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Dancing Through The Fourth Wall

Process drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy

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**Abstract**

This thesis explores the interplay of process drama and critical pedagogy and addresses the question of how the principles of the two pedagogies relate and whether process drama can enact critical pedagogy. While a significant and previously recorded association exists between the principles of critical pedagogy and process drama, the complexities of this relationship demand further examination. This research reveals potential for process drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy and outlines the key elements for practitioners seeking a form of critical process drama. I chose to employ qualitative methods and frame the research as a dance to honour the reflective and responsive quality of critical research.

My qualitative research employs two case studies to reflect and inform one another as a cumulative case study. In case study A, I analysed the well-known process drama work *The Seal Wife* by Cecily O’Neill and in case study B, I observed a Mantle of the Expert process drama unit. I focused my analysis of The Seal Wife upon a Melbourne workshop held in 1993 and my analysis relied upon the published account of the workshop, articles responding to it and the draft record of proceedings. I observed a Mantle of the Expert unit conducted over a six-week period and facilitated by an experienced practitioner, as an example through which to consider the form more broadly.

This research draws upon arts-based methods, it invites multiple voices and honours the capacity of drama to make meaning through the body. I asked the focus group participants in case study B to engage in drama activities during the group interviews, to stimulate and provoke through the body. I developed a new research method ‘re-writing in role’ to generate and communicate the data. This method involves re-writing the data from the perspective of fictional characters, to highlight key areas of interest. It is considered, obvious and partial reconsideration of initial data and draws upon elements from a range of narrative methodologies to provide a new data generation method. Re-writing in role provided a distanced frame from the factual events which motivated further reflection and welcomed multiple viewpoints.

This thesis offers a framework for critical process drama and suggests the methodological innovation of re-writing in role. The research findings offers the six key elements of, Ambiguity, Action, Agitation, Agency, Aesthetics and Hope which cooperate and inform one another around a given theme to open fluid spaces of reflection in action and critical pedagogy.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mum, Susan Louise Coleman (1949-2018).
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Chapter 1: Envisaging the dance

O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?”

—Yeats, Among School Children, 1933

Introduction

This thesis explores the “dance” between critical pedagogy and process drama. It examines the relationship between the principles informing both pedagogies through an interpretive cumulative case study. This a hopeful and dialogic research project, exploring the potential for a responsive embodied pedagogy of genuine democracy.

In pursuit of the research aims, I selected qualitative research methods to provide rich, detailed data and findings to consider and reconsider. The thesis honours the complexity of researching in the social sciences and recognises knowledge as contingent upon context and perspective. As qualitative research, this research invites me to interpret the data and recognises my primary role as the chief instrument of the data. I confront and negotiate my position within the inquiry as a participant. I employed a cumulative case study approach, which combined the analysis of two process dramas as critical case studies (Patton, 2002) selected for their ability to generate significant data. Case study A is a document-based analysis of a Cecily O’Neill’s prominent drama workshop, The Seal Wife and provides a historical example of foundational process drama practice. Case study B by comparison relies upon observations, interviews and other sources to generate data about an example of Mantle of the Expert, a prevalent form of process drama. These two cases work in and upon one another to generate a cumulative body of data that engages with the research question and illuminates’ possibilities for future praxis.
Designed deliberately to operate on numerous levels to inform and unsettle this thesis seeks to honour the dialogic underpinnings of both pedagogies. Despite its predictability as a linear document faithful to the well-trodden path of a PhD, it employs other non-traditional elements to extend the discourse and embrace the performative. I use dance as a central metaphor, to capture the visceral, spontaneous, flexible, and responsive nature of working in drama and to complement the fluidity of critical pedagogy. In addition, the thesis alternates between the academic prose of the researcher and creative writing as character.

While my official research journey began with the successful completion of my master’s, my passion for education and drama’s ability to enhance, critique and make meaning began much earlier. As a child, I loved creating characters, playing pretend and exploring the remarkable world of possibility. My subsequent experiences rehearsing, playing, and working in unfamiliar characters with diverse groups deepened these perspectives. Playing teacher at age 7 and protesting at age 9, the connection between education, drama and social justice, seemed evident to my childhood self and has continued to hold my interest in various settings.

Visiting schools as a disability awareness puppeteer, I frequently marvelled at the children’s curiosity, empathy, and critical thinking skills. Several years of teaching in primary schools established my interest in the arts and specifically drama, to inspire, motivate, communicate, and illuminate. As a reflective teacher, I continually sought to question, reflect, reconsider and take action, and engage in researching my own practice (Schon, 1987). Later, as a secondary teacher, I realised that some of my students, identified by the school as disengaged nevertheless worked tirelessly in dance and drama to create affective arts performances. This notable difference led me to wonder: what was it about working in the arts?

Exploring this through my master’s research, one student’s offhand remark that in role, “It was nice to pretend to be smart” (Coleman, 2010, p. 87) generated
immediate goose bumps. I began to wonder why he held this disparaging opinion of himself as “not smart” and how working in the fiction had challenged that view. I began reading Freire (1993) and the theories of critical pedagogy, which suggested the influence of ideological structures upon identity and motivated me into further research. It is essential to me that this research provide tangible concepts, teachers may apply in an increasingly complex world.

Throughout the 20th century, Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) worlds have dominated global constructs of epistemology and educational trends (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). While these societies continue to dominate, the educational landscape is changing. Over the last 20 years, digital learning has exponentially increased the accessibility of information, shifting the focus of educational discourse from acquiring knowledge to creatively applying it (Peters, 2014). Accordingly, education policy makers have redirected the focus towards Science, Technology, Engineering, The Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) rather than Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) (Ward & Kennedy, 2017) and emphasised the development of critical and creative thinkers (Ministry of Education, 2007). As a problem-orientated pedagogy, process drama develops creative capacities, and this research provides theoretical support for drama’s ability to cultivate divergent, embodied, and creative responses. However, the primary focus of my research is to see if drama can elicit responses and critically engage participants with the world.

Recently, notions of truth and knowledge have exploded, and in the post-truth era, facts are pliable and truth contestable. Previously reliable sources of information are questionable, and we can no longer, necessarily trust what we read, see or hear (McIntyre, 2018). I suggest that educating citizens to be critical is imperative as the lines between reality and fiction become increasingly blurred. My thesis contributes to a wider discussion about the culpability of education in accepting or opposing the proliferation of fake news (Peters, 2018). Paradoxically, the insistence of Western education upon extensive assessment,
and subsequent narrowing of curriculum and de-professionalisation of teachers has ensured that space for critical thought has dwindled. Given this pedagogical environment, it is perhaps unsurprising that anti-intellectualism autocrats have gained significant footholds in previously democratic nations (Giroux & Artseverywhere, 2018).

It seems increasingly difficult in contemporary society for critical pedagogy to unveil dominant social constructs in order to change them. In drama, participants deliberately construct the elements of the world and play with alternative behaviours. Process drama is an opportunity to be honest about being dishonest and is, ironically, both explicitly fictional and experientially valid. Through fiction, participants might confront social constructs, question social truths and identify and reflect upon themselves. Drama provides a space in which 21st-century learners can cultivate their critical, collaborative, creative and communication skills (M. Anderson & Jefferson, 2017). This research might reposition Drama from the outskirts of the curriculum, to a pedagogy for 21st-century citizenship (O'Grady, 2019). Although drama is an art form and a curriculum vehicle, the central question this research investigates centres around the pedagogical approach of process drama. It rests upon Doyle’s (1993) suggestion that through drama “they will tell their own stories and reflect on their own lives. Because of this work, they might see themselves differently. They just might change the society they live in” (p. 139).

Through the fiction, participants might imagine beyond the world they inhabit, explore their authentic interests and individually reflect upon and create their own identities (Aitken, 2009; Gallagher, 2007). This thesis adds to existing discourses on building resilient and capable individuals (O'Grady, 2019), while also serving to challenge how these qualities are defined and assessed. Enacting critical pedagogy through the experiential art form of drama breathes life into it and liberates it from the confines of abstract theory (Wink, 2005). This research might validate teachers’ practice in the face of increased accountability and offer a robust theoretical framework for process drama. It could offer critical
pedagogy practitioners’ additional ways of thinking about “the multiplicity of what and how dialogue looks like in the classroom” (Hao, 2011, p. 280). It investigates how these two pedagogies could unite to “dance” upon the same stage and what opportunities may arise to analyse dominant ideologies and enact change.

The central question addressed by this research is:

How do the underlying principles of process drama and critical pedagogy interplay, and does process drama provide a potential approach for the enactment of critical pedagogy?

This is supported by two sub-questions:

What are the underlying principles of process drama and critical pedagogy?

How might we theorise process drama through the lens of critical pedagogy?

In defining and refining my own understanding of these two pedagogical approaches, I have distilled them into two summaries and identified the associated principles. These provide an initial basis upon which to consider the rationale for my research and justify the parameters of the inquiry. A comprehensive definition and explanation of the origins, evolution and tensions surrounding these pedagogies occurs in subsequent chapters.

**Critical Pedagogy**

At the very least, critical pedagogy proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world that is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation. (Giroux, 2004b, p. 34).

Critical pedagogy is founded in the critical tradition and evolved from the writings of Paulo Freire (Schwandt, 1994). Founded in the spirit of a Marxist
revolutionary praxis, it offers a pedagogical approach that seeks to address the needs of the marginalised, overthrow oppression and create a more democratic and just social order (Kellner, N.D). Through uncovering the social edifices of ideology that construct the world, Freire (2005) hopes we may name, reflect and then act to change them. The following five principles reflect a widely accepted concept of critical pedagogy as compiled by Kincheloe (2008) and supported by the literature presented later in Chapter 3.

**Suggested key principles in critical pedagogy**

1. It is grounded on a vision of justice and equality that is anti-capitalist and pro-socialist (Kincheloe, 2008; Moraes, 2003).

2. It is dedicated to providing marginalised groups with the right and ability to take agency in civic life, and it seeks to alter the definition of society not merely the role participants may occupy within it (McLaren, 2008).

3. It challenges the perception of school as an intrinsically democratic institution and adheres to the belief that education is inherently political (McLaren, 2003). It is dedicated to the alleviation of human suffering and endorses the knowledge of all participants.

4. It “takes the problems and needs of students themselves, as its starting point” and relies upon them to agitate and generate themes in education that are of genuine relevance (McLaren, 2003, p. 242).

5. It repositions the teacher as learner and the classroom as a hopeful, democratic space “where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute” (bell hooks, 1994, p. 39).
**Process drama**

In the gap between the fictional and the real world, between the audience self and the performer self, in the gap between the thought and the action resides the endless opportunities for reflection about who and what we are as human beings. (O'Connor, 2003, p. 43)

Process drama is an interactive, improvisational form of drama in which students engage in a “lived through” fictional experience and considered the dominant form of drama as pedagogy (Bolton, 1986; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Through role-play and other drama techniques, process drama enables participants to collaborate and direct the path of inquiry (Aitken, 2009; Balaisis, 2002; O'Connor, 2003). Essential to process drama is active reflection, which may occur outside the drama, inside the drama or across both simultaneously. Through reflection, individuals may reconsider their role as active creators of society. The key principles of process drama suggested below were derived from the literature review provided in Chapter 4.

**Suggested Key Principles of Process Drama**

1. Process drama is concerned with improving the lives of individuals, creating better societies, and generating change (Ackroyd, 2006; O'Connor, 2003).

2. Process drama involves engaging in active, experiential processes through which participants may make sense of their lives (Heathcote, Johnson, & O’Neill, 1984; Simpson & Heap, 2002).

3. It assumes that learning is more effective when student centred, contextualised and recognises that “If it doesn’t matter to them, it doesn’t matter” (Norris, 2011).
4. Through the creation and engagement in an aesthetic fictional world, participants can express and explore innovative ideas, without fear of real world repercussions (Balaisis, 2002; O'Neill, 1989).

5. It consciously applies conventions such as "Teacher-in-role" where the teacher works alongside the students in the drama to disrupt traditional hierarchies and renegotiate the balance of power within the classroom (Balaisis, 2002; O'Neill, 1989).

6. It values ephemeral and embodied ways of knowing that resonate on personal and emotional levels, it resists conventional assessment ideologies and it invites ambiguity.

Process drama and critical pedagogy have similar discourses surrounding them and a shared use of common terminology, which hints at their potential partnership. Revolutionary language frequently appears within the discourse of both critical pedagogy and process drama. I have defined for this thesis the shared terms of agency, transformation and praxis.

Critical pedagogy advocates for the agency of all participants and stipulates a belief in the rights and responsibilities of all individuals to civic engagement. Agency is the capacity of an individual to act in the world and a “person's ability to shape and control their own lives” (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 42). It is the ability of an individual to enact and effect change upon their context and circumstance. As a process of social engagement, it requires participants to know their history, engage in the present and hope for the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Praxis reflects the interplay between thought and action and describes the action of acting, reflecting and then re-acting (M. Smith, 1999, 2011). Freire posits that our ability to participate in praxis makes us human, reflecting and acting upon the world in order to change it (Roberts, 2003). Transformation demands the recognition of present limitations and actions and relies on the understanding that reality is not fixed but in a constant state of creation (Freire, 1993).
The kinship of these two pedagogies has motivated me to consider how critical pedagogy and process drama might operate together. Process drama has been researched extensively for its ability to teach curriculum, address student engagement (M. Anderson, Hughes, & Manuel, 2008; O’Toole, 2008) or develop student empathy (Holland, 2009; Simpson & Heap, 2002). The following section outlines the parameters of the research and provides an overview of the entire thesis.

**Thesis Overview**

This thesis does not consider how gender, race, or socio-economic status impact upon process drama. It relies upon a cumulative case study comprised of two specific process drama examples. Each represents an isolated example of praxis explored for its potential relationship with critical pedagogy. Accordingly, I am not suggesting that all process drama is or should be informed by critical pedagogy, but rather investigating that potential. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge that this thesis has taken several years to complete and much of the data gathered some time ago. While initially a source of frustration, this delay enabled my ideas to journey alongside me as I moved from practitioner to academic. The remainder of this chapter provides an outline of the thesis structure and introduces Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2, I explore the methodology and methods selected to answer the research question. This begins with locating my research within the constructivist tradition, my position as the researcher, and my use of Janesick’s (2000) metaphor of researcher as choreographer as another way of approaching research and integrating the dance metaphor. It discusses the common research methods selected and explains the development of innovative methodology—“rewriting in role”—which presents the data from the perspective of a fictional character and its location within the two case studies.

Chapter 3 and 4 each provide a short overview of the historical beginnings, key figures, and significant literature for both critical pedagogy and process drama.
respectively. I explore the two pedagogies in terms of their evolution and position them within the wider educational context that influenced their creation and current practice.

In Chapter 5, I examine previous examples of praxis that sought to explore a potential partnership between critical pedagogy and process drama. I detail and then unpack these examples to identify potential pitfalls and opportunities for my own research. Next, I locate the space for my research within these examples and spotlight how it generates an original contribution to the current discourse. Chapters 6 and 7 describe and analyse the two case studies individually and details the use of rewriting in role, in varying degrees, to both illuminate and problematize.

In the penultimate chapter, I identify and examine themes generated through the reconsidering of both cases in association with one another. This chapter suggests that the six key elements of agency, ambiguity, aesthetics, action, agitation, and hope are essential to consider when engaging in drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy. In the final chapter, the thesis reflects upon the possibilities for a critical process drama form and considers the implication of this developing theory my own practice. Finally, it introduces a theoretical framework for critical process drama and its potential application by teachers.

