together before. The questions did not judge their contributions and gave them the power of final decision making. In improvisation, the writing process emerges from instant negotiation and the continuous spontaneous creation of text between actors. It is an authorless process in the conventional sense, involving ‘multiple scripters’ rather than one author. They made collective choices, editing and negotiating on their feet, before writing it down as a group. In this process I attempted to operate as both mirror and mediator. I aimed to reflect back their choices and suggest other possibilities for development through questions. Throughout this work I discussed my interventions with the group in an attempt to keep the methodology transparent, reflexive and open to many outcomes.

Deleuze’s (1994) account of the process of ‘becoming’ captures this way of working where rhizome connections create multiple possibilities for development. The dramaturge responds to the creative flow and many development opportunities are encouraged. It is

important to judge the timing of new questions so that the group continue to sustain their collaborative process and ownership of the work. Prayas were establishing a shared perspective and group understanding of their experience as ‘new’ New Zealanders through the process of coming together and working with drama. In the past they had only worked on the development of Indian texts. The questioning process enabled the group to explore multiple possibilities and then make their own choices about representation. The questioning process mediated creative composition to support intraculturalism and possibilities for intercultural exchange.

Another group were the Somali women and children who are the most recent refugees in the neighbourhood. The director and I had to gain their trust and began by spending time attending sewing workshops, nursery sessions, and a wedding celebration. Our facilitator in this process was Fadumo Ahmed who had worked as a midwife in Somalia and wanted new connections and more understanding for her community. Slowly the women began to share their stories of escape from Somalia and arrival in New Zealand but they were not ready to integrate within a large mixed performance so we decided to document their journey through a short film. This choice enabled Fadumo, who is a fluent English speaker, to tell their stories while we filmed the others in their nursery and sewing classes. In this process I asked Fadumo questions and the director filmed her responses. The film provided a safe, controlled medium that the group could then edit to share their experience with maximum exposure and control over a short period of time. The film then became part of the *Our Street* performance. In this process the women could shape how they were represented and, for example, used this opportunity to show only women who were wearing a veil. With each cultural group – Indian, Somali and Pacific Island – the director and dramaturge had to remain reflexive and transparent to negotiate the most culturally appropriate art form. We aimed to retain group ownership and an ethical integrity.

There were ten other groups working with the different communities through art, drama, dance, film, and music. My role was to move between them to encourage performance development and identify possible connections. Due to different commitments not all the participants were able to stay with the project so it was important to document their contributions. At Mount Albert Grammar School I led a ‘neighbourhood watch’ exercise where students kept a journal of stories from their street. Jeronimo Ponifasio, from Papua New Guinea, was unable to stay with the project but contributed this poem:

I found a bullet here  
Not in violent Papua New Guinea  
But in Mount Albert Road in New Zealand.  
The road where mothers  
Push their babies gently in prams  
And joggers float by  
Almost led by the music in their ipods.  
Do bullets drop here from somewhere else?  
From another violent place?  
Danger is trivial when you are a child  
Parents will always be there for you.  
Danger is more alive when you grow up  
Now on your own.  
But I heard the gun shots early at three  
I know where the blue house is.

(Jeronimo Ponifasio 2008)

This poem became an important provocation for performance development as we discussed the tensions between different communities.

Over an intensive week of workshops the different groups and other individual community members from Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka came together for the first time and shared their stories through writing, dance, visual

art, music and drama. This work mirrored the collaborations between the team of artists as the groups celebrated their individual voices and began to experiment with new ways of working. As dramaturge I spent the week searching for story connections, documenting key lines, reactions, observations and images. The dramaturge as documenter is very important in capturing ‘the legending processes’ for further development. My aim was to find a ‘bridge’ that could hold all the groups inside one performance. In one workshop a girl told a story about the street in which she lived where her neighbours from different countries stayed inside their houses and never talked. Over the summer a man built a fence around his house in the middle of the street. Each day the neighbours would gather beside him and begin to chat. Ironically as the fence grew higher and higher the neighbours spent more time together and the girl began to feel that she belonged to a community of the street. Unfortunately, once the fence was finished they all went back inside their houses. The girl described her sense of loss and longing for another event which would bring them together again. I realised that this story reflected the philosophy of the project and that it could shape the performance development.

Within the creative team I offered a multimedia storyline about a street where everyone stayed inside their own worlds – an Indian house, a Pacific Island house, a Somali house, and a Chinese house. This would facilitate an intracultural representation of each culture and their individual stories. The catalyst for change was inspired by a story from the director where two mothers from the Pacific Island and Indian houses had accidentally built a friendship through jogging very early in the morning and meeting to chat on a bridge where their paths crossed. This relationship would create a bridge between the different worlds. In this project the bridge-building practice was at the centre of the story. All the groups had been interested in wedding stories and the function of the ‘fence’ in the girl’s story would be two weddings happening on the same day from the Indian and Pacific Island houses. Across



all cultures weddings typically bring people together, providing both a rite of passage and a celebration of the coming together of different families and generations. These two weddings would enable the exploration of cultural tensions and traditions when values change in a new land, which would be shown through dance, music, film and drama. As each wedding faces a crisis, the different families would come together through the friendship between the two mothers. This was not a resolved ‘happy ending’ but offered moments of conflict juxtaposed with intercultural connections.

All these narrative ideas came from the different groups who had discussed different ways of meeting and sharing food. Without prompting each group had organically started to share wedding stories. This storyline ‘held up a mirror’ on the collective process and offered a way to fold and weave the different strands together to create one story and mediate one community – the *Our Street* depicted in the play’s title. Each group was able to shape their individual cultural stories within their separate houses but on the street they became one community. The creative team supported the intervention and worked with their different media to develop the performance. On one side of the stage was a Samoan Māori wedding, on the other an Indian wedding between a Punjabi and a South Indian. One reviewer claimed that ‘there is something uniquely Auckland to see a young Indian girl performing a Polynesian dance; and Pacific Island kids doing Bollywood’ (Field 2008). These moments of intercultural exchange offer possibilities for performance development in New Zealand and begin to challenge the bi-cultural notion of national identity.

As dramaturge I realised that this project required a delicate and transparent mediation process with an inclusive agenda and clear ethics. My employment as an ‘outside’ white British dramaturge in this multicultural context could be interpreted as a form of cultural colonialism. It was important to build trust between all the participants and a collective ownership of the work. The questioning process ensured that the participants retained control

of their performance decisions and a collective ownership of their material. I did not contribute any writing to the performance text. In the words of Cixous: 'you don't seek to master. To pocket the riches of the world. But rather to transmit: to make things loved by making them known (Cixous 1991:57). Each group gave their collective scripts to the director, Justine Simey-Barton, who then typed them into one document. Over eight drafts I mediated the composition process by suggesting different ways to weave the material together to represent the different cultures and art forms. The final narrative of *Our Street* reflected the journey of the project. The performance began through representations of separate worlds and intracultural stories. As the narrative developed they began to experiment with intercultural possibilities and establish a shared vision.

### **Developing the performance**

In this project I sustained an outside vision but there was a continual movement between outside and inside positions throughout the development process. In the final weeks of rehearsal the dramaturge often makes a final crossing to the inside. The audience then becomes 'the outside eye'. Due to bereavement, I suddenly had to return to Britain in the last 3 weeks of the rehearsal process. This situation created a heightened outside perspective when I returned for the production week. At this point the director did not want feedback. The time, just before a performance opens, is very vulnerable and she did not need to be unsettled. If I had been present in the final rehearsals there would have been more space for intervention.

In their performances the company owned and embodied their multiple texts and celebrated their intracultural and intercultural identities. The work had created a sense of community pride in the participants' connections to the 'Our Street' of Wesley, Mount Albert and Mount Roskill; what Les Back (1996) has termed neighbourhood nationalism. For the

participants the project engendered a sense of solidarity and collective community. Many individuals commented on how much they had discovered in common between their different cultures and how much they had been taken ‘beyond themselves’. This project honoured the individual cultural groups and created new intercultural connections. Supporting Braidotti’s notion of nomadic subjectivity, the stories reflected multiple belongings and the multiple ways in which: ‘ethnicity, nationality and citizenship can actually be combined, even within the same nation state’ (Braidotti 2010:2).