This thesis makes two contributions to research in drama education and critical pedagogy: the creation of new knowledge around the potential of process drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy, and the development of innovative research methodology–rewriting in role. This thesis offers a unique and critical exploration of Mantle of the Expert, which despite its prevalence has remained largely outside the discourse of drama research. I developed the rewriting in role methodology, which involves the deliberate act of rewriting verified events through a fictional lens during the initial document analysis. This innovative technique has facilitated a playful rendering of events and is signposted throughout the thesis. This fluctuation between writing styles and reliance upon
dance as metaphor hopes to invite the reader into a liminal space as both audience and colleague, and spectator and dancer

As a schema for the thesis, I detailed the motivation, location, and personnel of the research. I outlined the key questions driving this study, positioned myself as the researcher, and identified the designated dance spaces. This introduction highlighted the motivations for this research, my development as a teacher–researcher and initial understandings of critical pedagogy and process drama. The next chapter details the methodology and methods. It positions me within the research as its choreographer and expands upon the strength of dance as a metaphor. It describes the origins and creation of rewriting in role and its position alongside other arts-based approaches, within the research designed to explore and communicate the understandings of the research.
Chapter 2: Creating the Choreography

Introduction

In this chapter, I identify the methodological approach to the research and outline the research paradigms framing the study. As researcher and practitioner, I locate my ontological and epistemological position and tackle the inherent difficulties of engaging in critical research. I introduce the application of the dance metaphor, in an effort to communicate a sensory concept of the research. A discussion of the specific methods and processes applied to select participants and generate, manage and analyse data for the two case studies completes the chapter.

Methodology

Research is formalised curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose.

—Zora Neale Hurston, Dust tracks on a road, 1969

My own poking and prying began as a young child, growing up in the UK during the early 1980s. I was happy to talk to anyone about anything. I explored endlessly. I read everything; I was noisy, curious and opinionated. I was unafraid to get it wrong or dare to challenge adult authority. As time went on, however, I became acutely aware that society preferred girls to be quiet, passive, and nurturing and subsequently associated myself with the boys. I organised a protest over the boys’ dominance of the playground at age nine, initiated a Greenpeace group, and travelled to Parliament to visit our local MP. Over time, these acts of social conscience diminished, as I became domesticated and educated into the requirements of polite society. Having witnessed the battles of other imaginative, plucky young people trying to navigate a world that wants to curtail them, I hope for change. I imagine an education that enhances, rather than suppresses, the curiosity, enthusiasm and energy of its young people and that as Freire suggests, “keeps on preserving the girl/without allowing maturity to kill her” (Freire, 2007, p. 68).
Years later, as an education lecturer and a white, middle class, mother of two, I remain deeply curious about the world and anxious to reconnect with the cheeky, outgoing girl within. Drama was an early passion for me, playing a range of characters in an imaginary world of wonder and possibility. As a long-time performer, the discovery of process drama and its capacity for enabling students to travel beyond their world immediately resonated (Holland & O’ Connor, 2004). After facilitating a process drama with Pasifika boys during my master’s research, where the students worked as historians, the ancillary gains of taking on role became apparent. In role, these students made valuable contributions and actively engaged. They expressed surprise at their own abilities and contradicted their assumed inferiority. My curiosity aroused, I wondered what precipitated this negative self-concept and how drama altered this view. I did some more reading and discovered a potentially exciting association between critical pedagogy and process drama.

This thesis explores the dance between the principles of critical pedagogy and process drama. While both pedagogies appear to possess common ideological traits, my thesis interrogates this belief and regards process drama through the lens of critical pedagogy. I am curious to see if, when challenging social institutions, you need the playful, fictional world of ambiguites and uncertainties. Motivated by personal interest, curiosity and a desire to transform the status quo of education, this research is coloured by my own tacit assumptions about the nature of the world (Dunne, Pryor, & Yates, 2005). The following section will address my ontological and epistemological position in the hope of signalling the meta-narrative of the research.

**Assumptions**

The facts are not at all like fish on the fishmonger’s slab. They are like fish swimming about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean, and what the historian (or social analyst) catches will depend partly on chance, but mainly upon what part of the ocean [s]he chooses to fish in and what
tackle [s] he chooses to use – these two facts being, of course, determined by what kind of fish [s] he wants to catch. (E. Carr, 1987, p. 23)

Knowledge is a slippery little sucker. Carr’s aquatic metaphor encapsulates my own constructivist view of knowledge, the ever-changing world surrounding it and the research process used to capture it. The type of fish caught will depend upon numerous factors, not the least of which are the fundamental assumptions that guide my work or bait my hook. My research takes a constructivist view, which counters a paradigm of absolutes and aligns with current research trends in social science research. Following the advent of postmodernism, positivism lost its grip upon educational research, and alternative constructivist paradigms gained significant legitimacy (Lather, 1991; O’Toole, 2006). A positivist view contends that knowledge derives primarily through the senses and that logic and reason are the only faculties through which the world may be understood (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Constructivism contends, however, that reality is internal and unchanging (Kincheloe, 2003) and that while we may observe the same object, our concept of that object depends upon our individual perception. How we make sense of the world influences the sense we make. As the architects of their worlds, individuals actively participate in the construction and creation of knowledge about that world (Kincheloe, 2003, 2012; Moses & Knutsen, 2007). These constructions of the world do not occur in isolation but rather in active dialogue with the community. This capacity to know is subject to the surrounding social and contextual factors, which ensure that knowledge evolves and remains dependent upon human interaction (Moses & Knutsen, 2007).

As a socially located product, knowledge is subject to and informed by its inextricable relationship to power. Foucault affirmed that the dominant social class determines the beliefs that dictate how society operates and the normative vision by which people govern themselves (Foucault, 1980). Gramsci (1971, as cited in Lather, 1991) further argues that ideology mediates consciousness and significantly influences our understanding of everyday life and restricts the type of stories we may tell.
Power, plays an essential role in shaping worldviews and knowledge about the world (Foucault, as cited in Moses & Knutsen, 2007, p. 212). The dominant ideological power defines, alters and reinforces “regimes of truth,” privileging their “reality” above others. The mutual recognition of this dynamic acting upon reality, by prominent scholars of critical pedagogy and process drama, indicates their common ground (Kincheloe, 2003; O’Toole, 2006). An understanding that “power regulates discourses” (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 59), which is central to the construction of reality, influences the practice of both pedagogies.

**Theoretical Framework**

Power is a relational phenomenon that pervades all aspects of society and cannot be divorced from the world. Given how power operates in and through all aspects of the research context, this research requires a reflexive and critical approach. Grounded in critical theory and its capacity to transcend disciplinary boundaries, this thesis invites dialectical thinking and, as “Marx once wrote, make the petrified relations of capitalist culture dance” (M. Thompson, 2017, p. 12).

Critical theory arose out of the Frankfurt school, a collection of influential theorists, which included, among others, Marx, Marcuse, Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, Lowenthal and Habermas (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). Marx’s views, which heavily influenced this movement, posited that socioeconomic inequality was at the heart of social justice concerns (Breuing, 2011). Essential to critical theory is the notion of critique and as opposed to empirical and positivist models of knowledge, it provides a specific way of relating to the world, which considers how our understandings influence our conceptions of the world (M. Thompson, 2017). Through active criticism and reconsideration, critical theory seeks to uncover how ideology shapes social relations and deepens human consciousness of the self as a social being (Aronowitz & DeFazio, 1994; Gee, Hull and Lankshear, 1996, as cited in Kincheloe, 2003). Chiefly concerned with social justice, critical theory adopts an enduring process of thinking, acting and reflecting to challenge
the oppression of marginalised peoples.

Given the variability of social reality, critical theory maintains its obligation to resistance and critique through a flexible adherence to a set of principles, rather than procedures (Kincheloe, 2003; Neuman, 2003; Solomon-Godeau, 1989). Whereas religions and governments dictate the laws of society, dominant ideologies are habitually enacted, through informal social behaviours. Ideologies gain their dominion in performance. Accordingly, an ongoing praxis is required through which to re-examine the world and rename it (Kincheloe, 2003). A relative of critical theory, critical pedagogy provides a mechanism for a sociocultural examination of educational settings (Gore, 1993; Lather, 1991). The history of critical theory, and its relation to critical pedagogy, informs my research paradigm and is worth introducing here. Critical studies considers the world and asks why, and research framed by this paradigm must do likewise, challenging and re-engaging with questions about its method, motivation, and position.

Critical pedagogy offers a prism through which to refract the complex interactions between teaching and learning. Through this re-visioning, it confronts how social, cultural, political, and economic concepts infiltrate our worldview, to broaden and deepen that view (Wink, 2005). Relational and interactive, critical pedagogy is not a static theory to apply but informs the ongoing interactions of the lived experience. As critical research, I have adopted a reflective researcher stance and wrestled with the static concept of research methodology. The theories of post-modernism rebuked the origins of critical thinking and its fidelity to universal truths and rational supremacy. Accordingly, this research incorporates elements of both critical and postmodern thought and operates within the liminal space between them.

**Dancing on the border**

Committed to raising questions and challenging praxis, this research draws upon the theories of postmodernism to resist dominant forms of knowing, perceiving,
thinking and feeling (Torres & Reyes, 2011). Unwilling to align myself to a single theory, this research dances on the border between critical theory and postmodernism. I am suspicious of universal beliefs, and this research aspires towards the creation of educated hope (Giroux, 2002b). Educated hope confronts and dialogues within the dominant ideologies, including those embedded within research (Torres & Reyes, 2011) and invites reflection upon interpretive frames (Lather, 1991). Mindful of knowledge as a social construction, I reject the theory of the neutral researcher or authoritative expert and the primacy of language to relate human experience (Lather, 1991; Torres & Reyes, 2011). Informed by the principles of research as praxis (Torres & Reyes, 2011), this research takes a participatory approach, dedicated to social justice, and endorses embodied mechanisms of communication. Having established my initial research position, the next section of this chapter focuses on the nature of qualitative research.

Qualitative Research

I have employed qualitative research to answer my research questions, which recognises the influence of epistemological and theoretical positions upon notions of truth and uphold my constructivist ontological position. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Qualitative research acknowledges the complex world of the research and influence of the researcher and participants. It identifies knowledge as individually constructed, accepts the position of the researcher, and pursues an understanding of phenomena through thick description (Geertz, 1993). It intends to evoke the feelings, contexts, and intentions of participants, and explore meanings beyond words. Qualitative approaches value the personal accounts of participants and welcome subjectivity as an essential element of deepening understanding, recognising that knowledge is actively constructed and dependent upon the vantage point of the knower (Kincheloe, 2003; Stake, 1995).
Accepting that truth and the quest for certainty is hopeless, qualitative research embraces a research plurality and uses inductive approaches to build knowledge (Eisner as cited in Kincheloe, 2003). As an in-depth investigation of human interactions, a case study method is appropriate to the scale and remit of the research, while still remaining flexible and open to multiple emerging and unforeseen discoveries (Blatter, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Case study design investigates phenomena within a real-life setting and accepts the interrelation of those phenomena and their contexts (Yin, 2003). It can be particularly valuable for investigating complex locations like schools, where numerous variables affect phenomena, and it supplies a holistic way to comprehend real-life situations (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Data gathered and generated for this thesis stems from two distinct case studies. These are case study A–The Seal Wife–and case study B–The Shark, MOTE–and function both as discrete independent cases and in collaboration.

Examining multiple cases, a collective case study enables the researcher to analyse, within and across individual cases, to provide a three-dimensional view that considers the relationships, politics and additional factors influencing the context (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Judith Bell, 1993). The two cases selected reflect in and upon one another, acting cooperatively to illuminate a given phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003), so that no one case is privileged over another (Stake, 2005). Each case reshapes existing knowledge about the other and contributes to a clarification of theory (Evers & Wu, 2007; Stake, 2000). In light of this, I reviewed my initial findings in case study A and used them to guide my focus for case study B. Once I had completed both case studies, I moved backwards and forwards through both sets of data, to examine how they might relate and influence one another. Whilst I have presented individual findings for each case study, the final discussion chapter considers them in dialogue with one another and they contribute to shared understandings. As indicated in the figure below:
Disrupting the Qualitative Paradigm

As signposted earlier, aspects of my underpinning worldview required an expanded qualitative approach. Methodological codes may influence research in education regardless of inclusive goals of authentic participation (Elliot, 2007). Foucault argued that if human understandings are socially constructed, then language as the dominant form of communication regulates those as understandings (cited in Moses & Knutsen, 2007). This stance aligns with my commitment to exploratory research, which confronts ideology upheld by traditional research forms (Bridges & Smith, 2007; W. Carr, 2006). Fearing, that employing traditional qualitative methods would consider only what is currently understood, I incorporated alternative research tools (Papastephanou, 2007). I wanted to unsettle assumptions around knowledge, research and the supremacy of words (Leavy, 2014). I chose to employ arts-based methods that reflect a concept of knowledge as unstable, ambiguous, multidimensional and beyond the communication of simply numbers and words (H. Smith & Dean, 2009).
Arts-based research extends the creative practices previously embedded in qualitative research, applying artistic processes as the primary means of understanding and communicating an experience (Leavy, 2014; McNiff, 2008). Dynamic and independently meaningful, arts-based research can generate questions and focus attention upon a significant educational issue (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Though the intention of this research is not to produce an artwork, it draws upon the arts as a form of illumination and reflective inquiry (O’Toole & Beckett, 2009). Arts-based practises are particularly valuable to exploratory research, interested in promoting dialogue, by accessing subjugated voices and traversing multiple meanings (Leavy, 2014). I incorporated arts-based practices to encourage dialogue between these case studies. The arts can resist oppression by dominant paradigms and prevailing authorities and create fresh energy and insights through creativity (Lather, 2009 as cited in Leavy, 2014). These methods embrace a pluralist community of inquiry, liberate voice and are consistent with a social justice agenda.

Tensions exist, however, within the academy as to what constitutes artful expression and the negotiation between the role of researcher and/or artist and the quality of a researcher’s artistic expression (Piirto, 2002). Critique also surrounds the capacity of the arts to document ephemeral works (Nelson, 2013) or provide substantive evidence (Leavy, 2014) however, as Barone and Eisner (1997) argue, the “merits of the research are to be judged by its illuminating effect and its ability to reveal what had not been noticed” (p. 102). What questions do the arts allow us to raise and consider that we would have otherwise overlooked? I applied dance as a metaphor to animate the research and stretch my own capacity for noticing.

While thinking about the role of the researcher, an essential element in critical constructivist research (Kincheloe, 2003), I was drawn to Janesick’s (2010) metaphor of researcher as choreographer. This metaphor appealed to me, as a performer, and provided a “generative boost” to my concept of the research topic and process (Van Manen, 1997 as cited in Carpenter, 2008; Dexter &
When beginning a new work, the choreographer relies on foundational principles while simultaneously remaining open to the evolving choreographic process. I imagined dancing within each case, creatively rethinking the complex realities and adding a layer of artistic depth to my understandings (Carpenter, 2008; Moring, 2001).

Metaphor, as a non-linear device, can gather a richer experience, operate across a range of systems of meaning and stimulate inferences or perceptions that otherwise might remain obscured (Dexter & LaMagdeleine, 2002). The choice of metaphor influences not only the written description but also the implicit belief system of the research (Schon, 1993 cited in Dexter & LaMagdeleine, 2002, p. 364, Lakoff, 1986, Perrin, 1987). The social sciences have historically relied heavily upon metaphor to communicate meaning. Scholars frequently apply the metaphor of construction when writing solid theoretical arguments with solid foundations and sturdy frameworks (Richardson, 1994).

Dance as a metaphor informs my concept of the research and research subjects. It informs the observation and analysis by directing my gaze towards the position of the body and use of space. Though invaluable to the research concept, I did not “press it for all its juice” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 252) but applied it judiciously throughout the thesis to avoid narrowing the scope of the inquiry. It also speaks to the central metaphor of the forms of relationship possible between critical and drama pedagogies.

Parallel to Oldfather and West’s (1994, cited in Dexter & LaMagdeleine, 2002) concept of jazz as a metaphor for qualitative research, dance relies upon both a working combination of familiar steps and the potential for innovation and improvisation. Incorporating a dance metaphor enabled me to conceptualise the research from the position of performing artist. There are two central qualities that dance possesses that are useful to my research concept. Firstly, when learning a new dance, you typically begin with the basics and then add more flourish and experimentation as your confidence grows. Similarly, while I began
employing traditional qualitative methods at the start, my moves became more experimental as the thesis progressed. Grounded in established research methodology, as the research has progressed, it became increasingly playful, aligning with my own pedagogical philosophy and reflecting the evolution of the research. Secondly, dance relies upon the body and its innate knowledge to create aesthetically significant moments, which complements my belief in the capacity of the arts to encapsulate the ephemeral and affective qualities of life (Janesick, 2000). Incorporating this metaphor has invigorated my research, animated the data and encouraged fluidity between previously rigid academic binaries.

In addition, Janesick’s (2000) metaphor, describing the three stages of dance, provides a useful schema for the research design. After selecting a theme, the dancers employ a cycle of experimentation and reflection, which culminates in rehearsal and performance. Similarly, this research began with a topic and decisions regarding question, methodology, design and plan of study. During composition and rehearsal, I explored the data, and searched for patterns and contradictions, structure and dissonance. Finally, in rehearsal and performance, I provoked the audience, analysed the data and staged the findings.

Reconceptualising each case study as a dance stretched my thinking to include the content and form of each case. As dance works, they shared common elements of movement, form and style while simultaneously posing significant variations according to the specific dance genre. I envisioned case study A: *The Seal Wife* drama as a ballroom dance familiar and structured with a significant history of practice. Contrastingly, I conceptualised case study B: *Shark MOTE* as a hip-hop dance: contemporary, trendy and popular, it combines new ideas within a well-established form. This metaphor extended to my role as choreographer and the participants roles as dancers.

I employed the metaphor of the researcher as choreographer throughout the research. Motivated by a preliminary idea, a choreographer develops tools, plays
with established movements and reflects and reconstructs to create a coherent
dance work (Janesick, 2010). This approach relies upon an understanding that
both research and the arts pursue questions, explore ideas and imagine
otherness. During the process of rehearsal and repetition, my dance/research
skills have improved alongside the research (Janesick, 2001). Gaining proficiency
in the movements, techniques and forms of the research enriched my ability to
modify, extend and be creative within the methodological frame. This flexibility
enabled me to lean into my intuition and creativity, within the framework of the
established structure. As a critical researcher, I endeavour to uncover and reflect
upon the influences that construct my own consciousness, reflecting and
practicing to play, learn and change (Kincheloe, 2012; Papastephanou, 2007). I
remain alert to spontaneous opportunities and receptive to new pathways and
alternative rhythms. This flexibility combined with a commitment to the
research intent and its methodological stance, sought to maintain an open mind
not an empty one (Janesick, 2004)

Observation involves recording the contexts, events and people being studied
(Creswell, 2003). Positioned outside the MOTE work and acting as a spectator, I
drew upon my knowledge as a dancer/researcher to witness as audience and
make candid, non-participant observations. Supplementing these observations
with interviews, documents and reflections, a wide range of sources informed
the study (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002).

Participant observation is useful in an emergent research design; it complements
the study of small populations (Bank & Biddle, 1997; McKechnie, 2008), and as
Bernard (2006) maintains, “It puts you where the action is” (p. 344) and is the
only option for gaining a real understanding of the research area. Equally,
entering the research as dancer reinforced the paradigm of critical pedagogy and
concept of teacher as learner (Barthes as cited in McLaren, 1989). As
participant/observer, I engaged either as drama facilitator beside the students or
as a character through rewriting in role.
Re-writing in role, in which I rewrote the data from the perspective of a fictional character, provided a new stage upon which to respond creatively to the research. As co-participant, I danced nearby, positioning myself as a collaborative, albeit fictional partner rather than a remote authority etc. (Barthes as cited in Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Dancing within the narrative provided an opportunity to be both responsive and performative. This resonates with my concept of research as praxis and a desire to destabilise the authority of my position within the research (Torres & Reyes, 2011).

Positioned as both a teacher and researcher within the focus group interviews disrupted my status as researcher. When facilitating the drama-based interviews, I relied upon my professional, intuitive understandings as the teacher rather than researcher (Stake, 2010). In addition, working alongside them in role strengthened my capacity to “interact in a dialogical manner with research participants” (Bishop, 2011, p. 14). The participants are integral to the research as fellow dancers, collaborators and co-choreographers of the final dance.

Participants included the researcher, students, teachers, and creators of the process drama works. This inclusive approach supports the philosophy of process drama and critical pedagogy as collaborative teaching approaches (Aitken, 2007; Bowell & Heap, 2005; Freire, 2005). Inviting these multiple voices into the research dialogue provided thick description (Geertz, 1993) and enhanced the credibility of the findings (Boylorn, 2008).

Student voice is invaluable to research about students (Innes, Moss, & Smigel, 2001; McLaren, 1989) and enables educators to understand how classroom meaning is produced and adjudicated (Innes et al., 2001; McLaren, 1989; Nuthall, 1999). However, as anticipated and typical of semi-structured interviews, some voices dominated. In an effort to mitigate a potential bias, a comprehensive range of data was gathered, and creative interview techniques employed (Boylorn, 2008). Intended not as a cumulative repository of evidence, this wealth of data validates no final solution but rather raises numerous possibilities for
consideration. Consistent with the philosophy of critical pedagogy not to answer but rather stimulate opportunities for dialogue and praxis, this data offered suggestions and provoked questions (Elliot, 2007; Ramaekers, 2007).

As an iterative process, generating the data and engaging in analysis occurred simultaneously and symbiotically as I moved back and forth through the data. Through the process of writing, reading, refining and rewriting, I reframed the drama from a variety of viewpoints. I experimented with form to inform and engage with the data as researcher, artist and audience. Viewed as an opportunity to create a conversation around the two pedagogies of critical pedagogy and process drama, this thesis employs a variety of qualitative and arts-based research methods. Designed to illuminate and challenge thinking, these methods explore implicit meanings and the potential feelings, contexts and intentions of the participants. The next section will outline the specific methods utilised to collect and generate data, while the individual case study chapters supply an outline of specific analysis methods.

**Methods**

There is a multiplicity of ways experience can be represented, knowledge shown. (Eisner, 1991, p. 5)

**Introduction**

Having located my research within a qualitative paradigm, committed to rumination not determination, the following section describes the research methods applied in each case study. Split into three distinct sections, the first summarises the research tools common to both case studies, whilst the subsequent two sections detail the specific tools and methods employed in each.

Each one being an equally striking illustration of recognised drama praxis, the two case studies are diverse research prospects. As a document analysis engaging with existing written materials, case study A interrogates the historical well-known process drama, *The Seal Wife*. Despite this static data source, I
engaged with the texts anew through the writing of a fictionalised narrative. Reconceptualising the narrative as a first-person recount reinvigorated the documents and aligned the writing with the dialogic and participatory orientation of the thesis. Conversely, as a participant observer of a Mantle of the Expert (MOTE), I directly engaged with case study B. It required physical, first-hand involvement with the research site, and ongoing, reciprocal relationships with the research participants. A desire to dialogue with ideas through multiple voices motivated the rewriting. This conference panel discussion allowed emerging ideas to dialogue with one another. Both studies relied upon my research journal, for documenting observations and playing with emerging understandings, and employed drama-based techniques to elicit both critical and creative writing.

**Common Research Tools**

While both case studies danced as discrete pieces of research, the generic use of several research methods complemented their shared responsibility to the final cumulative case study “performance.” These research tools—research journal, drama-based methods and rewriting in role—were invaluable in crafting a responsive, flexible and rigorous collection of data.

I recorded detailed observations and reflections about the research within a research journal (P. Anderson, 2008). These reflections, generated new questions, reviewed emerging understandings and informed the modification of the research methods, to better suit the needs of the research (Geertz, 1993; P. Taylor, 1996a). This journal took several forms, including a written journal, online notes, and audio recordings. It was the first step in constructing associations between my observations and concepts, data, documentation and the literature (O’Toole, 2006). This journal generated a significant data source and initiated writing as a form of inquiry within the thesis (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005).
Drama-based methods

“Research is nothing new to the drama classroom; it is embedded in the warp and woof of our fabric” (Norris, 2000, p. 41).

As Norris comments above, drama and research are both pedagogies focused upon uncovering, investigating and making meaning through a reflective process. Accordingly, they are natural bedfellows within the classroom and logical allies within the academy (Norris, 2000). Drama integrates what McLeod (1988, as cited in Norris, 2000, p. 40) asserts are the five ways of making meaning: word, number, gesture, image and sound, which offer a holistic framework in which to explore meaning. Drama-based research (DBR) employs aspects of theatre or drama making in the generation, analysis or presentation of data. It values embodied inquiry and complements my research paradigm, which challenges the supremacy of language and seeks to encompass understandings through the senses (Bresler, 2011). Drama based research sits within the realm of arts-based research and identifies “the imaginative, critical and intellectual work undertaken by artists as a form of research” (Sullivan, 2005 as cited in Bresler, 2011, p. 323), positing that the arts can enhance understandings and endorse the potential of teaching and learning as acts of inquiry (Bresler, 2011).

Typically, drama-based research has tended to utilise drama in two dominant ways: either to disseminate or manipulate the data. Verbatim theatre or ethnodrama enacts research findings through theatre performance (Norris, 2000), whereas other forms apply drama to shape the data or build narratives with research participants (Ackroyd & O'Toole, 2010). Both researchers and participants in these processes engage in cooperative analysis, as they synthesise and structure the data through exploration or performance.

Harris and Sinclair’s (2014) work on the play-as-research conceptualises writing a play as an act of inquiry. The creation of the play directs the line of inquiry, while the final production provides the site of the inquiry and artistic representation of that inquiry (Norris, 2000). They recognise the reciprocal
relationship between form and content: the form influences the content and the content influences the form (Norris, 2000).

Similarly, Luton’s (2015) embodied reflection approach invites participants to create the data through the physical enactment of their narratives. Luton incorporated these reflections into her PhD performance, blurring the space between research and art and creating a deeply satisfying and thought-provoking theatrical event (Luton, 2015). Luton (2015) and Norris (2000) engage in drama to stimulate responses, generate data and embrace the concept that through “doing” we might better explore ideas. She invites participants to grapple holistically with their ideas and questions through voice, body, and movement.

Rather than serve or perform the data, I employed DBR during the data collection, analysis and presentation and identified the drama experience as data (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010). This reflects my view that the art form actively informs the generation of the data. In addition, the fictional space proffered by drama as research invites participants to engage in a space of mataxis (Boal, 1979), simultaneously standing with a foot in both the real and imagined world.

Inspired by Norris, the successes of several colleagues, and the aptness of using drama to research drama, this approach permeated the entire research design (Heyward & Fitzpatrick, 2015; Luton, 2015; Norris, 2000). Drama as research functioned in varying ways through the research: through rewriting in role, and in the dramatic interview approach. Rewriting in role features in both case studies, while the dramatic interview method arose once I began working with the participants in the second case study. The next section offers a detailed explanation of the origins, design, enactment and process of rewriting in role.

**Rewriting in role**

Rewriting in role is a considered, deliberate and partial reconsideration of initial data through which a richer story emanates. It draws upon elements from
narrative inquiry, fictionalisation, ethnodrama, auto ethnography, researcher in role, applied theatre and writing in role to create a fresh data generation method. It involves re-writing the data from the perspective of fictional characters, to highlight key areas of interest to the research, and from the “as if” (Stanislavsky, 1980) of inside the two dramas. Although a drama-based method, it is heavily influenced by narrative inquiry and writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 1994). Founded upon Richardson’s writing as method of inquiry, it reflects a concept of knowledge as unstable, ambiguous and multidimensional (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). Designed to emulate the goals of dialogical performance, re-writing in role permits multiple viewpoints and a renegotiation that problematizes and accepts hybridity (Cho & Trent, as cited in Leavy, 2014). This creates a fictional duo/multi-ethnography, which allows me to dialogue with myself and offers the reader multiple viewpoints to consider (Sawyer & Norris, 2013). This invites the reader as a critical agent and is congruent with social justice, which provides an opportunity to conduct research that liberates voice and embraces a pluralist community of inquiry (Bradbury & Reason, 2008).

As indicated by the prefix “re,” it does not fabricate new material but offers a reflexive re-engagement with the original data. It makes a reflexive return through existing writing, in order to make the writing fresh and new, creating a reflexive movement within the analysis, which circles back through concepts, or as Adams and Holman Jones (2011) describe it “writing déjà vu prose that makes the familiar hum with newness” (p. 108). Transparent about the fiction, this approach deliberately invites the author to consciously, influence the writing. As an act of purposeful construction, rewriting in role signals the fluid nature of discourse and interpretation and the bounded nature of its discussion.

As Frank (2016) discusses “when factual representation obscures possible alternative interpretations, writing fiction can offer a valuable contribution” (p. 9). This assertion validates the concept of rewriting in role as a form of fictionalisation that gazes beneath the printed text, reads between the lines, and probes to reveal both what is present and absent. As a mechanism to illuminate
and unveil, fictionalising addresses the typical reliance upon “official documentation” only.

Rewriting in role created space for the voices beyond the academy and expanded the discourse beyond the published accounts of *The Seal Wife*. Additionally, a straightforward juxtaposition of the workshop critique and authorised publications would amplify their positions as oppositional texts and potentially reduce the debate to a narrow binary. All data is subject to interpretation (Crawford & Boyd, 2012), and fictionalisation identifies writing as an act of construction. Trustworthiness and reliability rely not on objectivity or an adherence to factual details but rather on being honest about the dishonest.

Rewriting in role is fictional and determined by the authors decisions (Saldana, 2005a). Unlike ethnodrama, it is not a reconfiguring of verbatim participant responses but a fictional work that integrates understandings derived from the data. Grounded upon documented evidence, these fictions offer narratives that invite multiple meanings and deepen understanding. While the characters and their words are fictional, the understandings, questions and ideas are not and, consequently, any quotes attributed to participants are verbatim and taken directly from interview transcripts or observations. The following excerpt demonstrates the use of rewriting in role in case study A.

**Caitlin:**

Next, Cecily asked us to help create a sense of the fishing community where the family lived. This was fun as we moved into role, gossiping with other “townsfolk” about what we knew about the seal wife. Cecily told us that the community was “defined by schooling, religion, the fishing trade - that there is a simplicity but also a harshness.

By comparison, this excerpt taken from case study B, and written by Bernard, a fictional critical scholar, offers a response to the MOTE sessions infused with verbatim quotes, recorded during my observations.
Bernard:

Refreshing though it was to see students released from the spirit-crushing confines of their desks, even this movement was bound by invisible ideological shackles. “I like the quiet way you are moving through the space” serves as an unwarranted reminder, that a good child/employee is docile, reticent and obedient.

Recognising that writing is a privileged process through which to communicate and create (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005; Pollack, 1998 as cited in Spry, 2011), rewriting offers a renewed field of play in which, to experiment with ideas and explore understandings (Richardson, 1997 cited in Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005). It recognises story as a sense-making device and invites the reader into the world of the research (Hughes, 2008). Permeated with elements of myself, writing and rewriting in character has allowed me to excavate my own understandings and layer them into and upon the data as they evolved. Multiple lenses are incorporated and vigour, not rigor, sought to provide depth to the writing (Leavy, 2014).

Akin to rewriting in role is the process drama tool “writing in role,” which invites participants in the drama to locate themselves in role and write from that perspective (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003). Writing in role encourages participants to deepen their knowledge about the character, suggest narratives, explore concepts, and negotiate concepts through the safety of the fiction (Baldwin, 2009). Protected by role, it facilitates writing for purpose from diverse perspectives and relocates the author into the realm of interest and alongside others (Woolland, 2008).