*Our Street* opened at The Concert Chamber of Auckland Town Hall to packed houses with a very diverse audience. After the performances audience members talked excitedly about seeing their worlds and experience on stage for the first time: ‘I have never been to anything like this in my life’ (audience member in Auckland Council Documentary). Another Mount Roskill resident commented:

It showed the diversity of the community. It was really good to see the Somali women because they are the latest input to our community. That will help them a lot. (Audience member in Auckland Council Documentary)

This was ‘believed-in theatre’ where people acted out their lives and experience for their own community:

The stories are theirs, the characters are themselves or people they know, the situations pertain directly to them, the places where they perform are part of their specific communities, the actions that they make are often consequential. In believed in theatre, real life has invaded theatre. (Schechner 1997:90)

It was interesting to witness meetings between different audiences when a classical concert was programmed next door in the town hall. In this project sometimes marginalised communities, which are often not represented in theatre, came together and found a collective voice with status and visibility at the centre the city. The reviewer Michael Field wrote ‘It’s

about trying to define what our Auckland is, and how it could be in the future' (Field 2008).

Bhabha observes:

These “in-between” spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha1994:2)

The hybridity of this multicultural project challenges New Zealand's bicultural identity and suggests a country in transition. It was polyphony of 'scripters' writing about their lives in Auckland during 2008 and celebrating a 'vibrant multi-ethnic heart' at the centre of the city. However, it has to be remembered that the project was artificially created through government-funded arts intervention. After the performances each group more or less went back 'to their own poles' (to use the fale metaphor from the Samoan choreographer) or 'went back inside their own houses' (to use the story from the Mount Albert student). At the same time there were some significant short-term developments. In the following Creative Communities funding round the Somali women won a grant to make a series of short films with the director Justine Simeu-Barton. Creative Communities also provided money for the band to record their music and the dancers to do more classes. However, these were temporary transformations and to achieve sustained development there has to be an on-going community investment. The Indian theatre group *Prayas* employed me as dramaturge, and made their next show about their journey to New Zealand and included some Polynesian actors. They have continued to build their work and audiences.

### **Mapping developments**

My case study shows how the dramaturge can build bridges between different texts and different cultures. This is an expansive practice where the work is much more than the

function of script advisor. These interventions are motivated by a political agenda that encourages social change and new connections. In a rapidly changing and ethnically mixed society we have to rethink our interconnections. Intracultural practice is important because it brings together and honours different cultures and performance traditions. Once this work is established practitioners are able to experiment and explore the possibilities for intercultural practice. For Schechner (1991), intercultural performance is vital for human survival beyond the rivalries and boundaries of nationalism. There is a translation process that is required to perform another culture and this experience can create new connections: ‘so that “them” and “us” are elided, or laid experientially side by side’ (Schechter, in Marranca & Dasgupta 1991:314).

Turner and Behrndt (2008:88) argue that intercultural theatre can be reductive and imply a dubious notion of universality. This is reflected in the orientalist critique which has been applied to the practice of Eugenio Barba. Turner and Behrndt argue for a ‘cultural hybridity’ that reflects the complexity of identity influenced by different cultural contexts. The hybridity of intracultural performance enables performers to create an authentic connection with their individual cultural experience but it also mobilises a culture of difference between participants (Bharucha 2000). A nomadic subjectivity, with multiple belongings, is particularly relevant to new migrant practitioners creating performances with a foot in different lands. However, all practitioners benefit from the challenge to habitual thinking and an engagement with difference: ‘When you have a community that is open to its difference and innovation, there seems to be more scope for innovative thinking’ (Grosz 2001:7)

In the last 5 years other New Zealand performances have continued to develop this hybrid subjectivity. The most recent example is *Culture Clash*, which was performed at TAPAC in Auckland during October 2012 and devised by a cast from China, India, Russia,

Albania, Britain, Samoa, France, Kosova, and New Zealand. Starting with the provocation ‘what is home?’ this group of emerging actors shared and developed their multiple stories with the director Beth Kayes, producer Margaret-Mary Hollins, and dramaturge Renee Liang. Another example has been *Be/longing* from Talking House Theatre Company and Otago University where I was again employed as dramaturge. This was a verbatim performance that wove together the stories of new immigrants to examine what it means to be a New Zealander. Bharucha (2000) warns against a postmodern tendency where the hybridity of the migrant is valued more than that of someone who has stayed in the same country and cannot move. However, in *Be/longing* the audience follow the journey of the ‘outsider’ (multiple new immigrants) to discover new ways of seeing what it means to be an ‘insider’ (the New Zealander). Much has been written about how postmodern practice restricts any kind of political analysis but these examples of New Zealand intracultural and intercultural practice offer many ways to re-imagine the world and invent new performance architectures.

## **Chapter 7. Interdisciplinary Practice: The Dramaturge as Catalyst**

Throughout the '90s the growth of postmodernism and the centralisation of postmodernist ideas in the academy challenged narrative structure and paved the way for 'new dramaturgies'. The linear concatenate structure has been tested by life experiences, which are 'no longer organised according to prescribed models of dramatic coherence or comprehensive symbolic references and does not realise synthesis' (Lehmann 2006:83). Anna Furse describes how interdisciplinary collaboration has created performance texts;

which may not include words (and writers); they might include specific visual elements (e.g. video); they will always include action (for performance is sine qua non an act), they will always be authored or co-authored. (Furse 2011:v)

In this work narrative structure is ruptured by multiple perspectives and a new mode of perception which responds to changes in social communication and information technologies:

When the progression of a story with its internal logic no longer forms the centre, when composition is no longer experienced as an organising quality but as an artificially imposed 'manufacture' as a mere sham of a logic of action that only serves clichés, then theatre is confronted with the position of possibilities beyond drama. (Lehmann 2006:26)

Postmodern experiments in performance have moved away from literary theatre, and critics have articulated 'the post-modern unease about the central place of the logic of the logos' (Boenisch 2010:162). Lehmann and Primavesi (2009) describe a postdramatic theatre where space, light, sound, movement, and gesture tend to have equal weight in performance composition. Postmodern performance disintegrates, dismantles and deconstructs performance structure to create the free combination of all theatrical signs: 'freedom from

subjection to hierarchies, freedom from the demands of coherency' (Lehmann 2006:83). In this final chapter I investigate how the dramaturge can use;

new modes of representation; new dramaturgical strategies; new ways of structuring and staging worlds, images and sounds; new ways of positioning bodies in time and space, new ways of creating temporal and spatial interrelations. (Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006:11)

Inter-disciplinary and experimental work has also been described through ideas of intermediality (Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006) and liminal performance (Broadhurst 1999) because it crosses the border lines between different media and creates new ways of working. Intermediality is associated with 'the blurring of generic boundaries, crossover and hybrid performances, intertextuality, intermediality, hypermediality and a self-conscious reflexivity that displays the devices of performance in performance' (Chapple and Kattenbelt 2006:11). In postdramatic theatre the spectators become active witnesses who 'are willing to tolerate gaps and suspend the assignment of meaning' (Jürs-Munby in Lehmann 2006:6). This work has been influenced by avant-garde theatre and the ideas of practitioners including Artaud, Meyerhold, Grotowski, Brecht, and Beckett. Examples of postdramatic dramaturgy can be seen in the work of Robert Wilson, The Wooster Group, Goat Island, Wuppertal Tanztheater, Impact Theatre, Forced Entertainment, La Fura dels Baus, and Desperate Optimists, among many others.

This interdisciplinary practice invites the dramaturge to re-think the principles of conventional ordering and structure to find new strategies and models of representation. Boenisch argues for more 'reflexive dramaturgies' that force spectators 'to negotiate between representation and presence, yet without the promise of a solution that would neatly reconcile both perspectives and thus 'restore order' (Boenisch 2010:172). I begin this chapter with examples of interdisciplinary practice from Britain and Australia but then concentrate on a



New Zealand case study. I investigate how the questioning process informed the composition of *Slip – I'm not falling, I'm just holding on for as long as you can hold me*, commissioned by Touch Compass Dance Company in 2010. This is an integrated dance company that combines dancers with and without disability for radically inclusive performance. I was employed as dramaturge for the first production and again when the work was re-mounted in 2011 and 2012. In this research I attempt to document what happens in the questioning process and employ Deleuze's concepts of 'becoming' and 'folding' to create an outside criticality.

Taking up the metaphor of the 'catalyst', I propose that the dramaturge occupies a liminal space situated between 'insider' and 'outsider' positions on the Deleuzian 'fold' of creativity. The anthropologist Victor Turner described liminality as 'a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure (Turner 1967:12). This is the space of doubt between performance decisions where questioning and dialogue can result in new discoveries.

### **The laboratory process**

The French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were committed to 'new thinking' and contested philosophical orthodoxy:

Deleuze's ideas may be useful (because)... structure is still not a fixed entity. It moves and changes, depending on how it is used, what is done with and to it, and how open it is to even further change. (Grosz 2008:6)

In her book *Architecture from the Outside* Grosz uses Deleuzian philosophy to offer new possibilities for architecture and structure that challenge habitual practice. Deleuze believed that the theatre of representation subscribes 'to a naturalised reliance on the presentation of sameness' (Deleuze 1994a:29) and argued for the performance event as a place of

‘becoming’ resulting in different concepts of structure and multiple possibilities. He argued for the diversity of becoming and difference rather than what is fixed, singular, usual, common place or typical. Laura Cull (2009) writes that Deleuze’s *One Less Manifesto* is a call to arms for theatre practitioners who want to challenge representation and ‘break free of this situation of conflictual, official and institutionalised representation’ (Deleuze, *One Less Manifesto* 1997a: 253). These ideas are very important for the dramaturge because they aim to unsettle established practice and create rhizome opportunities for future development. Working with Guattari, Deleuze aligned his performance analysis with the experimental work of Artaud, Bene, Wilson, Grotowski, and The Living Theatre to develop a revolutionary theatre which challenged the logic of sense:

A process against all structure and genesis, a floating time against pulsed time or tempo, experimentation against any kind of interpretation, and in which silence as sonorous rest also marks the state of movement. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:294–5)

This challenge results in a performance-making process of continuous movement with no fixed narratives. A pure Deleuzian dramaturge would have no compass and context but would continue to pursue new connections until exhaustion. In his book *The Deleuze Connections* John Rajchman argues that ‘to make connections one needs not knowledge, certainty, or even ontology, but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not yet completely sure what’ Rajchman (2001:7). This is an open process where the dramaturge is an agent of change and possibility rather than the expert that imposes structure: ‘to think is to experiment and not, in the first place, to judge’ (Rajchman 2001:5). Deleuze recognised the impossibility of organising life into closed structures and saw this as a cause for celebration: ‘the fact that we cannot secure a foundation for knowledge means that we are given the opportunity to invent, create and experiment’ (Colebrook 2002:2).

Guattari and Deleuze saw all thoughts and ideas as being interconnected or 'rhizomatic'. The rhizome metaphor is borrowed from biology where rhizomes are horizontal root systems and Lecerle (1990) argues that it creates an alternative logic of representation. As discussed in Chapter Three, Aristotle's tripartite structure has dominated literary theatre to create a formula for composition. Deleuze observes that this is 'a whole apparatus that is planted in thought in order to make it go in a straight line and produce the famous correct ideas' (Deleuze and Parnet 2007:25). However, rhizomes function through plural connections and spread horizontally without a clear ending or beginning; there is 'a multiplicity of interconnected shoots going off in all directions' (Deleuze and Parnet 2007:xi). The single rhizome has no meaning but when connected with other rhizomes something new is elaborated. Deleuze argued that there should be no fixed structures in performance creation but an open 'whole of proliferating connections' (Colebrook 2002:5). This kind of assemblage has shaped postmodern and postdramatic practice:

It is a map meant for those who want to do something with respect to new uncommon forces, which we don't quite yet grasp, who have a taste for the unknown, for what is not already determined by history or society. (Rajchman 2000:6).

At the heart of this work there is no absolute truth, which can be a problem for practitioners that are committed to a political analysis and ethical framework. In *Francis Bacon: the loss of sensation* (2002) Deleuze discusses how the figurative painter, when starting a new work, has an already prefigured image, in the form of clichés and probabilities, which will influence the form of the painting. Inspired by Deleuze, the painter Ian Jervis (2012) argues that the artist has to address 'the responsibility of forgetting' in order to create innovative new work.

To create this rupture Deleuze offers a radical questioning of all assumptions and rhizome connections to think in new ways. In 1967 he wrote a paper titled 'The Method of Dramatization', arguing for a questioning process that extends the development of ideas:

‘The Idea, the discovery of the Idea, is inseparable from a certain type of question’ (Deleuze 1967:1). He believed that the idea is a multiplicity, the spatio-temporal coordinates of which ‘can only be determined with the questions: Who? How? How much? Where and when? In what case?’ (Deleuze 1967:1). Deleuze’s philosophy encourages the dramaturge not to settle on familiar solutions but to question ideas and be open to new connections. This perspective is vital in the process of performance experimentation when practitioners are exploring what the work may become. There can be a tendency to default to traditional models of practice as the norm so the challenge for the dramaturge is to retain an open nomadic subjectivity which is accountable, embedded and embodied.

A Deleuzian perspective encourages us to see the work as always in development. The interest here is not in beginnings or endings but the space in the middle: ‘being in the middle of the line is the most uncomfortable position, one begins in the middle’ (Deleuze, cited in Marks 1998:33). This is the liminal space, on the creative ‘fold’ between ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’, where the dramaturge can discover new possibilities. Deleuze is interested in the different kinds of rhizome connection between ideas, and identifies three types of synthesis in the creative process: a connective synthesis (if ... then), a conjunctive synthesis (and ... and), and a disjunctive synthesis (either ... or) (Deleuze 1997b:xxvii). The concept of ‘becoming’ suggests that one idea does not become another but it is in the meeting between the two that something else ‘becomes’ possible: ‘becomings belong to geography; they are orientations, directions, entries, exits’ (Deleuze and Parnet 2007:2). Deleuze notes that the most difficult thing is to ‘make chance an object of affirmation’ (Stivale 2005:51).

Like Deleuze, Brian Massumi is interested in the active possibilities of transition and mobility. He invites practitioners to be open to new possibilities:

Take joy in your digressions. Because that is where the unexpected rises. That is the experimental aspect. If you know where you will end up when you begin, nothing has happened in the meantime. You have to be willing to surprize yourself writing things you didn't think you'd write. (Massumi 2002:202)

His argument is that new discoveries will come from risk and the unknown rather than the repetition of tried and tested structures. Massumi argues for a 'translogic' rather than 'metallogic':

A translogic is different from metallogic. It doesn't stand back and describe the way multiple logics and operative levels they model hold together. It *enters* the relations and tweaks as many as it can to get a sense of what may come. It is pragmatic. It imaginatively enters the fabric of transition and pulls as many strands as it can to see what emerges. It is effective. (Massumi 2002:207)

Translogic is very important in the liminal space of creative assemblage. The dramaturge as catalyst 'pulls on many strands' to discover what is possible. One example of this practice is the work of Tim Etchells with Forced Entertainment in Britain. He describes the process of collaborative composition using the 'Nice Cop/Nasty Cop' strategy for performance interrogation. This is used in the development of improvisations by asking questions to tease out 'stuff from the unconscious and work it' (Etchells 2009:53). As writer and dramaturge, Etchells facilitates this process to identify what is working. In this practice I suggest that Etchells sustains a sense of Deleuzian movement. He trusts discoveries and accidents and distrusts intentions, arguing that collaboration is about 'a mis-seeing, a mis-hearing, a deliberate lack of unity' (Etchells 1999:56). This work is informed as much by 'collective mis-understandings' as by a deliberate performance vision. This is not a process that follows a planned structure or blueprint, the work unfolds 'on the floor' and celebrates the possibilities of instability.

The company begin by questioning what the work is doing, which is also a central question for Deleuze. They then ask ‘What might it mean? What does this imply about structure? Would this work be sustainable as a show? What is missing from it? What does it remind one of?’ (Etchells 1999:53). Etchells describes the process as ‘bringing down a conceptual grid or frame onto what they were doing but then taking it off again and replacing it with another one’ (Etchells 1999:53). The frame is composed of carefully selected questions that may enable new ways of working and seeing. The choice and wording of each question is vital to the connective process. The American feminist scholar Peggy Phelan writes that Forced Entertainment has sustained a long commitment to a critical practice that ‘questions and fuels dreams’ (Phelan, in Etchells 1999:9).