Aitken’s (2014, 2015) innovative adaptation of teacher-in-role as method; researcher in role seeks to address similar issues. Aitken (2014) suggests that researcher in role generates playful responses, enhances the collegiality between researcher and participant and enables “more authentic responses and interactions to occur” (p. 268). She cites the use of role for inviting authentic participation, encouraging genuine dialogue and lessening participant inhibitions.
often driven by the paradigm of research. Likewise, rewriting in role shifted the relationship between the data and researcher, telling the story beyond the official documentation, and engaging in dialogue with concepts in contextually relevant ways.

Interested in eliciting detailed research responses, pioneers of Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR), O’Connor and Anderson (2013) champion the value of creating a meaningful, fictional world for participants and echo the theory behind rewriting in role. They argue that theatre as research generates multifaceted data and provides a fictional, contextually relevant space for active dialogue. They recognise that drama engages with tacit knowledge, in the messy reality of social interactions, and provides opportunities for both learning and research. Creative approaches create different types of findings.

Consistent with my research paradigm, this method contests the supremacy of static words, by placing the research and participants into the active, imaginative space. Whilst the written format of this thesis is inescapable, shifting narrative responsibility to these characters allows it to inhabit a new life within the imagination. The writing belongs to the character, humanising and relating it to a living, breathing, feeling, if fictional being. Employing character further enabled me to face my own culpability and momentarily counter my compliance with the ideology of my institution, the academy and the polite requirements of the field. Compromised as an academic product for examination, rewriting tempts me to playfully step out of the “academic” PhD constraints, if only temporarily, and to unsettle them (M. Anderson & O’Connor, 2013; O’Connor, 2013). I can explore the emerging analysis dialogically and circumvent the monologic confines of a traditional thesis.

My initial rendition of these two vivid case studies into academic prose, withered these juicy, plump stories to raisins. Relocated to writing from within the drama added dynamic energy to the debates and controversies and captured the essence of the drama about the drama. It added an appropriate theatricality to
the writing and reflected the external debates surrounding both cases. Writing in multiple voices echoes and exposes the reality of the multiple personas of teacher, researcher, practitioner and individual that I navigate daily (Breault, 2016). Finally, shifting between voices of varying authority honours my critical stance by challenging the supremacy of academic voice and welcoming the frequently silenced.

Employed in various ways in the two case studies, re-writing in role satisfied the logistical puzzle of telling multiple stories whilst simultaneously generating an affecting rendering of the data. Several competing narratives challenged my initial attempts to make sense of The Seal Wife workshop. Originally, I compiled these various accounts into one document, placing the relevant paragraphs in contrast with one another on the page as shown below.

The participants sit on the floor while O’Neil, seated on a stool, tells this Irish tale. The tale is characterised by its brevity and lack of illuminating detail (Taylor, 16) O’Neill’s artistry is characterised by an ability to select a pre-text which contains the seeds of inquiry. The Irish folk tale raises issues related to families, identity, and sacrifice, which dominated the yearnings of humans over time.

O’Neill’s choice of the pre-text title, The Seal Wife, and the ensuing narrative content immediately establishes the central female character in a marginalised position (wife), with the masculine (Patrick) at the centre: she exists only in relation to him. She is the other, the mother of his children, incidental but not necessary to his autonomous existence. O’Neill’s mediation of the narrative defines Patrick as a ‘fisherman” that is an authentic producer/provider in society, while the Seal Wife is defined in terms of her aesthetic value” the most beautiful woman.”

This proved valuable for revealing the disparities of opinion and recollections around the workshop but remained difficult to follow. Using this wealth of data as a foundation facilitated a coherent rendering of the workshop and allowed for questioning around areas of uncertainty. Rewritten from the perspective of Caitlin Anderson, to her colleague Jane, I staged this writing as her workshop diary and follow up emails. Given the success of this method, I tried to apply it to case study B, rewriting the MOTE from the position of Gaby, a student teacher. However, this single-person narrative fell flat, and I subsequently reframed the
writing of the MOTE as a dialogue through which to debate and provoke. After considering several options, I wrote a fictional transcript of a conference panel discussion centred on a MOTE work, between Bernard Garcia Jameson, Caitlin Anderson and myself. Bernard, as critical scholar, revels in pompous, outlandish and bloated debate, whilst Caitlin’s return unites the two studies and confirms the evolution of her character into an experienced drama educator. An emergent researcher and scholar, I interject to negotiate and consider both viewpoints. PowerPoint slides and the inclusion of panel chairperson further maintain the fiction. Variations in layout and font convey the shifts into the fictional world, providing vital cues to the reader and supporting the theatrical leanings of the work. These embellishments hopefully transport the reader into the fiction and invite them to dwell within a virtual world (Kim, 2006). The following excerpt demonstrates these shifts in format.

**Bernard**
Gaining awareness of these ideological constraints will enable you to oppose them but it won’t make you immune to them.

**Caitlin:**
Yes, but the reality is that working in schools requires an adherence to protocols, patterns, or rules to enable it to function effectively; these inevitably communicate tacit understandings. As an educator working in this setting, it would be unrealistic to expect students to disregard the world they know so well, and dive with reckless abandon into an unknown sea.

Through this rewriting, the theories of critical pedagogy and process drama purposefully and plausibly dance together. Caitlin’s reappearance justifies the integration of perceptions from case study A, offers comforting familiarity for the reader, and facilitates a flexible movement of ideas between the case studies. The table below provides an overview of rewriting in role within the thesis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: The Seal Wife</td>
<td>Caitlin Anderson (Written) – Young, female, early career tertiary drama practitioner</td>
<td>A composite character whose account of the Melbourne “Seal Wife” workshop makes sense of the multiple documents</td>
<td>Diary entries and email communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jane (Inferred) – Older and more experienced, a drama colleague and friend</td>
<td>Provides an audience for Caitlin’s writing and provides context for drama education at the time of the Melbourne workshop in the early 1990s</td>
<td>Email communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Shark MOTE</td>
<td>Bernard Garcia Jameson</td>
<td>Expert in critical pedagogy, an exaggerated character based upon well-known scholars, who offers an enthusiastic bombastic critique of the MOTE experience from a critical pedagogy perspective</td>
<td>Conference panel discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caitlin Anderson</td>
<td>Experienced drama educator who draws on a wealth of knowledge in drama education to discuss the MOTE experience with Bernard, from a drama perspective</td>
<td>Conference panel discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chiefly guided by the requirements of their narrative function, each character possesses a backstory, which informs their actions and motivations. Caitlin’s, initial lack of knowledge, excused by her inexperience, enables her to innocently, question established practice. Her emails to Jane and half-written abandoned articles are naïve and idealistic but nevertheless pose vital questions. She responds to the workshop with a sense of immediacy and reflects the position of New Zealand drama educators, still peeking out from beneath the shadows of their Australian counterparts. Thoughtful and nuanced, Caitlin’s responses in
case study B suggest her years of experience and they satirise the representation of female academics, arguably the underappreciated workhorses of the academy.

Purposefully written as a caricature of the enigmatic and obscure critical theorist, Bernard is by contrast a supremely confident and verbose character. Deliberately controversial, this character lampoons the male academic who lacks the humility to listen to others. Distanced from the consequence or influence of reality, these roles allowed me to ask imprudent questions and play devil’s advocate (Eriksson, 2011). These two distinct personalities with disparate expertise and personalities offered unique and varied positions from which to contemplate the research questions. Rewriting in role “fleshes out” the data and creates an empathic connection between the reader, the research and its participants (Haseman, 2015). The creation of a dramatic frame which acts as a border and separates the real world from the imagined offers further protection (Carroll & Cameron, 2005).

Rewriting in role created and sustained this distanced frame in several ways. Firstly, I distanced myself through the creation of the fictional world and then repositioned myself as characters within that frame into a “space of enactment” (Carroll & Cameron, 2005, p. 5). No longer researcher as voyeuristic observer but embedded and protected into greater engagement, (Boland, 2015) distance was maintained as I alternated between writing in the dramatic frame and the thesis (Carroll & Cameron, 2005). Written as reflective memories, time offered the final distancing frame within rewriting in role. I wrote these accounts as memories to provide a further layer of distance reduce the emotional intensity of these narratives and validate their reflective tone. Finally, the distance offered by rewriting in role protects me. I can safely write potentially controversial things in role as Caitlin or Bernard and deliberately provoke without fear.

Rewriting in role disrupts linear models of writing and contests accepted forms of knowledge, adding complexity, inviting new questions, engaging the aesthetic and destabilising the primacy of the author. It seeks to operate within a liminal
space between scholarship and performance, creating a text that is accessible to both professional and public audiences. It attempts to honour the dialogic principles of critical pedagogy and invite collaboration in multiple ways through the text: in the creation of the narratives themselves, between the audiences and the characters, and between the reader and myself. These voices refract and reflect upon one another and reveal the liminal spaces in-between the narratives and debates.

Arts-based methods are employed not to replicate or recover the truth but instead improvise around it. Rewriting in role sits outside a positivist paradigm and is underpinned by a belief that “every written text is a product of particular social, political, technological, economic and personal events” (Frank, 2016, p. 485). Exploring the same data from different voices enabled me to recognise the relationship between the thinking and ideas and analyse the same event through various lenses (Ely, 1997). Repositioned into the narrative, this performative writing purposefully disrupted perceptions to gain awareness of them (Sawyer & Norris, 2017). The fictional text aims to be plausible, realistic and evocative (Miencczakowski, 1995 as cited in Denzin, 1997). Originally conceived to create a coherent narrative, the value of re-writing in role has been manifold. Affiliated with the research on numerous levels, this method reflects in and upon emergent understandings, remains open to possibility and welcomes polyvocal debate. As discussed next in relation to case study A, the purpose of rewriting is not to deceive the reader or bolster my hypothesis but allow for an exploration of ideas as supported by the research.
Case Study A data collection

Introduction


The Seal Wife

Three principal motives informed the selection of *The Seal Wife*. Firstly, its author Cecily O’Neill is a process drama pioneer who has influenced countless leading drama practitioners (Neelands, 2008b; P. Taylor, 1995). Secondly, it is widely regarded as an exemplar of process drama techniques and the source of notable controversy and, finally, published in numerous forms; it offered a rich, readily available data source.

Initially delighted by the wealth of documentation surrounding *The Seal Wife* drama, I quickly realised that incorporating every document would be problematic and unproductive. Adapted and then engaged to teach language, discuss teen pregnancy and address conflict management, the popularity of *The Seal Wife* drama has endured (Carkin, n.d; Dunn, 1996; Marschke, 2004; Neelands, 2008b; Ngum, 2012; O’Mara, 1996; O’Neill, 1995; P. Taylor, 1995).

While many practitioners have relied upon O’Neill’s original design, the variation in intention, facilitation and context of these instances limited the usefulness of alternative versions of the drama (Carkin, 2007.; Carkin, Caplan, Kao, Dilatush, & Hillyard, 2011; Chinyowa, 2012; Marschke, 2004; Ngum, 2012). I elected to limit my attention to *The Seal Wife* drama workshop conducted by O’Neill, at Arts
Education Colloquium 1, 1993 and attended by 30 predominantly tertiary drama educators in Melbourne, Australia. The three principal accounts of this workshop are the Draft Record of Proceedings (Muir, 1993), Pre-text and Storydrama: The Artistry of Cecily O'Neill and David Booth and Retrieving the Mother//Other from the Myths and Margins of O'Neill's 'Seal Wife' Drama (O'Neill, 1994; P. Taylor, 1995). The primary sources of analysis, this research also considers some additional responses to the workshop (Dunn, 1996; O'Mara, 1996).

This wealth of written material is in part a response to the controversy that arose because of Helen Fletcher's article critiquing the workshop. Published 2 years after the workshop, in a special edition of NJ: Drama Australia, Fletcher's article offered a feminist analysis of the drama. The following section will introduce Fletcher and other the key figures associated with The Seal Wife workshop and locate its enactment and documentation within this historical and social context.

**Key Figures**

There are three significant figures connected with Seal Wife workshop and its subsequent controversy. These are the author of the monograph, Philip Taylor, the subject of the monograph, Cecily O'Neill, and the author of a critical response to the workshop, Helen Fletcher.


Cecily O'Neill is an eminent drama practitioner credited with explaining and extending the work of Heathcote and Bolton into the practice known as process
drama (Muir, 1993; Neelands, 2008b; P. Taylor, 1995). At the time of the workshop, she was an associate professor in drama and theatre education at The Ohio State University, dividing her time between London and the United States (O’Neill, 1995). Highly regarded, O’Neill had previously published *Drama Structures; A practical Handbook for Teachers* (O’Neill & Lambert, 1982) and the *Collected Writings of Dorothy Heathcote* (Heathcote et al., 1984). A deliberate attempt to validate and defend the artistry of drama the NJ monograph was an opportunity to share O’Neill’s philosophies and teaching (P. Taylor, 1995).

Helen Fletcher’s controversial article “*Retrieving the Mother//Other from the Myths and Margins of O’Neill’s ‘Seal Wife’ Drama*” (Fletcher, 1995) presented a post-feminist critique of The Seal Wife workshop. At the time of the workshop, Fletcher was an experienced secondary drama teacher and recent Master in Theatre Arts graduate. In the mid-1990s, she changed her career focus to pastoral care and worked for a several years as the dean of housing at Flinders University. She passed away in 2017 from cancer. Authors of the supplementary documents varied from experienced to emerging drama and applied theatre scholars and discussed in more detail in the case study chapter (Dunn, 1996; Neelands, 1996; O’Mara, 1996).

**Historical Context**

O’Neill arrived in Melbourne during a difficult time in the history of drama education. David Hornbook’s (1991, 1998b) writings called for a return to drama as a discreet artistic subject and were fundamentally critical of Heathcote, Bolton and process drama work. Battle lines between those dedicated to the great canon of British theatre and those devoted to drama as an educative process were sharply drawn (Donelan, 2001 cited in M. Anderson, 2002). Underpinned by Heathcote’s (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, 1984) progressive ideas of drama as a learning methodology, O’Neill’s process drama was under attack.

These waves of disquiet from the UK crashed upon Australian shores and unsettled the local drama education scene. Unlike their British counterparts,
however, Australia largely succeeded in unifying drama education in the face of a hostile educational system (Donelan, 2001 as cited in M. Anderson, 2002; O’Toole, 2004). Having briefly outlined the people and position of the Seal Wife workshop, the remainder of this section specifies the research methods employed.

This case study employs two major research methods: document analysis and rewriting in role. Document analysis functions in two stages; in the initial stage it provides the source material for the fictional rewriting in role and in the second stage it is reapplied to the fictionalised account together with the supplementary documents on The Seal Wife.

Document analysis offers an opportunity to study the materials in depth over time and is well suited to the revision of existing materials. In the first phase of document analysis, I began reading, sifting, and selecting documents to provide the foundation documents for rewriting in role. Deliberately restricting myself to the Melbourne workshop narrowed the focus and established a common basis for the research discussion (O’Neill, 1994, 1995; P. Taylor, 1995). After reading and reflecting upon the events as described by the core documents (Fletcher, 1995; Muir, 1993; P. Taylor, 1995), I rewrote an account of The Seal Wife workshop as a (fictional) participant. Grounded in the original data, this reimagining played with the data, offering up new questions and challenges and integrating ideas and questions related to the research.

**Diary of a Drama Teacher (Rewriting in Role in The Seal Wife)**

Several elements informed the decision to rewrite, The Seal Wife workshop from the perspective of a fictional attendee. Rewriting in role created a coherent narrative grounded in the existing documentation. Reanimating this historical event through a fictional account embraced the messiness of a lived experience and rendered it active (Daiute, 2014). The author of the fictional workshop journal is Caitlin Anderson, a young, inexperienced early career tertiary drama educator who recounts the workshop via journal entries and emails this to her
colleague Jane. Although muted, Jane is essential for motivating Caitlin and acting as the unseen audience. The reader operates as another silent contributor, invited to eavesdrop on Caitlin’s writing as an accomplice, co-creator, and spectator. I collaborate with the reader to create and preserve the fictional reality and they are essential to the thesis.