Etchells pursues an active audience with characters ‘wandering at the edges’ of performance. He argues that the audience ‘prefer to find things rather than to be shown them’ (Etchells 1999:73) and is interested in the possibilities that come from mistakes, interruption and rupture. He embraces these moments that fracture narrative structure and offer fertile ground for performance development. He writes:

Connections are encouraged to emerge, parallels, echoes, fights, conflicts in the strands of material are teased out. But the whole is not allowed to cohere. The aim is that the mixture – by our will, our dramaturgy – is kept in a kind of indefinite and always dynamic suspension. The task of making sense is delegated elsewhere. (Etchells 2009:75)

Etchells describes the work as ‘doing time’, the images and text unfold over time, and through this process there is ‘the slowing of time, the shattering of it, the stretching and speeding of it’ (Etchells 2009:76). In this practice the audience make their own ‘rhizome’ connections and Etchells is located at the centre of the ‘becoming’ process as writer and dramaturge, juxtaposing different fragments of text:

The work we made or loved was often in fragments or layers (of image, sound, movement text), so too the writing should be in fragments – fragments between which the reader must slip and connect if she is to get anywhere. (Etchells 1999:23)

Forced Entertainment's most recent project, at the time of writing, is *The Coming Storm*. The publicity material captures their dramaturgical choices with disrupted broken narratives and multiple texts:

In this new work international innovators Forced Entertainment tangle and cross-cut multiple stories to make a compelling and unstable performance. From love and death to sex and laundry, from shipwrecks to falling snow, personal anecdotes rub shoulders with imaginary movies, and half-remembered novels bump into distorted fairytales. Using a method as inventive as it is absurd, six performers create, collaborate, ambush and disrupt this epic saga that is resolutely too big for the stage. The result is comical, contradictory and poignant; full of wrong-headed tricks, broken dances, sleazy drum interruptions and perfunctory piano accompaniment. Everything builds and everything shimmers. Everything teeters and everything trembles. Everything is reshaped and everything is cannibalised. (Forced Entertainment 2012: [www.forcedentertainment.com](http://www.forcedentertainment.com))

In this practice Forced Entertainment's fragmented and disintegrated assemblage forces the audience to make their own connections. The company disrupt the narrative of performance by 'questioning, stretching and breaking theatre in many different ways to see what can be built from the wreckage' (Forced Entertainment 2012: [www.forcedentertainment.com](http://www.forcedentertainment.com)).

I have identified the questioning process as catalyst for change but dramaturgical transition also requires the actions of listening, reflecting, facilitating, and suggesting. The sociologist Les Back argues that listening needs to be trained, and 'a form of openness to others needs to be crafted, a listening for the background and the half muted' (Back 2007:8). The choreographer Carol Brown describes a deep listening from the dramaturge that identifies the 'unconscious underbelly' or subtext that sits underneath the surface of a

performance work (Brown, interview 2010a). Badiou argues that there is always ‘something lying beneath or something at work in the situation, something that remains to be discovered through a constructive passage’ (Badiou, in Feltham 2008:108). The dramaturge listens and then attempts to articulate what is at work in the performance to inform the constructive process. Back cites fiction writer Eudora Welty to describe the ‘listening for a story, what might be at stake in a story and how small details and events connect to larger public issues’ (Back 2007:7). In the same way, the dramaturge listens for the performance vision and new connections. Back also quotes from the novel *If nobody speaks of remarkable things* by John McGregor:

You must always look with both your ears and listen with both your eyes. If nobody speaks of remarkable things then how can they be called remarkable? (Back 2007:8)

After a deep listening the questions reflect back the work and facilitate creative dialogue between participants with suggestions from the dramaturge. Badiou observes that the ‘generic truth’ does not emerge as soon as it is named but unfolds step by step through the process of enquiry:

An enquiry is an encounter with various multiples of the situation, in which a decision is made as to whether they are connected to the event or not. (Badiou 2008:108)

In the practice of a dramaturge these transitional actions of listening, reflecting, questioning, facilitating dialogue and suggesting create the ‘connective tissue’ (MacDonald 2010b: 92).

### **Creating new connections**

In 2006 Claire MacDonald set up the artist-led initiative ‘The Space Between Words’ which aimed ‘to empower artists to change the terms under which writing is practiced in conversation with, and as an informing element of, art and performance’ (MacDonald cited in



Turner 2008b:2). The idea came from another British symposium ‘The Articulate Practitioner’ in 2005, which highlighted the value of artist-to-artist networks fluid enough to allow new partnerships and collaborations. ‘The Articulate Practitioner’ built on feminist art practices and curatorial methods developed over two decades by Jill Greenhalgh of The Magdalena Project. This research project led to an international symposium, ‘Writing Encounters’, which created a network between practitioners working with text, visual and language poetry, digital writing, performance, theatre, film, music and dance. The project was guided by MacDonald’s feminist ethos and aimed to connect ‘writing artists’ (that may also be theatre practitioners, dancers and visual artists) and to host collaborative projects and events (MacDonald 2010c:thespacebetweenwords.org).

Inspired by MacDonald’s work, Catherine Turner (2008a), from Winchester University, began to organise another initiative, ‘Writing Space’. This project aimed to be radically inclusive, creating dialogues between performance and theatre artists whose writing practices were based across different genres. These initiatives reflect a Deleuzian commitment to ‘thinking the new’, through active experimentation, a nomadic perspective, and diversity. MacDonald and Turner are questioning established ways of working and creating new connections. The first project in 2008 was supported by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council and by Winchester University, while mentored by Writernet (the equivalent of Playmarket in New Zealand) and ‘the space between words’. A diverse group of artists was asked to work with students and consider questions about narrative, lead discussions, run workshops, and give presentations or share their perspectives on another artist. The central questions for the participants’ practice were *Why?* and *What?* These questions drew attention to their different reasons for making work and their contrasting practice.

Turner notes that there was a wide spectrum of ways in which the workshops informed, and continues to inform, both the participants' writing and their dramaturgical or academic work. This project demonstrates the possibilities for 'rhizome' connections between artists in the process of 'becoming'. In the meeting between different ways of working each artist was encouraged to be reflexive and open to new possibilities. Ideally, the dramaturge as catalyst sets up these interactions and offers creative 'foldings' through the questioning methodology. Turner identifies an expanding set of questions to ask of a performance text:

Does it seek to provide some revelation of the 'real' that surrounds us? If so, how? Does it seek to represent it through fictional narratives? Does it operate as a frame? Does it offer an interaction with found material? Does it (also) evoke the dreamed or the lost, the failed? The broken or the impossible? Does it draw attention to its own mechanisms, failed or otherwise? Does the dialogue take place across a stage? Is there a shift of axis so that the dialogue is primarily between the stage and the audience? Does it do without a stage or an audience or both? Does it generate the architecture of performance? Does it contribute to (or interrupt) our experience of an architecture? What are its architectonics? What are its spaces? Does it present itself as material, sound, rhythm, dynamic? Does it flicker between opacity and transparency? Does it possess a spiritual or ritual performativity? Is it part of a continuing dialogue? Does it prompt or trace a live exchange, or do both? Does it explore, as surely it often does, the relationship between these different possibilities? Or is none of these an adequate way of expressing what a piece of writing might do? (Turner 2010:85)

This list of questions can develop the work in many directions but the dramaturge selects the provocations appropriate to each project. The questions become the catalyst that will affect change: 'affect is the change, or variation, that occurs when bodies collide, or come into contact' (Colman, in Parr 2005:11). Deleuze uses the term affection 'to refer to the additive processes, forces, powers, and expressions of change – the mix of affects that produces a modification or transformation in the affected body (Colman, in Parr 2005:11). In

performance development the questions can facilitate dialogue and new ideas are discovered. Bhaktin notes that dialogical thinking provides the solution ‘both/and’, which creates multiple opportunities for development: ‘dialogue always implies the simultaneous existence of manifold possibilities, a smaller number of values and a need for choice’ (Holquist 1990:149). In this kind of development process Deleuze observes how;

movement always happens behind the thinker’s back, or in the moment when he blinks ...during this time, while you turn in circles among these questions, there are becomings which are silently at work, which are almost imperceptible. (Deleuze 2007:2)

The questions provoke the dialogue that then shifts thinking to create new connections. The university context can offer a space to develop expanded dramaturgies and Deleuzian ‘becomings’. Supported by Winchester University, the ‘Writing Space’ project created new performance texts that were documented through the *Studies in Theatre and Performance Journal* 30(1). In their radically inclusive approach, Turner and MacDonald facilitated a non-hierarchical dialogue that enabled practitioners to experiment with new ways of working.

Supported since 2001 by the University of Melbourne, ‘The Dramaturgies Project’ has organised four Australian conference workshops as a laboratory process that aims ‘to explore, reflect and give rise to dramaturgical practice in, and as a basis for, making innovative performance in Australian theatre’ (Eckersall, Monaghan & Beddie 2005:1). As dramaturges, Eckersall, Monaghan, and Beddie wanted to encourage a national discussion to develop dramaturgical practice and the evolving role of the dramaturge. They recognised that dramaturgy in Australia had moved beyond literary theatre to include multimedia performance and that non-literary dramaturgical activities were now part of the production process. The rise of Performance Studies in academic departments ‘had generated a need for a new kind of dramaturgy which responds to the postmodern influences currently engaging

many theatre artists' (Eckersall, Monaghan & Beddie 2005). Jonathan Marshall describes these new dramaturgies as 'a new interdisciplinary paradigm which insistently refuses barriers between programs, concepts and institutional settings' (Marshall 2010) The first two workshops aimed to define dramaturgical practice in Australia, the third developed dramaturgical skills through practice, and the fourth aimed to establish a national audit of current practice and establish new ideas.

One Australian example of these new dramaturgies in practice comes from Critical Path, a choreographic research centre based in Sydney. Critical Path delivers a programme of research opportunities to promote innovation by creating a place for choreographers and dance artists 'to explore new ways of working, develop new networks and engage in debate and critical appreciation of dance' (Medlin 2011:1). This work draws on developments in the relationship between dance and dramaturgy that have pursued:

Dramaturgy as a critical practice that lays bare the compositional and narrative drivers in the work; dramaturgy as a process that moves between practice and reflection and finally; the role of dramaturg as facilitator of the reflective process. (Behrndt 2010:185)

Critical Path opens the work to 'those who are interested in ideas or models we can enlist to investigate, test, open to new ideas, be exposed to new practice and make new collaborations' (Medlin 2011:2). The director Margie Medlin works as dramaturge and curator to create new connections between universities and artists. In a programme of cross-disciplinary practice the artists are encouraged to create new professional relationships and juxtapose different art forms.

In New Zealand the director Stephen Bain attempted to create new connections through a Festival of New Performance at The Edge in Auckland during 2012. He wanted to 'create a platform where artistic discourse and artist-as-researcher were the points of

reference' (Bain 2012:46). He is wary of using the term curator to describe his work on this project because 'the curator can become the new writer subverting and colonising the ideas of the artist by putting them together in new ways' (Bain, interview May 2012). He wanted to validate examples of contemporary marginal performance work in New Zealand: 'the Festival provided a snapshot of what was going on. I wanted to bring together the disparate to identify a very different brand of performance from traditional mainstream practice' (Bain, interview 2012). The Festival also brought together international performance artists from Australia and Britain and the German company Rimini Protokoll from Berlin. From New Zealand there was Verbatim Theatre from Otago University, Mark Harvey from Auckland University working with Johannes Blomqvist, Binge Culture Collective (a Wellington Company that is inspired by the work of Forced Entertainment), By a Slightly Isolated Dog Ltd (a Wellington Company that collaborate with their audience to make the work) and Louise Tu'u (who constructed a performance inspired by her time with homeless people in Auckland).

Bain writes that in Auckland there seemed to be 'a very progressive performance scene that was locked out of the theatres and performance spaces, which upheld strong commercial imperatives' (Bain 2012:46). The dramaturge John Downie led a festival workshop that explored the possibilities of interdisciplinary practice. Bain describes how Downie;

makes expansive interventions which question what the work is doing to think outside and around the performance and find new connections. The dramaturge has to be a person who can access the macroscopic and the microscopic. (Bain, interview May 2012)

The Festival demonstrated that there is a body of contemporary New Zealand practice that experiments with new ways of working and there is also an audience that wants to engage

with this work. Bain comments that ‘the diversity of audience at this event was a minor triumph of the ability to engage an audience on the strength of an idea’ (Bain 2012:47). As dramaturge Bain created new connections between artists and challenged the notion of what a New Zealand performance can be. At the same time, he was disappointed by the lack of serious engagement from the media with this event:

Performance art is often subjected to such derisory put-down, where the artist is brought to account by having to justify a work (in the briefest sound or visual byte) when challenged by we-the-non-believers. (Bain 2012:47)

This observation echoes the experience of Mason and Thompson in the ’70s, which was discussed in Chapter One.

### **Questions as catalyst**

In August 2010 I was employed as dramaturge to work with Carol Brown as choreographer, Russell Scoones as sound artist, and Dorita Hannah as performance designer on *Slip – I’m not falling, I’m just holding on for as long as you can hold me* for Touch Compass Dance Company in Auckland. Touch Compass, established in 1997, is New Zealand’s only professional integrated dance/theatre company. They produce dance/theatre combining dancers with and without disability to challenge what is dance and who is a dancer. They commissioned *Triple Bill* so that three choreographers could work with six differently abled dancers on three pieces. Their publicity described the then unfinished *Slip – I’m not falling, I’m just holding on for as long as you can hold me*:

Between flying and falling, scenes of suspension expose the intimacy of support and the possibilities of surrender. For this new work, performers write their greatest hits, dress up, dress down and dance out their songs, risking everything and still moving beyond the fear of falling. (Touch Compass publicity for *Triple Bill*, August 2010)

The work began through the story-telling of song-writing, through improvisation developed from ideas about suspension, through exploring ways of dressing and un-dressing, through a grid pattern that demarcated the space and defined emerging relationships (Brown, interview 2010a). This first stage of development did not include the dramaturge. It was an interdisciplinary process that experimented with dance, text, sound, and architecture to create a first-draft performance. At this point I was invited into the laboratory process to provide an outside eye and development feedback.

The dramaturge can be involved from the very beginning or enter the development process at any point until the show closes. I have also been employed to develop the performance vision when a project has not worked in the first season. For *Slip – I'm not falling, I'm just holding on for as long as you can hold me* Brown wanted an outside eye after a period of intense inside collaboration. I worked with Touch Compass for three weeks until the production opened at The Concert Chamber in Auckland Town Hall. Throughout this process my dialogue was mainly with Brown as the choreographer and lead artist. The interdisciplinary collaboration had already produced the music and ideas for costume. The designer (who was now based in New York) continued to work on the architecture of the space and costumes through internet discussions with Brown.

As a dramaturge with no dance training I was positioned outside Brown's intercorporeal work with the dancers. I facilitated, what the theatre director Anne Bogart (2001) calls, the *ura* or dialogue around the work. Bogart uses the Japanese words *irimi* and *ura* from Aikido to find the inside/outside balance in performance development. *Irimi* means to enter and *ura* means to go around. As a choreographer Brown prefers to work with a dramaturge who is also a writer because 'they offer a new dimension for the development of the work' and she views dance as 'a kind of writing with the body' (Brown, interview 2010a). In this composition process Brown was positioned 'inside' the creative process as she entered

the inter-corporeal dialogue with the dancers. As dramaturge I was positioned ‘outside’ and moved around this embodied practice. This is very different way of working from the ‘inside’ practice of the dancer dramaturge Lepecki:

I enter the studio as dramaturge by running away from the external eye. Just as the dancers and choreographers, I enter to find a (new) body. That’s the most important task of the dance dramaturge – to constantly explore possible sensorial manifestoes. (Lepecki, in deLahunta 2000)

The dramaturge takes up different positions as they find the balance required on each project between *irimi* and *ura*, inside and outside, proximity and distance. Many dance dramaturges stress the need for proximity in the composition process and work through an embodied process (Kunst 2009). Brown stresses the importance of identifying ‘the unconscious underbelly’ as the kernel of performance vision: ‘the dramaturge articulates the concept as precisely as possible and looks after it, they identify what is the piece that wants to be made’ (Brown, interview 2010a). This description captures how, as an outside eye, a dramaturge can articulate the ideas which operate underneath the work. My work focused on the performance vision and journey to articulate what the work was doing and what it might become.

*On Slip – I’m not falling, I’m just holding on for as long as you can hold me* the dramaturgical process was developed through the questioning process. I first asked Brown: *what are your expectations of the dramaturge?* After our first meeting Brown wrote:

To unfurl the piece that sits quietly underneath the one I think I am making. To uncover the unconscious of the work beyond what is immediately apparent to me (now jaded by detailing and full of blind spots because of my proximity to the process and the performers). To recover some critical and conceptual distance or focus through which to allow this hidden work to emerge. (Brown, 2010b)

On the floor Brown and the composer Russell Scoones had collaborated with the dancers to create a body of material and now they wanted to understand what the work was doing.