Caitlin allows for the expression of a typically unheard voice, both from within the workshop and broader academic circles, being that of the novice practitioner. Although fictional, Caitlin represents a significant demographic of drama practitioners, young and female, largely absent from academic conversations of the time. Incorporating this perspective offers yet another layer to the story and provides a counterpoint to the officially authorised version. Leavy (2014, p. 14) suggests this type of rewriting can promote dialogue between the voices in authority and those whose narrative is omitted.

In the second phase of the document analysis, I considered Caitlin’s account together with the letters responding to Fletcher’s article published in NJ: Drama Australia (Dunn, 1996; Neelands, 1996; O’Mara, 1996). This analysis of case study A provoked new ideas and questions and actively informed case study B.
Case Study B data collection

Introduction

This section will briefly outline the Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) approach, although a comprehensive analysis and history of Mantle of the Expert and its location within the paradigm of process drama is available in Chapter 4. In addition, this section will outline the specific unit of work and the research methods employed.

Purposefully selected as one of the dominant forms of process drama currently active in schools, Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) is a readily available example of process drama in action. Established by Dorothy Heathcote, Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) incorporates drama, inquiry learning and expert framing and has evolved over the last thirty years, into a distinct process drama form (Aitken, 2013). Positioned within a fictional frame and presented with a problem or project to tackle, participants adopt the role of expert and work in a cooperative group. While participants work in the drama remains improvisational, MOTE requires substantial planning to ensure opportunities for encountering the curriculum within an ongoing holistic experience.

The Shark MOTE

This MOTE unit occurred over a 6-week period, in a Year 6 class at Plainview Normal, an affluent school located in a provincial New Zealand town. Research participants included the classroom teacher, students, and the MOTE facilitator. Described by the teacher as enthusiastic, engaged, and achieving well, the predominantly 10-year-old students came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. While new to MOTE, Lisa, an experienced classroom teacher, was extremely enthusiastic and keen to learn, while Aaron, the drama facilitator of the unit, had significant experience though referred to himself as an emerging practitioner. Please note I have used pseudonyms for these practitioners throughout the research. In addition to the research participants, a group of preservice teachers also attended.
Aaron, Lisa and the deputy principal collaboratively planned the MOTE several months’ earlier, according to the school’s curriculum goals and specific objectives of the class. Prior to teaching, they established the pre-text for the drama, associated curriculum links, potential sources of tension and key inquiry questions. The MOTE commission required the participants to design a shark enclosure so convincing that the sharks would breed despite being in captivity. A schema of core elements for successful MOTE experiences informed the fictional context and guided the drama, as indicated below.

Table 2 Core Elements of Mantle of the Expert in the Shark MOTE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Elements</th>
<th>Shark MOTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fictional context</td>
<td>Professional high-quality company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Company, enterprise/team</td>
<td>Augmented reality company–design simulated environments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Frame</td>
<td>Quality company with commitment to ethical practises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Commission</td>
<td>To design a Dumb Gulper Shark tank that would convince the shark it was in the ocean and ensure it bred successfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Client</td>
<td>NZ Department of Fisheries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Possible curriculum areas</td>
<td>Science, key competencies, literacy, testing pH levels, capturing and recreating the sounds of the sea, decoding letters, research shark habitat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Role</td>
<td>Designers at the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Drama conventions</td>
<td>Conventions such as freeze frame, conscious alley used to explore ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Potential tensions</td>
<td>Tank temperature set too high, sponsor of project has ulterior motives, or shark learns it is in captivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Reflection</td>
<td>Students will reflect out of role on work undertaken in role.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Methods Selected

I employed a variety of research methods to gain a thick description of the research site, collecting data in the form of observations, interviews, journal entries, document analysis and critical friend discussions (Geertz, 1993). Striving to invigorate my angle of repose, I frequently shifted position from observer to participant, to oscillate from inside to outside the research (Richardson, 1994).

The following table provides a brief overview of the research process

Table 3 Overview of MOTE Research Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>MOTE Classroom Activity</th>
<th>Researcher Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25/06/13</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Initial visit to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/07/13</td>
<td>Planning MOTE meeting</td>
<td>Observe and participate in discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30/07/13</td>
<td>Session led by Aaron Drama Games Offer the premise for augmented reality scenario. Students decide upon company</td>
<td>Observe the MOTE session (Aaron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/08/13</td>
<td>Session led by Aaron Company receives and accepts the Dumb Gulper Shark commission.</td>
<td>Observe the MOTE session (Aaron) and record in journal (Aaron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group interview with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview the classroom teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/08/13</td>
<td>Session led by Lisa In groups, work on tank designs</td>
<td>Observe the classroom MOTE session (Lisa) and record reflections in journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group mini-interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/08/13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interview with Aaron; MOTE facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/08/13</td>
<td>Session led by Aaron ARS host visit from Teacher-in-role as “Bruce” the science expert</td>
<td>Observe the MOTE session (Aaron) and record in journal (Aaron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify and then re-create the soundscapes of shark habitat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/08/13</td>
<td>Session led by Lisa: ARS work on designs in small groups and shares with entire company.</td>
<td>Observe the MOTE session (Aaron) and record in journal Focus group interview with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/09/13</td>
<td>Session led by Aaron: Rehearse presentations and then present designs to NZ fisheries. Create freeze frames of themselves having fun in Wellington.</td>
<td>Observe the final MOTE session (Aaron) and record reflections in journal Focus group interview with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/09/13</td>
<td>Interview with classroom teacher: Lisa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/01/14</td>
<td>Interview with Aaron: MOTE facilitator.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Observations and Reflections**

I observed an hour-and-a-half MOTE session, every week for 6 weeks. These were a combination of sessions managed by either the MOTE facilitator (Aaron) or classroom teacher (Lisa). Aaron’s sessions were the site of major developments in the drama, whilst Lisa’s sessions were predominantly a continuation of earlier work.

Conscious of the potentially inhibiting impact of the research, I endeavoured to build trust with participants by sharing the research aims and plans with them (Leary, 2010). I established and maintained friendly relationships with the participants, while taking care not to interfere in the teaching (Leary, 2010). I made candid observations as a spectator, altering my location within the room to vary my vantage point and the voices around me. A wide range of data sources, including interviews and students’ classwork supplemented these observations to mitigate observer bias and partiality (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002).
I kept a research journal to record observations, develop questions and note theories as they arose. I frequently recorded the most potent ideas while driving home and these immediate reflections were invaluable in charting my shifting understandings and challenging underlying assumptions. Through the subsequent transcribing and rewriting process, I reviewed and re-evaluated these ideas (O’Toole, 2006). These reflective memos kicked off the analysis process, as I began to fuse my understanding of the literature with observations, reflections and other data.

I conducted participant interviews throughout the MOTE unit, informed by critical social theory and the concept of researcher as traveller. While tailored to suit the specific participant, each interview was underpinned by a commitment to communal exploration (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Interviews were semi-structured and began with a series of open-ended but predetermined questions to stimulate dialogue and guide the interview (Ayres, 2008). These interviews became more responsive and conversational as we got to know one another (Leary, 2010). I gave participants pseudonyms to protect their identity and recorded interviews on a digital voice recorder (Wellington & Szcerbinski, 2007). In addition, I recorded any informal discussions with participants before or after the MOTE sessions in my research journal.

**Focus Group Interviews**

In critical research, student voice is essential to raising the consciousness of students to their own educational opportunities and restrictions (McLaren, 2003). As valued participants within the research, I selected a small group of students for focus group interviews (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Well suited to exploratory studies, the flexibility of this interview style ensures it can bend to the rhythms and interactions of the group and generate different opinions (Travers, 2006).

Children are the primary source of knowledge about their own views and experiences. (P. Anderson, 2008, p. 287)
Although not in my original proposal, I utilised drama techniques within the interviews as a method of stimulating and generating data (Punch, 2005; Travers, 2006). Students responded spontaneously to one another and generated rich data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Happily, integrating drama into the interviews and revisiting my previous life as drama teacher liberated me into another role of teacher/researcher.

A suitable adjustment to the original design, I expanded these interviews to allow for the use of drama conventions. I felt that drama as a research method could honour embodied communications (Norris, 2000) and counter the warning of a colleague that gaining useful responses from children would be tricky. Although competent in the use of drama conventions, I relied upon Jonathon Neelands’ seminal work *Structuring Drama Work: A handbook of Available Forms in Theatre and Drama* (Neelands & Goode, 1990) as a foundational guide. This framework of easily referenced conventions strengthened the DBR’s validity and my confidence in the approach. Incorporating drama into the interview process added three factors to the process: the recognition of embodied knowing, the creation of a playful space, and the restructuring of the researcher–interviewee relationship.

Protected by the drama frame, we expressed ideas tangibly and altered the physical space around us. Participants adopted new roles, created images, sounds, scenes, and explored ideas affectively. We replaced the lone voices breaking through the eerie silence of an interview room with movement, whisperings and incidental chatter. The participants and I replayed and re-examined moments of the MOTE through drama conventions, and participants “toggled” between roles, offering them a variety of positions from which to contribute (Carroll & Cameron, 2005, p. 8). Playing with their identity through drama allowed them to perhaps temporarily abandon the role of helpful student and present their authentic views. Relocated as drama teacher/researcher, I physically worked alongside the students as collaborator and fellow participant. This disrupted the potential binary of the researcher/subject and complemented
my methodological stance.

Drama Conventions as Interview Tools

Each session began with several warm-up exercises, designed to encourage participation, build community and encourage movement. These included making shapes, weather walks and name games. Following the warm up, we explored selected drama conventions. These included hot seating, tableaux, consciousness alley, scene starters, and others with conventional interview questions (Neelands & Goode, 1990). The following examples are from the interview transcripts:

Tableaux and Thought Tapping

Claire:

“Show me a frozen image snapshot of your classroom, your normal everyday classroom, so this morning when you came into school and you went to your desks// I’m going to come around and going to thought tap// just to see what you are feeling at this moment not necessarily what you are doing but what you are feeling at this moment okay? “

(Student Interview 1, August 5, 2013)

Repeating this initial activity, students created a frozen image of the classroom when engaging in MOTE. Subsequently, we reflected upon the two images, and the similar or disparate elements within them.

Hot Seating

Claire:

“You are going to go into role okay? / And we are going to ask you questions we have about what we’ve seen going on in the MOTE classroom with the students okay?”

(Student Interview 1, August 5, 2013)
Scene Starters

Split into several smaller groups, I issued each group a line of dialogue recorded during my MOTE observations, as a scene starter. I was interested to see how the students interpreted the line in terms of potential locations, characters, and plot.

As introduced earlier, rewriting in role was the second drama-based research strategy employed in this case study. Choosing to write about the MOTE as a fictional conference panel discussion between scholars afforded an opportunity for both critical analysis and playful creativity. Bernard, Caitlin and I all participate in this transcript of the discussion. Bernard Garcia Jameson is a character wholly dedicated to a radical vision of critical pedagogy. As a satirical character, he deliberately embodies the aspects of critical pedagogy, which have garnered criticism, namely that it is too abstract, rhetorical, pretentious and lacking in self-awareness (Breusing, 2011; Ellsworth, 1989).

Caitlin, now an experienced drama practitioner confident in her capabilities and capable of debating the merits of drama education, returns. Tendrils of her early thinking around process drama are still evident, as she considers this MOTE drama and its relation to critical pedagogy. Her reappearance tangibly connects the two case studies and reflects my efforts to have each case operate in a relation with the other. As the third participant, I have cast myself in the parallel role of emergent researcher and recent doctoral student. My commentary negotiated between the often-competing voices of Caitlin and Bernard.

Bernard and Caitlin’s debate occurs in the public realm of a lengthy panel debate following their attendance and observation of the Shark MOTE. Creating a fictional transcript has allowed me to incorporate detailed references to literature, alongside a spontaneous academic debate. The motivation for rewriting in role in this case study came from a desire to create a dialogic space that reflected numerous divergent and emerging perspectives. I communicated my thought process through the dialogue between voices and engaged with
critical pedagogy and process drama in a dynamic way (Banks, 2008). As the emergent researcher, my third voice answers, supports, questions, and appraises the varying discussion. I invite the reader as a fourth participant to engage within this conversation. This complexity reflects my understanding of critical pedagogy as a dialogic form that resists easy definition or narrowed ideological norms. As a performed conversation between characters upon an imaginary stage, this approach deliberately sought to create an artistic event. This reflects my belief in knowledge as ambiguous, unruly and difficult to convey through the potentially stagnant form of words. Rewriting in role sought to stimulate an affective response and challenge the supremacy of academic language and technical rationality within educational settings (H. Smith & Dean, 2009).

**Analysis Methods**

I began analysing the data almost immediately, alongside the rest of the thesis (Stake, 1995), which required a careful consideration of my personal bias (O’Leary, 2010, p. 264). I explored the data to see how participants engaged in the drama and whether these dramas enabled participants to question assumptions about the world through critical praxis (O’Leary, 2010, p. 261). I reviewed and considered all the data through a critical lens which considers the place of language as an inherently and inextricably political part of social practice (Gee, 2009, p. 25). I reflectively considered the data to refract and reflect upon one other to generate meanings and answer the research question (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005). As, I read, labelled, archived and re-read the data I noted and generated emerging themes (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) based upon an inductive process of ongoing verification and reflection (O’Leary, 2010, p. 262). As I rewrote the data through rewriting in role, Bernard, Caitlin and I provided further angles of repose through which reconsider the data (Richardson, 1990). In the final stages of analysis, I sifted through both the original and generated writings for significant themes. I tackled the final discussion chapter by re-reading the findings from both case studies and coding these themes in different highlighter pens. This created a colourful if slightly chaotic collection of papers.
and inspired the penultimate dance metaphor of the maypole and its coloured ribbons.

**Ethical Considerations and Challenges**

In documenting these stories, it became apparent that these pedagogical experiences were a source of intense emotional significance to practitioners, participants and others. Instigating research in a critical frame required that I challenged common assumptions and asked difficult questions. As a teacher researcher, I appreciate that every teaching moment is complex and influenced by all manner of things, and that for a practitioner, hosting a researcher within the room is rarely stress-free. While the focus of the research is not individual practice, I have tried to be sensitive during any discussion of teacher praxis.

My position as researcher and visitor to the class gave me an authority that likely influenced participant responses. I attempted to minimise my authority by engaging with students in collaborative activities and deferring to greater expertise when consulting with drama practitioners. Cautious of the controversial material of *The Seal Wife*, I attempted to verify accounts of the drama from multiple sources and offer all participants an opportunity to voice their views. Finally, as a teacher, I made a conscious decision to share my developing thinking with the practitioners involved and exemplify an attitude of collegiality.

While gathering background evidence on *The Seal Wife*, I spoke to numerous people who attended the workshop, read the monograph, taught the drama or were familiar with this historic time in drama education. Some of these were salient to the study, whilst others offered me valuable perspective but nothing more. I listened to stories surrounding the workshop but excluded them from the final thesis. I adhered to a code of ethics and evaluated each story and discovery for its potential for harm. In an effort to protect the privacy of contributors, these stories have not been included but have informed the narrative.

Creating fictionalised characters offered another potential ethical quagmire, and
again I relied upon the research to guide my writing. While drawing upon the traits, names and aspects of numerous people, none of the characters are direct replicas of real people. If I had based them upon real people, they would not have the playfulness required by the thesis to make inflammatory or oppositional statements. The fiction is based upon an accurate record of events, and while I selected quotes to stimulate debate, they are authentic verbatim quotes. Making up elements of the workshop or MOTE experience would not only have been unethical, it would have served no purpose to me, as researcher.

I applied pseudonyms in case study B to conceal participants' identities and removed or altered identifying background information such as the school's name from the final thesis. In accordance with the ethics provision of the University of Auckland, participation information sheets were provided, and consent sought.