Brown's response to my question enabled me to gauge her expectations for the dramaturgical process at this point. As lead artist Brown was no longer able to see the work with fresh eyes and needed to develop the performance vision. To evaluate the work in progress I used Deleuze's question: *What is the work doing?* Brown answered that at that point it was:

A clunky sequence of scenes structured by six songs and costumes. The work is being faithful to the elements of song and costume and staging and it is in many ways ruled by them. (Brown, 2010b)

To understand Brown's vision for the piece I used the question: *What is the work trying to be?* She wrote:

I think the work is trying to be a vehicle for the stories, unique movement signatures and performing qualities of this diverse group of performers. It is trying to be a piece about the stuff of life, the uncertainties of identity; the losses; the longings and loves; the flirtations; the disappointments; the contingencies as experienced by these performers and to make connections with the experiences of others. I have been thinking about Adam Phillips' writing, and his posing of the question, what if we understood our life, less as a series of achievements and personal milestones and more as a series of accidents. What if our lives are ruled by accidents? Each of the performers tells a story about being suspended and another about a life-changing moment. The work moves from the ground to the air, from the beginning of the day to the end and possibly into the dream state where we all can fly whilst our bodies stay rooted to the ground. It is trying to have a theatrical curve that un-settles the security of the ground beneath our feet, that lets us slip, with few words, six songs and some potent dancing. In this way, I am thinking about a dancer stumbling and another hopping on one leg, about a dancer falling in rehearsal and crying or another's hidden epilepsy, about all these different relationships we have to gravity and to ground and how they determine our lives as much, if not more than the things we put in our curriculum vitae. (Brown, 2010b)

This question enabled Brown to begin to articulate her performance vision and enabled me to interpret her intentions for the work. The task was then to identify the gap between the work

presented at this point and her newly articulated performance vision. This gap or liminal space was the place for creative foldings and rhizome connections:

The space in between things is the space in which things are undone, the space to the side and around, which is the space of subversion and fraying, the edges of any identity's limits. In short, it is the space of the bounding and undoing of the identities which constitute it. (Grosz 2001:92)

My next question was, *What is the gap between the work now and your performance vision?*

Brown wrote:

The gap is really something to do with each performer finding a way to get beyond enacting a series of choreographies and exploring what it is to be together in a condition where things do slip around, and the ground beneath us cannot be taken for granted, whilst at the same time feeling secure enough in their knowledge of the timings, the nuances and the particularities of the choreography. (Brown, 2010b)

I then asked, *How can the dramaturge become a bridge-between?* She wrote:

For the bridge between the work now and performance vision – getting the timing and momentum of the work to the level where the audience is taken by surprise to the degree that their perceptions about who they are watching slip is imperative. Each performer needs to have a clear pathway through which to embody the choreography and to be both revealed and made different by it. (Brown, 2010b)

These questions enabled Brown to articulate the work in progress and facilitated a dialogue and agenda for development. For me the 'gap' was in the moments of transition and the connections between the different pieces. The company needed to extend the moments of 'holding on' and 'letting go' to stress what was at stake throughout the work. In this exchange the inside/outside balance existed in the relationship between choreographer and dramaturge.

In questioning what the work is doing the dramaturge holds up a mirror to reflect the practice that can enable practitioners to see the work with fresh eyes. Deleuze's concept of 'folding' illuminates the way in which new connections are also created through questions and dialogue. Deleuze describes 'foldings' as the small moments of perception that occur in the process of performance composition: 'miniscule folds that are endlessly unfurling and bending on the edge of juxtaposed areas' (Deleuze 1993:93). The encounter between different ways of seeing and thinking catalyses new discoveries on the creative fold:

There is always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we don't see it, because it's the least perceptible of things. And yet it's along this line of flight that things come to pass, becoming's evolve, revolutions take place. (Deleuze, in Marks 1998: 33)

The questions prompt a re-definition of the performance vision and in dialogue ideas are folded and perceptions are recomposed. Bohm writes that 'the observer profoundly affects what it is observing and is also affected by what is observed' (Bohm 1996:69). Ideas are suggested, deconstructed and reconstructed through a collaborative exchange. It is important that the questioning process does not judge. Bohm describes how the individual must face their own blocks 'whenever certain questions arise, there are fleeting sensations of fear, which push him away from consideration of these questions, and of pleasure, which attract his thoughts and cause him to be occupied with other questions' (Bohm 1996:4). Affect theory has attempted to analyse how the encounter between relations 'can serve to drive us towards movement, toward thought and extension' (Seigworth & Gregg 2010:2). My research aims to show how the questioning process affects performance development.

In the Touch Compass process I documented all possibilities and held the memory of the work in progress in my production journal. Following this questioning and answering process I began to engage with the dance through watching a DVD film of work in progress. I then sent a further series of questions to Brown before meeting the dancers:

- *What are your central themes?*
- *What is the journey of the piece and the journey of each dancer?*
- *How do identities change?*
- *What is the transition from individual to collective? How are they transformed?*
- *Is it important to know which story belongs to which performer?*
- *How can the transitions be extended and tightened?*
- *How can the clothes extend meaning?*
- *Do they each have a heightened moment which marks their story?*

(Graham, Production Journal 2010)

These questions created a shared agenda for the development process. They provoked dialogue or what could be described as a ‘co-construction of knowledge’ (Dysthe 2002: 50). Brown wrote that ‘the questions are very helpful in gleaning the nuggets of content that demand further refining’ (Brown, August 2010c). They begin with open explorations but then start to clarify what is happening and suggest new connections. After the presentations of work in progress I questioned the journey of each performer, the use of text and the shape and pace of the work. While watching the performance I mapped the journeys and the signatures of each performer. I then talked with Brown about the performance vision and how the transitions could support the performance flow. This work supported the ‘connective tissue’ (MacDonald 2010b:92).

With the dancers I questioned their collective and individual journeys through moments of transition – *where did they hold on and when did they let go?* This was a very delicate process because the dancers were not used to working with a dramaturge and are not necessarily used to giving their own views within a development process. Unlike theatre, this kind of dialogue and expectation is unusual within dance practice where dancers are often told what to do without their feedback. As in any company, Touch Compass has differently abled performers and the dramaturge has to find the most useful questions to sustain a

collective and collaborative development. Each time we met the company became more comfortable with the questioning process and began to value and welcome the interventions. I edited the spoken text and worked with each performer on projection and developing an authentic connection with the words. In the development process there was now a constant movement between proximity and distance. Kunst argues that this critical but supportive practice ‘can profoundly question the nature of dance and its supposedly self-evident relation to contemporary life’ (Kunst 2009:87). The dramaturge reflects one audience member perspective and enables the company to see the inside from the outside. The choreographer is positioned inside the production process and it is hard for them to achieve this fresh perspective. It could be argued that the dramaturge is the first audience member to articulate how the outside sees the inside but there is also an inside knowledge that informs the questioning process.

In this production distance was valued over proximity and was re-enforced by the choice of a dramaturge that has not been trained as a dancer. When *Slip – I’m not falling, I’m just holding on for as long as you can hold me* was re-mounted in 2011 and 2012 I was again employed to assist the performance development process. In 2012 there were two new performers and I worked through questions to enable them to articulate their journeys and establish new connections with the material. I was able to hold the memory of previous performance decisions and support the company to retain their performance vision when Brown was unavailable. In this case study I have attempted to show how a dramaturge can use the questioning process to provoke new ways of knowing and assembling through collaborative dialogue. The questions can clarify the central concepts, probe performance assumptions, identify the performance rationale, offer different perspectives, explore the consequences, and be reflexive (why am I asking these questions?).

## **Mapping developments**

This chapter set out to investigate the methodology of the dramaturge as catalyst and examine what happens in the questioning process. The questions can enable performance practitioners to think otherwise and see the familiar in new ways. In the liminal space between performance decisions ideas are sifted and refined as perceptions are folded and rhizome connections discovered:

It is an encounter between bodies that releases something from each and, in the process, releases or makes real virtuality, a series of enabling and transforming possibilities. (Grosz 2001:69)

Postmodern performance creates a dialogue between multiple voices and Kunst has described how the dramaturge has often been seen as the ‘guarantor of interdisciplinarity’ (Kunst 2009:180). Postdramatic and interdisciplinary practice has created new dramaturgies through divergent and lateral thinking. This work requires a nomadic subjectivity that can move between multiple possibilities and resists settling in one way of working.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dramaturgy is a not-yet settled word, a word that might even have the status of one of Raymond Williams's keywords – words that are significant, but contested; words that are argued over; words that are now. (MacDonald 2010b:93-94)

This thesis set out to examine the contribution of the dramaturge to performance development. More generally, it has analysed what dramaturges have done, what dramaturges are doing and what they can do in the future. My research shows that the disciplinary position of “the dramaturge” is simultaneously in development and under erasure. In Europe, the USA and Australia the professional position has developed an expanded practice through interdisciplinary collaborations, devised theatre, dance, and performance art. However, in New Zealand the position has been restricted to the function of script advisor by the organisation Playmarket as well as other practitioners. There are devising companies, such as Indian Ink and Red Leap, which employ the role but there is no training or professional network to support this position. I have analysed the work of the dramaturge through five actions of dramaturgical transition. These actions entail ‘listening’ to the practice, ‘reflecting back’ on what it is doing, ‘questioning’ different ways of working, ‘facilitating’ a dialogue between different practitioners, and ‘suggesting’ possibilities for development. My central argument is that the work of the dramaturge has to remain an unsettled practice in order to challenge habitual ways of operating and create new developments.

From the historical transitions presented in this study I have shown that the dramaturge has a kinetic practice that involves a constant movement between critic and collaborator, nation building and subaltern voice, the dramatic text and performance text, structuralism and post-structuralism, distance and proximity. These dualisms also reflect the contested nature of the field and very different ways of seeing and working. However, the role facilitates a creative and reflective pause between performance decisions. My thesis

shows that the dramaturge was first introduced to represent ‘the national voice’ but that over time national identities have mutated and multiplied thanks in a large measure to the influence of post-colonialism and feminism. I have also shown how the dramaturge can function as script advisor (in Chapter Three), mediator (in Chapter Six), and creative collaborator (in Chapter Seven).

The practice of the dramaturge is shaped by the politics of the production process. Inspired by Lessing, the function of script advisor has concentrated on the writer and evolved through literary theatre. These interventions have often provided a known set of procedures and a master blueprint for performance construction. As a theatre writer I have frequently experienced this ‘feedback’ and ‘feed-forward’ from a dramaturge that references the ideas of Aristotle, Campbell, McKee, and Vogler. These expert interventions create a clear linear concatenate structure that can be taught or imposed on pure drama. This structure provides ‘safe’ results that serve the market of mainstream theatre and the creative writing industry. In contrast, the last 20 years have seen many practitioners choosing to work with a dramaturge that functions as creative collaborator and mediator. Influenced by Brecht, this practice develops through interdisciplinary collaborations within the fields of, devised theatre, dance, and performance art. These interventions are more likely to be non-hierarchical and unfold ‘in the moment’ guided by an open questioning process. As I have sought to show throughout this thesis, in this work it is very important to credit and acknowledge all contributions.

In New Zealand the Playmarket decision to cease using ‘the workshop process’ seriously reduces the possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Instead, their preference for the so-called ‘clinic process’ focuses on the individual writer and does not recognise performance as a living system for convergent collaboration. At the same time there continue to be productions that do work with a dramaturge, and others that use writers or the collective creation process, but do not employ a dramaturge. This thesis makes the case for an inclusive,



non-hierarchical and reflexive practice that can be employed at any stage of development with an individual writer or a group of collaborating artists. It is a practice that can develop the dramaturgy for an existing work or for a new creation.

As I have shown, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and doxa can provide a useful framework for analysing both the performance and the work of the dramaturge. The concepts enable the dramaturge to question what the work is doing and analyse different influences upon the work. Like Bourdieu, Braidotti (2006) argues that ethical accountability is closely related to an awareness of position, power and privilege. When the dramaturge reflects back the habitus and doxa of the work they 'unsettle' habitual ways of working to show how the field of professional practice is constituted and the power relations involved. Bourdieu provides a conceptual tool that investigates how the past is active in the present and can shape the future.

However, while Bourdieu's concepts are useful for examining how structures and practices of performance reproduce themselves, they are also limited in their application. This is because they only critique the social context and do not create alternative ways of working. Taking up the ideas of Deleuze, I suggest it is the questioning process that enables the dramaturge to unsettle established ideas and develop an expanded practice. Evidence of this was highlighted in Chapter Seven, which showed how the questioning process provided a sphere of disturbance that catalysed new connections.

Many dramaturges sustain an 'outside' position by moving in and out of the development process rather than by being present all the time. Reflexive questioning enables them to continue to monitor their own contributions (why am I asking this question?). Without this self-questioning process the dramaturge may continue to offer the same solutions but without realising what they are doing. As time passes the dramaturge becomes

positioned ‘inside’ the collective performance vision. However, the questioning process can continue to create new connections by clarifying the central concepts, probing performance assumptions, identifying the performance rationale, offering different perspectives, and exploring the consequences. Thompson observes that questions and answers are on a continuum and ‘if you ask the right questions, solutions will follow’ (Rudakoff and Thompson 2002: 309). In the listening action a key question is *What is the work doing?* In the reflecting action, *What is the work showing?* In the facilitating action, *What are the different development opportunities?* In the suggesting action, *What if?*

In this thesis I used different metaphors to conceptualise methodology and evoke the different roles of the dramaturge. Foremost among these, as I argued, are the dramaturge as midwife (supporting), conservationist (balancing preservation with innovation), architect (constructing), navigator (guiding), bridge builder (mediating) and catalyst (changing). In this kinetic practice there is a constant movement between different ways of working as the dramaturge responds to the needs of the project. The art educator Felicity Allen argues that the artist can assume a variety of roles at different moments in a development process: ‘a shift that can itself be seen as transgressive or, more positively, destratifying’ (Allen 2009:19). The dramaturge is a creative artist. In the process of becoming every action has a reaction and all interventions affect change.

To develop an expanded practice it is very important to stay connected to the needs of the moment. Developing an open encounter, the dramaturge responds through kinaesthetic empathy. This is most obvious in dance when improvisation offers multiple connections for development. Using the transitional actions of questioning, facilitation, and suggestion, the dramaturge intervenes with no master plan or expert blueprint. The movement between ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ positions creates an in-between and unsettled ‘third’ space. I have

explored this liminal time, between performance decisions, using the concept of the Deleuzian ‘fold’ of creative possibility. This is where new insights are discovered.

Braidotti suggests that a ‘nomadic’ perspective can challenge our thinking and seeing through transposition:

Habits are socially enforced and thereby ‘legal’ types of addiction. They are accumulated toxins which by sheer uncreative repetition engender forms of behaviour that can be socially accepted as ‘normal’ or even ‘natural’. The undue credit that is granted to the accumulation of habits lends exaggerated authority to past experiences. Transpositions address the question of which forces, desires or aspirations are likely to propel us out of traditional habits, so that one is actually yearning for changes in a positive and creative manner. (Braidotti 2006:9)

As I have tried to argue in my analysis of the work of the dramaturge, the questioning process becomes a form of transposition in the sense implied by Braidotti. Questions provoke new insights and alternative ways of knowing. In this practice the dramaturge transposes subjectivity to offer diverse connections and ways of seeing. Ideally, the dramaturge develops a nomadic perspective, providing ‘a non-unitary subjectivity and vision that is nonetheless functional and accountable, mostly because it is embedded and embodied’ (Braidotti 2006:4). This way of working maps many connections and is ‘bristling with multiple possibilities and not limited to a single task or one evolutionary path’ (Bly, cited in Jonas, Proehl and Lupu 1997:53).

Interdisciplinary and cross-art forms offer greater fluidity to contemporary practice without alliance to any singular art form. In my New Zealand research the dramaturgical practice of Philippa Campbell, Catherine Fitzgerald and Carol Brown is most open to this way of working. Their methodologies have a nomadic feminist subjectivity that works with multiple belongings and a commitment to the journey. As Campbell put it, ‘I believe in

everything and use all possibilities to develop the work. There are many ways to skin a cat' (Campbell, interview 2010). In Māori practice the kaitiaki, now balanced between guardian and guide (Kouka 2012 and Halba 2012), may travel beside performance practitioners. Here an open dialogue can value the past but also embrace new connections for the future.

However, the role of dramaturge has not been fully developed in New Zealand and the interdisciplinary practice of Performance Studies is still in its infancy. Playmarket, the playwrights' organisation, has dropped the collaborative workshop and restricted the development process to focus on the individual writer. It is important to question why these choices were made. One answer could be because of the way New Zealand in the 1980s embraced neoliberalism with its uncritical faith in free markets, individualism and the role of the entrepreneur (see Kelsey 1989). In this period collective forms of organisation were devalued and this applied equally to collaborative and experimental performance development. In her 2012 Sir Paul Reeves Memorial Lecture, the anthropologist Anne Salmond observed that part of the problem with intellectual and creative work in Aotearoa is that it has developed silo thinking: 'we are trapped in habits of mind that limit our potential as a small, intimate society' (Salmond 2012: 2). As I have tried to argue in my chapters on feminist and multicultural practice, it is important to think 'otherwise', to ask new questions and to challenge the gatekeepers. Salmond stresses that Māori ways of knowing can contribute to a hybrid thinking where collaboration and cooperation can create new communities and ways of working. It could also be argued that the 'collaborative' as a category was put onto the silo of Māori so that they have been perceived as hapū and iwi rather than as individuals. The idea that there is a Māori way of doing things must be recognised but it can also become a way of ghettoising the other. Perhaps the best way to avoid these pitfalls is to ensure constant engagement with wider international communities of practice.