**Conclusion**

This chapter underlines some of the inherent challenges in tackling critical research that seeks to be innovative, creative and responsive while adhering to the parameters of research discourse. The messiness of this research has at times proved frustrating and unwieldy, but this is the discomfort of limbs moving in unfamiliar ways and upon hard, new surfaces. I have resisted authorised methods in favour of following my instincts, sometimes with success and sometimes not. I have been on a merry dance that took me right back to where I started.
Chapter 3: The Contemporary Dance of Critical Pedagogy
Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the emergence and evolution of critical pedagogy and its dominant progenitor. It positions this approach within its historical context and reviews texts fundamental to its development. It charts the evolution of critical pedagogy from its Marxist beginnings, through postmodernism and as a recent radical response to neoliberalism. In concluding this chapter, I return to the fundamental principles of critical pedagogy, which beat rhythmically at the heart of its praxis.

Origins of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is influenced by the critical tradition, critical theory and the foundational work of Marx and a collection of scholars in the 1920s, known as the Frankfurt school. Stirred by the economic depression and injustice surrounding them, these scholars interrogated the nature of domination and its impact upon the known world (Kincheloe, 2008). Sharing a common paradigm, these scholars sought to expose the dialectical tensions in the modern age between authoritarianism and the enlightenment (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Schwandt, 2001).

In the wake of Hitler and National Socialism, many of these scholars fled to the US. Confronted by the rhetoric of the American dream and contrasting widespread discrimination, critical theory became the emerging philosophy of the New Left and influenced numerous liberation movements of the 1960s (Belgrad, 2008). Critical theory (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972) must recognise society within its historical context and provide a robust critique that considers how “consciousness is tied to history” (Kincheloe, 2012, p. 57). Critical social theory seeks to expose what constitutes the reality of its citizens by examining the complexities of social, economic, and political issues within the dynamic of social reality (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972). Concerned with transformation, it
places criticism at the centre of its knowledge production (Eagleton, 1976, as cited in Leonardo, 2004) and adjusts its theory on its interaction with the world it tries to explain, as both a school of thought and a process of critique (Giroux, 2009). Through this disruption, it enables the development of new social relations and significant social change (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

Challenging power, questioning the Eurocentric view, and recognising the inequity and violence perpetrated by dominant hegemony are aspects of critical theory fundamental to critical pedagogy (Kincheloe, 2008). The recognition of the potential disruption of social relations and consequent social change outlined by critical theory gave rise to a discourse of possibility in which a democratic society might prevail. As agents of this discourse of possibility, critical researchers engage in an ongoing reiterative process of action, reflection, and theorising (Anyon, 2009) comparable to that of teachers as transformational intellectuals (Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Kincheloe, 2003).

Critical pedagogy explores the complexities of ideology and its impact upon educational settings and owes much of its theory to the work of Paulo Freire. The following discussion reviews the life of Paulo Freire, his influence on critical pedagogy and the central principles of his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

**Freire**

Heralded by many as the godfather of critical pedagogy, Freire’s work provided the inspiration for a critical socially conscious movement, intended to reconstruct both schools and society (Boyd & Mitchell, 2012; Kirylo, 2013). Despite being born to a middle-class family in Brazil in 1921, Paulo Freire always empathised with those in poverty (Kirylo, 2013). Later, as a victim of the Great Depression, this awareness took on personal significance, and though his fortunes improved, these concerns continued to shape and inform his practice (Roberts, 2013).
Teaching literacy in his native Brazil, Freire witnessed the oppression of the peasants around him and worked to improve the lives of these marginalised people through education. Aligning himself with the Frankfurt school, he acknowledged the role of education in replicating oppressive ideologies and political viewpoints (Freire, 2005; M. Smith & McLaren, 2010; Souto-Manning, 2010; Wink, 2005). However, he argued schools could be sites for liberation, if participants were encouraged to challenge the status quo and develop critical understandings about the perceived “realities” of everyday life (Freire, 2005; M. Smith & McLaren, 2010). Freire emphasised the inseparable relationship between learning and being (Freire, 2005) and the importance of raising a citizen’s critical consciousness. He regarded teaching as a political act and re-conceptualised educators as moral agents of liberation (Roberts, 2003).

Grounded in the notion of people as unfinished conscious beings, his teaching sought liberation through cognitive acts and dialogic encounters, motivated by problem posing (Freire, 1993). As a catalyst for greater learning, problem-posing critiques knowledge and places it in context to agitate common assumptions (Boyce, 1996). Well received by the incumbent Brazilian government, Freire’s first experiments with dialogic education and culture circles began in the early 1960s. In a culture circle, participants gather round as equal members of the circle to create a distinctive learning environment in which to dialogue (Reyes & Torres, 2007; Souto-Manning, 2010). A variety of sources generated the themes for discussion to stimulate critical discussion and open dialogue (Arnett, 2002). This dialogic form recognises participants’ experiences as central to the construction of meaning (Shor, 1990, as cited in Souto-Manning, 2010). In this framework, teachers and students work collaboratively in “mediation with the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 32). This desire to collaborate and connect extended to his writing, in which Freire fostered a connection to audience with personal anecdotes (Weiler, 1996).
This writing style, coupled with the notoriety of his imprisonment in 1964 and political exile, likely contributed to descriptions of him as a “proud but humble warrior of the spirit” (Gadotti & Milton, 1994, p. 7). Although Freire rejected the guru label, arguing that it was in direct opposition to the democracy he sought, the legacy of his righteousness remains (Freire & Freire, 2014). Ironically, as Weiler (1996) identifies, Freire is often invoked as the symbolic face of progressive education and in a position of inferred authority that directly contradicts his ideals of dialogic exchange. While exiled from Brazil, Freire continued to develop his teaching philosophy and in 1968 wrote his groundbreaking work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1993; Roberts, 2013). Considered the foundational text for critical pedagogy, this book outlines Freire’s philosophies and teaching methods. The following section details this essential text and the first phase of the development of critical pedagogy.

**Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

I read the book, I stayed up all night. Got dressed in the morning, went to school, I felt my life had literally changed, I mean, I felt that it changed because I had a language that seemed to say, to speak very directly about the kinds of issues that I was involved in but more importantly gave me a way of theorising the practise rather than just saying, I think it works.


Emerging from Freire’s experiences teaching literacy in his native Brazil, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1993) is the starting point for any meaningful discussion of critical pedagogy (Arnett, 2002), and many of its ideas are considered revolutionary even now (Freire, 2005; McLaren & Kincheloe, 2007). Freire argued that by engaging in authentic dialogue with the world, individuals could unveil the social and political influences structuring society. Human beings, Freire asserted, are in continual praxis and as such can create and transform their own reality. He maintained that through reciprocal reflection and action,
the oppressed could transform their reality and affect change (Freire, 2005; Freire & Freire, 2014). He argued that the banking education model often functioned as an effective agent of oppression by disseminating knowledge affirming the status quo. This model denies children the opportunity to engage critically, encourages them not to think and merely accept the world (Freire, 1993). Freire believed education should confront and question how constructed ideologies inhibit our perceived realities and, in doing so, reveal how we may act to move beyond them to a better world.

Critical pedagogy as outlined by Freire has two distinct stages. In the first stage, it operates to expose the oppressive forces and drive action to transform the existing world. In the second stage, critical pedagogy as praxis becomes the pedagogy of liberation for all peoples, to ensure that one dominant ideology is not replaced by another. As praxis, it counters the culture of domination through reflexively confronting the world and engaging in persistent dialogue with it (Freire, 1993).

As authentic dialogue infused with hope and critical thinking, it invites participants as equal contributors and recognises reality as a process in the making (Freire, 1993). Through dialogue, he believes participants identify the effect of ideology upon their lives and how it might be transformed (Freire & Freire, 2014). Several key educational concepts underpin this idea that citizens who can recognise and read the world may take agency to effect change (Freire, 2005).

The key educational concepts tendered by Freire were the essential connectedness of politics and education, the importance of valuing life experiences, and the dialectical nature of the relationship between the world and our understanding. Freire continued to be active in various facets of education and became a significant global influence on ideas around education and the philosophy of praxis. He returned to Brazil in 1979 and continued to work, write, and teach, until his death in 1997. Prominent educational theorists such as Peter
Crafting critical pedagogy

Although Freire's teaching began in Latin America, his challenge to traditional education and call for a radical rethinking of the world was notably popularised in the US. While Freire's early practice occurred in the Northeast of Brazil, where almost half of the population were illiterate, it is his exile in Chile, which was perhaps instrumental in shifting his ideas further to the left (Gadotti & Milton, 1994; Holst, 2006). The election of the Christian Democrats in 1964 revealed widespread social change and a newly energised progressive outlook. As Freire himself noted he created Pedagogy of the Oppressed in this intellectually rich atmosphere of “open, radical criticism” (Freire & Freire, 2014, p. 36). In 1969, Freire travelled to Harvard University and began a phase of international work, in which his ideas gained popularity with the New Left and critical scholars (Aronowitz, 2013).

In the US, the 1960s decade began hopefully the election of a youthful president and a decade of activism and reform stimulated by social inequalities followed. The New Left movement, which arose in the early 1960s, offered a liberal and progressive response to poverty and inequality (Belgrad, 2008). This movement promoted democracy and championed grassroots protest. Spearheaded by educated young people, this movement was anti-establishment, humanist, and liberal. The visibility of these inequalities and prejudices further underscored by the rising civil rights and women's movements which sought to eradicate discrimination (Belgrad, 2008). Regarded as a useful vehicle for tackling these inequities, many educational reforms such as the Head Start program for impoverished preschool children were implemented (Traub, 2000). While this did not necessarily translate into widespread pedagogical change, it did seed an environment receptive to alternative pedagogy and the rights of children within
Prior to these progressive social movements, Dewey's (2011) child-centred educational approaches, which countered the dominant transmission model of education, had already gained ground (Thorburn, 2017). Dewey and other progressive educators recognised that children's prior knowledge and life experiences should be valued and built upon, through active and engaging lessons (Dewey, 2008). Akin to the recommendations of Plowdon in the UK, education was re-conceptualised as an opportunity to facilitate personal growth. By the 1950s, however, these ideas had lost traction and the US education system returned to a conservative outlook (Belgrad, 2008).

**The first phase**

Gaining traction in the 1970s and early 1980s, the writings of Freire (1974, 1993), Giroux (1981, 1988) and Shor (1992) disseminated critical pedagogy. It remained faithful to the centrality of class as the determining social factor and built upon the ideas advocated by the Frankfurt school. Welcomed by progressive educators, this philosophy of praxis made an indelible impression on future critical scholars, Peter McLaren and Ira Shor. Applying these theories in North American settings, two other notable texts, *Life in Schools* (McLaren, 2003) and *Empowering Education* (Shor, 1992) furthered the practical and political considerations of critical pedagogy.

Peter McLaren's *Life in Schools* recounts his experiences teaching in Toronto's urban schools (McLaren, 1989). Offering an engaging discussion of the influence of social structures in schools, it interrogates the difficulties of enacting critical pedagogy in this environment. Framed through the lens of critical pedagogy, McLaren recalls how students were frequently blamed for their own failings, under the misnomer of school as a meritocracy (Kincheloe, 2007a; McLaren, 1989). He reveals how the school's curriculum and pedagogy favoured white middle-class students, while disregarding the social realities influencing a large proportion of students. Marginalised and disregarded by the school, many of his
students operated within different "decision fields" (family, workplace, culture) of class, gender, and race relations (McLaren, 1989, p. 198).

In McLaren’s (1989) view, nominal school events designed to placate students’ alternative cultural and social paradigms, served to invalidate them. Notably, he identifies students’ own culpability in reflecting and constituting their oppression through either direct agreement or opposition (McLaren, 1989). He contends that students, when denied an opportunity to identify and create their own worldview, will accept and adopt the identity given to them (1989). In a rebellion against the social position of women as merely mothers or domestics, the girls in his class demonstrated overt and aggressive sexual behaviour. As he explains, through adopting the opposite position of “sex object” (McLaren, 1989, p. 213), these students inadvertently assented to society’s binary definition and reinforced the status quo (Butler, 2003). McLaren advocates for developing students’ awareness of the social structures operating upon and through them. He identifies critical pedagogy as a means to “disclose and challenge” (McLaren, 1989, p. 168), providing education for empowerment not skill acquisition or social stratification. Shor’s book, Empowering Education (1992) complements McLaren’s and explores the broader political implications of critical pedagogy.

In Empowering Education (1992), Shor declares all forms of education as inherently political and maintains that education can be either enabling or inhibiting. Underpinned by philosophies of the status quo and deemed important for socialising children into the world, school does not necessarily prepare them to act within it (Apple, 1979). Indoctrinated into a worldview through the banking model and educated out of critical thought, these students are ill prepared to exercise their democratic power (Shor, 1992). Education for citizenship, he believes, requires critical pedagogy. In addition, critical pedagogy contrasts with traditional school relations of competition, which asserts the supremacy of the individual and refutes the commonality of the human condition. Shor (1992) explains that traditional hierarchical schools are sites of conflict and constant unrest. Schools support a social discourse of competition
and focus upon individual accountability. Students compete with the institution for authority, with one another for worth, and with national assessment results. Students educated in this competitive environment of individual responsibility are well prepared to regard capitalism as a suitable system of social order.

By comparison, critical pedagogy values the voice of the individual in solidarity with others and acknowledges the significance of social interactions and wider social factors. Critical and collaborative, individuals need to work together to achieve genuine democracy (Shor, 1992, p. 15). This is not an easy agreement but rather a commitment to challenge themselves and co-operate as active citizens. Despite its rhetoric of inclusive practice and hope for educating towards democracy, critical pedagogy did not receive universal support.

Closely aligned with the core principles of critical theory, it drew significant criticism in the wake of postmodernism and an expanded understanding of diverse modes of oppression (Kincheloe, 2008). Critics questioned whether this pedagogy of social revolution could remain unproblematically tethered to its ideological origins. The next section will detail the critiques and subsequent evolution of critical pedagogy (Porfilio & Ford, 2015a).

Detractors of critical theory drew attention to its origins in Marxist thought, its reliance upon grand narratives and the privileging of patriarchal voice (Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1991). Reliant upon fundamental concepts of truth, liberation, emancipation and critical understanding, these narratives relied upon on the humanist view that individuals are comprised of a set of fixed characteristics such as sex, race or class (Lather, 1991). Postmodernism exploded these narratives and challenged the transformative and emancipatory rhetoric of critical theory (Lyotard as cited in Lather, 1991).

Postmodernism arose out of a growing uncertainty about what determines social reality. It challenged the theories of the Enlightenment and its notion of universals and totalising theories, suggesting instead that all meaning is context bound and provisional (Lather, 1991; Torres & Reyes, 2011). Post structuralism
complemented this critique and maintained that an understanding of culture and context are essential to understanding and reading any text or social situation (Moses & Knutsen, 2007). As Foucault (as cited in Moses & Knutsen, 2007) asserted, language is socially located, and can both represent and create meaning. The mechanisms of discourse determine the meanings derived through it (Foucault as cited in Moses & Knutsen, 2007). This highlighted the potentially problematic influence of critical theorists and foundational texts upon the theory itself. I would argue that in our increasingly mediated world, the medium often distorts the message and its meaning (McLuhan, 1964).

During this period, there were several specific critiques of critical theory and critical pedagogy. Its aspirations of freedom, justice and democracy were challenged for claiming a self-evident agenda that failed to recognise its social context. Bowers and bell hooks (cited in Keesing-Styles, 2003) objected to its uniform acceptance of Western assumptions about “man” and the nature of freedom. Amsler (2010) bemoaned the lack of practical articulation and chided critical pedagogy scholars for explaining “very little about the meaning of either criticality or pedagogy” (2010, p. 20). Furthermore, Gore (1993) questioned the focus on power as a possession and suggested a Foucauldian understanding of the indivisibility of power and knowledge.

Reliant upon the legacy of its “founding fathers,” Freire, Marx, Marcuse and Adorno, scholars noted its failure to engage with feminist, indigenous, race or gender critiques (bell hooks, 2003 as cited in Breuing, 2011). The privileging of the male voice—abstract and authoritative—coupled with a disproportionate number of male theorists drew criticism from a feminist perspective (Lather as cited in Breuing, 2011). McLaren challenged this critique however, for being guilty of reducing critical pedagogy to the same essentialism and forcing critical pedagogy and postmodernism into binary opposition (McLaren, 1995). Ellsworth (1989) was similarly concerned that critical pedagogy privileged the rational argument purveyed by modernism as the only medium for resolving conflict.
In a postmodern and post structural view, the local, contextual, and personal are central (Torres & Reyes, 2011). If everything is a matter of perspective, there can be no consensus and the truth remains irreconcilable (Foucault, 1991; Lather, 1991). However, relying on a theory of absolute contingency results in fatalism, cynicism, and subsequent paralysis. The risk of postmodernism to critical theory is that if anything goes, everything goes.

The postmodern disruption to the formerly secure foundations of knowledge challenged the limited binaries of understanding and gave rise to new theories in critical race theory, feminist studies, indigenous studies and others (Torres & Reyes, 2011). Guarding against this fate, critical pedagogy evolved into its next phase, problematizing the assumptions underpinning critical pedagogy and inviting scholarship from a wide range of fields.

**The second phase**

In the late 1990s, leading critical educator Peter McLaren acknowledged the value of postmodern theory for offering multiple discursive strategies through which to unsettle the master narratives of the Enlightenment (McLaren, 1995). He recognised that critical theory carried with it a discourse that privileged the white male coloniser and that even discourses of liberation contain “ideological traces and selective interests” (McLaren, 1995, p. 13). Giroux also welcomed the opportunity to problematize modernity’s universal notions of citizenship, domination, and structural certainties (Giroux, 2004a). During this phase, critical pedagogues were encouraged to be more self-reflexive about their aims and practices, the on-going project of democratic transformation and the politics of uncertainty (Giroux, 2004a). In addition, they were challenged to not only examine unjust power relations in schools but also consider the myriad of elements influencing the lived experiences of students and teachers (Steinberg, 2010).

By the mid-2000s, however, some theorists began to view critical pedagogy as thoroughly domesticated by postmodern theory and reduced to complacent
relativism (Darder, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2005). McLaren (2005) argued that the postmodern politics of difference and inclusion had supplanted that of class analysis, replacing notions of truth with individually located judgments. He contended that postmodernism had diluted critical pedagogy by divorcing issues of racism, sexism and others from class struggle and weakened its capacity to challenge capitalism as the governing political form (McLaren, 1995). Critical pedagogy, it seemed, had been co-opted by the mainstream into a buzzword for anything dialogue friendly or “affirming.” Devoid of political significance, scholars argue that Freire’s radical concepts were neutralised, and critical pedagogy became simply another “tool” of progressive education dedicated to the “inevitability” of capitalist society (Breuing, 2011; Kincheloe, 2007b; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; McLaren, 2005, p. 17).

Furthermore, critical pedagogy critics noted its lack of representation from scholars beyond the Eurocentric framework and its inability to embrace its complexity in practical applications (Gore, 1993). This critique challenged critical pedagogues to consider not only what and whose ideas are privileged but how and why. Decolonisation theory asks for a rethinking of Western notions of democracy based upon notions of being and knowing, constructed through the colonial process. As Langdon argued, without efforts to “subvert the fixity of Eurocentric colonisation” (2013, p. 384), social justice agendas continue to subjugate Indigenous knowledge. Similar issues were raised around the capacity of critical pedagogy to account for diversity and refute the male, able-bodied, heteronormative paradigm inherent in our institutions (Gabel, 2002; Langdon, 2013). Of equal concern is how teachers and academics steeped in the authoritative paradigms of their institutions might credibly enact meaningful critical pedagogy (Fobes & Kaufman, 2008).

McLaren argues that you cannot remove the political element and capacity for authentic transformation from critical pedagogy, despite attempts to do so in some of its more recent reincarnations (McLaren, 2005; M. Smith & McLaren, 2010). In response to this “domestication,” McLaren and others have called for a
reinvention, towards a revolutionary critical pedagogy, which places class and capitalism at its core. McLaren calls for a Marxist analysis to connect critical pedagogy to a project of democracy that aims to eliminate subordination (McLaren, 2005).

McLaren acknowledges the previous failure of critical pedagogy to engage African, Asian and Indigenous peoples (Kincheloe, 2007b). He contends that critical pedagogy theory must embrace Indigenous ways of knowing, listen to marginalised groups and enhance education in a multi-logical, globalised world (Kincheloe, 2007b). Moreover, Giroux encourages scholars to publish their theories in both academic and non-academic spaces to extend the reach of the theory and invite a range of diverse audiences into the conversation (Guilherme, 2006, Hill, 2012). In recent years, Porfilio and Ford (2015b) and Grande (2015) have urged for the reimagining of a critical pedagogy that responds to the postmodernism critique and counters its domestication by mainstream education.

**Conclusion**

The future of critical pedagogy remains complex as it seeks to question the relationship between education and politics, and unpick the tangled web of social, institutional and political structures and reveal how power and hierarchy operate within and through them (Grande, 2015). As a rookie critical pedagogue working in teacher education, I continually dance around my competing allegiances towards the critical tradition and the inevitability of assessment, accountability and practicality. While encouraging dissent, critique and student ownership, I remain mindful of the heavily regulated school environments many of my students occupy. Meaningful critique of the status quo is challenging when lecturers, teachers, school boards, regulatory teaching bodies and others possess the authority to deny preservice teachers’ registration, employment and success.

While revolutionary critical pedagogy views its future in a reinvention, I suggest a recentering and reconnecting with the elements of its praxis that remain vital
to practitioners concerned with social justice, in any sphere. As an approach to society and education, critical pedagogy has at its core a concern with agency, relations of power, and the potential for individuals to craft their own identity within the world. The discourses of postmodernism, feminism or decolonisation are not competitors but collaborators and co-conspirators to an approach led by the heart and designed to keep dancing.

As a practitioner, I position myself alongside students, communicate and negotiate the curriculum and hope to engage in a process of reciprocal critical discourse. Ultimately, however, the institution and its requirements position me in authority over students, and as Freire (1993) suggests, undermines the possibility of authentic dialogue. Given these constraints, I am doubtful of an educator’s ability to easily enact critical pedagogy. Attempting to teach a pedagogy of dialogue and collaboration, through direct instruction, seems absurd, and would only serve to reinforce its legacy as abstract and impractical. I am curious to see if the imagined world provides a space of enactment that can evade the ideological habits of education and liberate teacher and student alike. Heathcote’s work on teaching political awareness highlights process drama as a mechanism to make the familiar strange, to distort the known and invite action and contemplation about the world (Eriksson, 2011). The fluidity and instability of the imagined world enables participants to make and remake the drama continually through interaction, potentially enacting the principles of critical pedagogy. Perhaps, in order to really do critical pedagogy, in the real world we have to enter an imaginary one.
Chapter 4: Pirouetting with Process Drama

As those who fear the power of art understand very clearly, if it is possible to imagine alternative realities it is also possible to bring them into existence. (O’Neill, 1995, p. 67).

Introduction

Founded on the work of Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, process drama is a broad term that describes an approach to learning through drama. This chapter locates process drama within the wider educational context and follows its development from creative drama through to its current form of drama as pedagogy. Developed into a theoretical framework by Cecily O’Neill and others, process drama explores life concerns within a fictional space and places students at its centre (Bolton, 2006; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Rosler, 2008).

Origins of Process Drama

School drama in the early part of the 20th century largely consisted of reciting plays and perfecting elocution. Tethered to English literature, the study of classical texts was, at the time, the main purpose of any quality drama programme. Some teachers, however, began to embrace the emerging philosophies of progressive education (Dewey, 2008) and the primacy of self-expression and active educational experiences (Bolton, 2007). Over the next 50 years, alternative ideas about learning in and through drama began to take hold in the classroom.

Believing students learn better through seeing and doing, Harriet Finlay Johnson, an early champion of drama in education, encouraged students to discuss and explore ideas freely (2012). Dedicated to the child’s natural inclination to create, this imaginative drama safeguarded students’ free and un-examined expression (Bolton, 2007). Similarly, enthused by child-centred pedagogies and somatic learning, Caldwell Cook developed the “play way” to utilise drama as a cross curricular tool for developing creativity (Taylor, 2000, as cited in O’Connor,
Peter Slade's story-based drama, whereby students were encouraged to explore their own movements through acting out a given story maintained this creative focus (Bolton, 1986). Later, Brian Way replaced the narrative emphasis of Slade's work by incorporating warm ups and relaxation techniques to enhance students' personal development through drama (Way, 1967). Fostered in an emerging progressive educational paradigm, these developments in drama were foundational to the innovation of process drama.

In the UK and US, following the Second World War and in an effort to encourage social cohesion and prosperity, the 1960s saw a shift towards progressive social policies, in which the welfare state was extended and educational funding increased (Wasson, 2016). Correspondingly, the Plowden report (Plowdon & Central Advisory Council for Education England, 1967) advocated for a curriculum influenced by Piaget that recognised children's innate interests and provided a holistic education. The subsequent dismantling of the grammar school system and reinvigoration of the arts (Newsom & Central Advisory Council for Education England, 1963) created an environment in which dramatic play and the importance of imagination were readily accepted (Sayers, 2012; Warnock, 1983). This provided fertile ground for the rise of drama in education and the work of Dorothy Heathcote and others (Bailin, 1993a; Bolton, 2007; S. Davis, 2013).

**Heathcote**

The daughter of a mill family in northern England, Dorothy Heathcote demonstrated early academic promise as an enthusiastic scholar and keen reader. Despite her natural acting talents, she quickly realised she was not “the right shape” (Smedley, 1971) for a film star and repurposed her theatrical talents as a teacher in schools and universities. Heathcote's early work was firmly entrenched in a progressive philosophy that valued participants’ rights to individual expression. Renowned for working alongside students, Heathcote's work went beyond creative expression and instead required students to actively...
collaborate to construct the drama and negotiate its tensions (S. Davis, 2016). She embraced Dewey's theory of experiential learning and the desire to provide students with projects that reflected their interests (Sayers, 2012). Posing problems and tackling big questions were essential to Heathcote and became key features of her drama work (Sayers, 2012).

Heathcote achieved greater recognition through her collaboration with Gavin Bolton, who documented her work and with whom she developed the foundations for process drama (Bowell & Heap, 2013; Eriksson, 2011; O’Neill, 1995). By the late 1960s and early 1970s the progressive attitude of the British government aligned comfortably with Heathcote's work and her popularity increased. The BBC film *Three Looms Waiting* (Smedley, 1971) impressively captured Heathcote in action and cemented her place as a unique pedagogue. Countless leading drama academics attribute Heathcote with introducing them to drama as a powerful medium for learning (Neelands & Goode, 1990; O'Toole & Dunn, 2002; Saxton & Miller, 2012).

Heathcote’s strong and charismatic personality, as revealed in her television appearances, offered immediate appeal (Battye, 2010; Smedley, 1971). Designated early on as the midwife and godfather of educational drama, she was celebrated for her seemingly magical teaching abilities in numerous accounts of her practice (M. Anderson, 2012; S. Davis, 2013; Hornbrook, 1998b; Neill, 1977; Wagner, 1980). Heathcote’s reputation as an enigma was likely enhanced, by the insistent tone of her essays, her many models, lists and rules and an initial reluctance to publish or record her practice (Heathcote et al., 1984).

Ironically, while Heathcote’s unique teaching style captivated practitioners, it also intimidated them. Afraid they could not replicate her style and overwhelmed by her extensive notes and plans, practitioners became apprehensive of the pedagogy (Heston, 2013; Sayers, 2012). If successful process drama required Heathcote herself, then, then the pedagogy could not be widely implemented without significant alterations.
For anxious administrators and teachers, this offered an opportunity to resist, adapt and moderate Heathcote’s practice, to make it more accessible. Conflating the pedagogy with the person restricts the pedagogy from evolving and developing, confining it instead to a brief unrepeatable moment in time. By comparison, process drama practice has evolved, and the following section details these waves of development, its key features and its current incarnation.

**Producing Process Drama**

**The first wave**

Heathcote’s work, which began in the 1950s, influenced countless practitioners worldwide and regarded by some as in direct opposition to the aesthetic and intellectual significance of theatre-based drama (Hornbrook, 1991). Similar to the work of Slade and Way, Heathcote was firmly entrenched in a progressive philosophy, which valued the student’s rights to individual expression. She appreciated the capacity for imaginative play and sought to activate dramas that invited experimentation (Sayers, 2012).

Heathcote demanded more from her participants, however, than “rocks and trees” (Smedley, 1971). She advocated for an interactive and engaging form of drama, which actively employed productive tensions to captivate student interest. Often tackling difficult topics, Heathcote wanted participants to engage in a thoroughly engrossing “lived through” experience that compelled participants to think, reflect, and act (Bolton, 1986; S. Davis, 2016). The immediacy of the form, coupled with the launch of a significant tension, binds the participants together and sustains the energy required to propel the fiction (Bowell & Heap, 2013; O’Neill & Lambert, 1982).

Unlike her predecessors, Heathcote placed the emphasis for the drama upon the group rather than individuals and sought to engage both affective and cognitive responses from learners. In her first drama model, Man in a Mess, she established the concept of the classroom as a laboratory, in which direct
involvement in a dramatic situation could allow for experimentation and exploration. Operating alongside students in role, Heathcote would establish a task for the group and continually introduce tensions and challenges to progress the drama and deepen engagement. Heathcote believed that while acting in the context of the drama, students would move from their specific understandings, to broader universal understandings about themselves and the world (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Wagner, 1980, 1999).

Heathcote often joined the participants as another contributor to the fiction. In role, Heathcote moved from an authority to a partner and colleague and operated alongside her participants. She emphasised asking genuine questions, motivated by a desire to know the answer, rather than “teacher questions” (Heathcote, O’Neill & O’ Sullivan, 2009).

Documented in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Heathcote’s work invited students to deeply consider tasks and engage with them responsibly (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Students often contributed the initial contexts, themes and locations for the drama, while Heathcote sought to use drama to provoke, shatter, and reform ideas (Heathcote, 1983), acting as an agitator within the drama to urge, cajole, and comfort participants in the birth of creative knowing (Heathcote et al., 1984). The Collected Writings of Dorothy Heathcote, published in 1984, offers an insight into Heathcote’s philosophies around pedagogy and her developing praxis (Heathcote et al., 1984). She criticised the inauthenticity of schools for failing to provide students with opportunities to engage with the world or its ideas in relevant ways (Heathcote et al., 1984). In her view, drama could make a vital contribution to education, by offering a unique forum in which to foster social skills, reflect, and communicate. Students in her dramas encountered complex issues and engaged as part of a community through a fictional but meaningful project (Heathcote et al., 1984), drawing upon participants’ emotional resources in a meaningful way, to stimulate critical thought and affect change.
In subsequent years, Heathcote established three alternative drama models: Mantle of the Expert, Rolling Role, and the Commission Model (S. Davis, 2013). While Heathcote and close colleague Gavin Bolton focused attention upon Mantle of the Expert, a number of other practitioners continued to cultivate work in what subsequently became known as process drama (Carroll & Cameron, 2005; Neelands & Goode, 1990; O’Toole, 1992). The next section discusses these developments and the evolution of process drama, and its most popular form, Mantle of the Expert.