Playmarket have produced a pamphlet about ‘devising’ that recognises that many different practitioners can be involved in performance composition. Part of the aim of this thesis is to build on the work of Carnegie (1987) and provoke a collaborative dialogue between New Zealand practitioners. This discussion may develop the work of the dramaturge and possibilities for expanded practice. Such a dialogue could also;

explore the possibilities of dramaturgy, to promote dramaturgical practice, to widen the base of dramaturgical practice, to create a debate around dramaturgy, to create national and international comparisons and to promote this practice in difficult social and economic times. (Eckersall 2005:1)

A good starting point for such an exchange is a set of questions inspired by the Writing Space Project in Britain:

- How can the dramaturge develop a relevant practice in New Zealand?
- How can dramaturgical thinking be inspired by Māori ways of knowing?
- How might we begin to construct frameworks and partnerships to facilitate innovative new collaborations?
- What can the university context offer as a space for developing new or ‘expanded’ dramaturgies?
- How can the dramaturge be trained for performance development in New Zealand? What is the career of a dramaturge?

These questions aim to unsettle established practice and the inflexibility of siloed thinking. They could also help to catalyse new opportunities for cross-fertilisation and performance development. If artists are encouraged to exchange ideas and collaborate in different ways they may experiment and create new dramaturgies. The experience of working in this way might thus be used to train a generation of dramaturges who, as Lehmann and Primavessi (2009:6) put it, are ‘open minded, ready to accept the job as a position on shifting grounds and to question the categories that used to define theatre’.

While exploring the possibilities for experimental and expanded ‘new dramaturgies’ it has to be remembered that most New Zealand performance development continues to prioritise individual writers with New Zealand stories through literary theatre. The playwright and script advisor Ken Duncum comments:

I think the most interesting change is that 25 years ago the audience was suspicious of New Zealand theatre work, now there’s a prejudice in favour of it – New Zealanders are more likely to ask why they should bother to see a British, American or Australian play, how’s it going to be relevant to them? We’ve come a long way. (Duncum 2011: programme notes)

This view celebrates the achievements of New Zealand drama but nationalism can also be narrow and parochial. I suggest that in the future performance practitioners will want to make work that moves beyond the familiar and national frontiers. New Zealand practitioners have fought hard to tell their own stories but now this work is established they can look outwards and make new connections. An international exchange of dramaturges and different ways of working could extend development practice. It would be interesting to move a group of dramaturges and kaitiaki from country to country to ask new questions and encourage experimentation. This nomadic practice could facilitate an outside eye, the cross-fertilisation of ideas and possibilities for international collaborations. It would enable practitioners in different countries to see the familiar in new ways.

Gathering together the findings from my research it is possible to construct a model – or ideal type – which reflects the interventions of the dramaturge. Like any model it is only an abstraction that seems to highlight the key characteristics. However, it does show how theory can be combined with practice to conceptualise the work:

- The company or individual artist employs a dramaturge to develop their work. This can take place throughout the production process and in any kind of performance. The

dramaturge begins as an outsider through a deep listening process. They are listening to what the work is doing and where it has come from.

- The dramaturge reflects back the work to present the company or artist with an outside analysis. Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and doxa can be used to map the field of influence and how the work reflects or challenges established practice.
- The dramaturge deploys questions to facilitate an inside dialogue about what the work may become. Deleuze's concepts of folding and rhizome connection can help to understand what is happening in this process and extend the possibilities for development. The questions catalyse thinking and a collaborative performance vision is articulated through dialogue.
- The dramaturge makes suggestions for change, which can be framed by the different metaphors of methodology, depending on what is needed. This is the time of creative experimentation, between performance decisions, which may require architecture, midwifery, navigation, conservation or bridge building.

While this model may seem to recall the journey of set-up, inciting incident, crisis and resolution suggested by McKee (1998) and Vogler (1998), it differs by being reflexive, adaptable and open-ended. Lehmann and Primavessi (2009:6) argue that the dramaturge has to be open-minded to facilitate interdisciplinary projects and cross-art experiments. Such a position is re-enforced by Grosz's theoretical reflections on the arts:

An openness to futurity is the challenge facing all of the arts, sciences, and humanities; the degree of openness is an index of one's political alignments and orientations, of the readiness to transform. (Grosz 2001:91)

As old distinctions are broken down, the dramaturge plays a vital role as 'a great equaliser and a glorious leader of all that goes into theatre collaboration' (dramaturge cited in Honan 2002:b2). Ideally the dramaturge is a bridge between the different artists and ways of working: 'they are focussed on facilitating the creativity of others' (Turner and Behrndt

2008:181). This collaborative practice creates new connections that challenge non-adaptive thinking and the territorialism of the individual.

My research has highlighted the possibility of a transparent, reflexive, and radically inclusive constructive practice. Like MacDonald, I believe that ‘dramaturgy’ is a key word through which we can map our changing times and notions of performance. I have shown that the dramaturge does not occupy a settled position but requires a nomadic subjectivity: ‘in a world where we are all still “strangers and sojourners”, as Bateson put it, echoing Isaiah, the ability to improvise as we travel, adapting our methods as we go, will enable us to negotiate our futures’ (MacDonald 2010b:99). A methodology that embraces multiple perspectives should be welcomed rather than feared. Indeed it can be argued that the ‘not-yet settled’ task of ‘dramaturgy’ is precisely this, ‘to unsettle’; and that this is the key ethical-political imperative to adopt in post-colonial times. The dramaturge can use the actions of transition to be a catalyst for change.





## **APPENDICE 1. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How would you describe your practice?
2. When have you worked as a dramaturge?
3. How were you selected for these projects?
4. How did you 'become' a dramaturge?
5. How do you describe your process as a dramaturge?
6. Is there a metaphor for this work?
7. Which practitioners inform your work?
8. What are your theoretical influences?
9. How does theory inform practice and practice inform theory?
10. Can you describe one important intervention as dramaturge?
11. When, how, where and why did this happen?
12. What was the impact of this intervention?
13. How do you maintain a dialogue with your collaborators?
14. How do you analyse and deconstruct the process?
15. How do you provide feedback?
16. What are examples of best and worst practice? Why?



## **APPENDICE 2. INTERVIEWEES**

1. Claire MacDonald, Writer, Dramaturge and Academic, London, 10/6/2009
2. Mark Amery, Former Director of Playmarket, Wellington, 17/9/2009
3. Jean Betts, National Script Advisor Playmarket, Wellington, 17/9/2009
4. Catherine Fitzgerald, Producer and Dramaturge, Wellington 2/3/2010
5. David Carnegie, Academic and Dramaturge, Wellington 3/3/2010
6. Nonnita Rees, Founding Member of Playmarket, Wellington 4/3/2010
7. Carol Brown, Choreographer and Dramaturge, Auckland 24/3/2010
8. Greg McGee, Writer, Auckland, 31/3/2010
9. Kate Jason-Smith, Director and Dramaturge, email responses, Wellington 20/9/2010
10. Fiona Samuels, Writer and Dramaturge, Auckland, 13/9/2010
11. Gary Henderson, Writer and Script Advisor, Auckland 3/5/2011
12. Philippa Campbell, Literary Manager and Dramaturge, Auckland, 17/5/2011
13. Lester McGrath, Producer and Dramaturge, Auckland 24/5/2011
14. Jenni Heka, Māori, Pacific and Asian Advisor Playmarket, Auckland 28/11/2011
15. Colin McColl, Director, Written responses, Auckland 16/12/2011
16. Hilary Halba, Academic, Director and Actor, Auckland 23/2/2012
17. Roma Potiki, Writer, Director and Dramaturge, Wellington, 1/3/2012
18. Murray Lynch, Director of Playmarket and Script Advisor, Wellington, 2/3/2012
19. Hone Kouka, Playwright, Director and Dramaturge, email responses, Wellington, 29/3/12
20. Stephen Bain, Director and Dramaturge, Auckland, 9/5/2012



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