The second wave

Several of Heathcote’s previous students and contemporaries theorised and expanded the drama form and made significant contributions to its progress. O’Neill and Johnson collated Heathcote’s works in Dorothy Heathcote: Collected Writings on Education and Drama (Heathcote et al., 1984) while O’Neill’s (1995) Drama Worlds: A Framework for Process Drama elaborated further on both the practical application and theoretical possibilities of process drama. Morgan and Saxton (1994) focussed their attention on the importance of questioning techniques within the drama and the development of practical skills (Morgan & Saxton, 1991), while Neelands and Goode’s influential work Structuring Drama Work (1990) proved essential in demystifying Heathcote’s methods and translating them into accessible drama conventions. Closer to home, O’Toole, and Haseman’s work, Dramawise: An Introduction to the Elements of Drama (Haseman & O’Toole, 1986) provided a schema on how to teach drama in classroom settings (M. Anderson, 2012). In New Zealand, drama educators embraced drama as a pedagogy and Heathcote’s work, and in 2003 it gained further legitimacy through its compulsory inclusion in the National Curriculum (O’Connor, 2003). Several drama education practitioners continue to work in New Zealand, and drama remains part of the New Zealand primary school compulsory curriculum.
Serendipitously introduced at a similar time by both O’Neill in UK and Haseman and O’Toole in Australia, the term process drama quickly gained acceptance (Dunn, 2017). Process drama is a form of drama whereby an ensemble gathers in present time and space to make meaning and craft their own work as both the audience and performer (Bowell & Heap, 2005). In a process drama, participants manipulate drama elements to explore complex problems and engage as both participants and spectators (O’Neill, 1995). Throughout its history and in spite of a variety of practitioners and frameworks, the key features of process drama remain. These key features include the provision of a motivating pre-text, employment of “teacher-in-role”, addition of productive tensions and active reflections in and upon the drama world (Bowell & Heap, 2013; Dunn, 2017).

**Pre-text**

O’Neill’s foremost contribution to process drama was the concept of pre-text. Designed to launch the drama and suggest potential paths of interest, artefacts such as objects, people, books, images, or maps may function as a pre-text (S. Davis, 2016; O’Neill, 1995). A good pre-text operates on multiple levels; it jump-starts the drama, establishes a relationship between the participants and the action, and provokes possibilities through the use of symbol. A quality pre-text creates a firm base for a dramatic encounter and introduces a problem or issue that will motivate participants (O’Neill, 1995).

**Tension**

Pre-texts are responsible for igniting the participants’ expectations, hinting at tensions, and capturing interest. A quality pre-text should propose a substantial theme and raise dramatic tensions, for as Bowell and Heap assert, “Dramatic tension is the fuel that fires the imperative for action in a play” (Bowell & Heap, 2013, p. 53). Engaged in the drama through role and motivated by a significant tension, participants form an opinion and take a position on the issue. It is this stimulated response which can create further negotiation within the drama as each participant tries to reconcile or debate their viewpoint within the drama (Bowell & Heap, 2013). The selection of alternative viewpoints enhances the
drama and distances participants from their own views to encourage flexibility of thinking.

**Teacher-in-role**

The teacher working in role within the drama improvisation is a hallmark of process drama and distinguishes it from other approaches (Kao & O’Neill, 1998, p. 26; Neelands, 1984, as cited in Lin, 2010). Teacher-in-role invites the teacher to resist the role of authority and operate within the drama as co-worker, conduit, colleague, or client. Balaisis (2002), Bolton (1984), Wagner (1999), Aitken (2007) and O’Neill (1989) suggest this behaviour transforms the function of the teacher, challenges classroom hierarchy and allows for genuine co-constructivist learning. Despite being located within the fiction, this collaborative relationship immediately alters the atmosphere and balance of power of the classroom (Kao & O’Neill, 1998, p. 26). Essential to process drama is the provision of the fictional space in which students can play with real questions in imagined settings. Liberated from the confines of the classroom and gifted time to play, all participants have a unique opportunity to reconsider self. The process of reflection either during or following the process drama work provides this opportunity.

**Reflection**

Edmiston (1991) argues that without reflection, drama cannot foster deep learning. Through stepping between the two worlds of fiction and reality, participants view their own realities from within a fictional context. Authentic learning can occur, as participants consider, reconsider, and negotiate between current understandings and drama experiences to make meaning (Boal, 1979; Heathcote et al., 1984; O’Toole, 1992). This capacity of process drama to facilitate a reflective, contemplative and critical disposition in participants is essential (Kao & O’Neill, 1998). Although widely accepted by most drama practitioners, the value of process drama remains in dispute.
In the early 1980s, public enthusiasm for progressive teaching faltered and the educational environment shifted. The UK government’s demand for a return to teaching discrete bodies of knowledge eroded the space for drama as pedagogy and reasserted the dominant status of theatre studies. An acrimonious split between process- and product-oriented drama practitioners, and the considerable academic criticism levelled at Heathcote, exacerbated the situation (Abbs, 1994; Hornbrook, 1991). This transformation in the political landscape, combined with the attack from Hornbook, perhaps motivated Heathcote to re-conceptualise Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) for a new era.

Potentially, in an effort to confront the criticism that Heathcote’s work was process rich but content poor (Hornbrook, 1995) and to gain legitimacy, this new approach favoured knowledge over imagination (Sayers, 2012). This version of MOTE returned curriculum to the centre of the drama and placed greater emphasis upon students’ research, discovery and knowledge (Sayers, 2012). Heathcote believed the context and inquiry would engage the participants and reduced her emphasis on building belief, prior to the drama. Participants were urged to adopt the bearing of the expert rather than role, and elements of the drama were crafted prior to entering the space. These changes reduced the need for high levels of teacher artistry and allowed Bolton to promote it as the “easiest dramatic form for the inexpert teacher to handle” (1979, p. 67). There was less focus on being and doing, and more on observing and responding, with participants encouraged to engage in the drama while still being themselves (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Sayers, 2012). In another variation to the model, it gave more time to reflection, and less to working inside the drama (Sayers, 2014).

Constructing the MOTE around curriculum increased its user-friendliness to teachers, who could now plan episodes of the MOTE to meet curriculum requirements. As Heston (2013) comments, Heathcote moved from the crucible method to a stewardship manner of teaching. An approach Heathcote herself connected to Freire, the crucible method invited teachers and students to work
dialogically in “stirring” the knowledge together and valued the children as self-educators (Sayers, 2012, p. 8). Her stewardship paradigm, which arose in part as a response to the changing political climate, shifted the position of students slightly to that of the apprentice. Heathcote envisaged the drama as a bridge between education and industry to build a community of learning rather than positioning students as “good little workers” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 18).

Unlike its predecessor, this version of MOTE suited the educational trends of the 1990s and 2000s and its popularity soared, a position strengthened by the publication of the instructional textbook *Drama for Learning* (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) and release of the video series *Making Drama Work* (Heathcote, 1991). While Heathcote’s system remained complex, this version provided facilitators with defined principles, clear organisation and a structured design. In recent years, Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) has established itself not merely as an aspect or tool of process drama but as a distinct approach. This next section locates contemporary process drama praxis and the refinement of Mantle of the Expert as imaginative inquiry.

**The third wave**

Dunn (2017) revised the elements of process drama in her recent article, which participation, experiential learning, spontaneity and agentic spaces as other significant elements for its praxis. Additionally, O’Connor and Anderson suggested the potential of process drama for questioning and challenging dominant ideas and in relation to critical pedagogy (O’Connor, 2003). While not as widespread as it may have been in the early 1990s, process drama remains an active pedagogy, currently nestled beneath the umbrella of applied theatre. It continues to adhere to its principals of imbuing students’ learning with real purpose and relevance through active, physical engagement in the fictional frame (Bowell & Heap, 2002; Heap & Simpson, 2005; Holland & O’Connor, 2004).

Process drama continues to be taught and researched by leading practitioners as a medium to actively engage diverse learners through integrated learning
experiences and has gained significant recognition from the Additional Language and English as Second Language communities (Jablon, 2017; Piazzoli, 2014; Rothwell, 2012; Winston & Stinson, 2016). Drama education practitioners and researchers gather at international conferences, and disseminate research through numerous publications including *Research in Drama Education* (RIDE), *NJ (Drama Australia)* and *Applied Theatre Researcher* (ATR) (Day & Norman, 2018; Ewing, 2010; O’Connor, 2016; Pascoe & Sallis, 2012; Stinson & Saunders, 2016). Although Mantle of the Expert exists predominantly outside of these research spaces, its prevalence in schools has ensured it remains one of the most popular and well known of Heathcote’s forms.

Mantle of the Expert, or MOTE as it is known in New Zealand, is arguably Heathcote’s most significant legacy to the world of education (S. Davis, 2016; Sayers, 2012). MOTE has gained widespread uptake in the UK over the last 15 years and several schools in New Zealand have adopted the approach (Aitken, 2009). As a result of its gaining popularity, several new resources have been created, which include books, the website mantleoftheexpert.com, training courses and the quality trademark for schools.

Essentially, MOTE provides an imagined context within which children act in role as experts, to develop skills and acquire knowledge in a selected area. This inquiry-based work locates participants within a fictional situation and entrusts them to examine and attempt to solve a given problem (S. Davis, 2016). Students take ownership of a given problem or commission, share expertise and participate alongside teachers as collaborators.

The principal attributes of the practice as identified by S. Davis (2016) are:

- It provides a purposeful context for the learning.
- Participants must take on meaningful roles, in order to carry out tasks.
- The teacher extends and empowers students, often from within the drama.
In the late 2000s, Heathcote aided the efforts of Luke Abbot, Tim Taylor and others to establish a national organisation capable of offering Mantle of the Expert training. MOTE grew exponentially during this time, strengthened by its relationship with the Creative Curriculum network and the endorsement of UK school monitoring body, Ofsted (Abbot, 2013; Sayers, 2012). Heathcote remained central to these developments until her death in 2011 (Cooper, 2013). This iteration of MOTE specifically incorporates curriculum throughout an ongoing holistic imagined experience and requires substantial prior planning (Aitken, 2013). It identifies several core elements for a successful MOTE experience, and while firmly grounded in Heathcote’s earlier practice, these elements continue to evolve through the work of Mantle of the Expert.com. Renowned practitioner Viv Aitken (2013) identifies these principles as establishing a context, adopting a collective identity, tackling a given project, employing drama elements and incorporating curriculum.

As its popularity grew, so did the number of practitioners labelling their work MOTE or positioning themselves as specialist practitioners. Consequently, the national MOTE network attempted to regulate MOTE, offering a quality mark for teachers demonstrating evidence of quality practice (Abbot, 2018). Current leaders in the field, Luke Abbot, Tim Taylor and Viv Aitken, have all assisted in transporting MOTE into the 21st century. Tim Taylor’s 2016 book, A Beginners Guide to Mantle of the Expert (2016), revises the practice once more and provides another shift, albeit subtle, in the focus and purpose of MOTE. This guide aims to cover the broad concepts behind the approach and outline detailed steps for the emerging practitioner (Swanson, 2017)

Taylor defines MOTE as “an educational approach that uses drama and inquiry to create imaginary contexts for learning” (T. Taylor, 2016, p. 13) to deliberately engage with the curriculum across a wide range of subject areas. Taylor underpins his discussion with the belief that students are “resourceful people, with a successful past and a hopeful future” (T. Taylor, 2016, p. 29). While much of the book adheres to the model of MOTE as explained on the website (“How can
moe be used?,” 2012) and informed by Heathcote, there are several variations that are worth reflecting upon.

Taylor streamlines Heathcote’s system to three central factors, whereby students operate within a fiction as experts, work for a client on a commission, and work towards a final outcome. Taylor (2016) suggests that children are naturally imaginative and can create and sustain fictional frames easily. He describes building this fiction as a negotiated act of co-operation between the community of learners, which includes the teachers, classroom, curriculum and school. This concept of communal decision-making and creation is central to his explanation of MOTE. Correspondingly, Taylor’s framework continues to employ “teacher-in-role” as colleague, through a change in teacher tone rather than the portrayal of a discrete character. In addition, it reduces the discrete space for reflection upon the actions or behaviours of participants, either inside or outside the drama frame.

Finally, Taylor distinguishes MOTE from children’s existing imaginative play through its purposeful connection to curriculum. He contends that the main function of the fictional context is to provide wider opportunities for curriculum learning and make curriculum meaningful to students. In contrast to earlier iterations of creative drama (Slade, 1955; Way, 1967), Taylor moderates the significance of the playful aspects of drama, claiming that imaginary play without (curriculum) substance is ineffectual (T. Taylor, 2016).

Although Heathcote’s early philosophies remain foundational to MOTE, as she herself acknowledged, the complexity and fluidity of the system makes noticeable practical variations likely (Aitken, 2013; Sayers, 2012). Heathcote’s own practices evolved over time and she reportedly continued to discover new elements to MOTE throughout her career (Aitken, 2013; Heathcote & Herbert, 2009). Employed by a variety of practitioners throughout the world, MOTE is likely interpreted and enacted differently in each context. The remainder of this chapter outlines my current understanding of process drama, my practices as a
teacher–educator and my interest in the possibilities of process drama for enacting critical pedagogy.

**Personal experiences in Process Drama**

An enthusiastic performer already, I discovered process drama while engaged in postgraduate education studies. It immediately resonated with my previous experiences in make believe as a vital and engaging approach for interrogating my ideas about the world. I realised that considering, rehearsing and performing unfamiliar characters in disparate situations had significantly affected my beliefs and engagement with the world. Many of my formative experiences were facilitated through engaging with foreign worlds and new questions through drama.

As Wilhelm (1998) advocates, and I experienced, process drama enables students to “learn new information for real purposes and to create new understandings and situations” (p. 10). Central to my interest in process drama is its potential to engage a wide range of learners, through cognitive, verbal, physical and affective modes of understanding (M. Anderson et al., 2008; Arnold, 2005). Foreign concepts are confronted and negotiated through various mechanisms to make meaning upon which to actively reflect and explore (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). The fiction protects participants from harm, while simultaneously enabling to experience and reflect upon events, numerous times, from multiple positions (Gallagher, 2007).

Incorporating process drama into my classroom revealed not only how organic this approach felt to me as a teacher, but its broad appeal to students for whom traditional models of learning failed. Through the imagination, students made their own unique meaning of the world (O’Grady & Smyth, 2017). Motivated and energised by this creative pedagogy, I have continued to apply process drama pedagogy in primary, secondary and tertiary education with varying degrees of success. However, this enthusiasm deflated, when I realised some of the institutional and ideological boundaries to this responsive and evolutionary
I am currently a teacher–educator and continue to employ process drama methods within my teaching regardless of curriculum focus. As a pedagogical approach, its capacity to reveal tacit understandings about human behaviours happily align with teacher education, a space in which human endeavour and critical engagement is key (O’Toole & O’Mara, 2007; Sæbø, 2009). Furthermore, as a hopeful critical educator, I wish to dialogue with students as colleagues and provoke them to navigate and reflect upon the education system and our role within it.

**Conclusion**

As a practitioner, I recognise the inherent difficulties of engaging in critical praxis within hierarchical institutions dominated by a culture of assessment. This research aims to provide robust, relatable and practical ideas to support critical educators within institutions. Process drama invites meaningful critical engagement within an imagined world, which might inform our current one, and provide a tangible way for educators to enact critical pedagogy. This overview has provided a comprehensive guide to the origins and development of process drama and Mantle of the Expert. The next section traverses the shared dancefloor of critical pedagogy and process drama and the resonances between the two pedagogies, and reviews previous attempts to unite them. Finally, I relate my research to the foundational work of Doyle, Errington and Boal who took the first steps into this new dance and position my research within this discourse.
Chapter 5: Dancing apart dancing together

Come writers and critics
Who prophesize with your pen
And keep your eyes wide
The chance won't come again
And don't speak too soon
For the wheel's still in spin
And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'
For the loser now will be later to win
For the times they are a-changin

Dylan, The times they are a-changin, 1964

Introduction

Surrounded by the metaphorical and literal progressive music of the 1960s and early 1970s, an environment of revolution and flexibility surrounded the development of both critical pedagogy and process drama. This progressive environment suited Freire and encouraged the academic and administrative discourse to adopt dialogic approaches (Markovich & Rapoport, 2013). Equally, this progressive atmosphere offered a renewed focus on the arts as a valued outlet for dialogic, child-centred, critical and creative expression. Underpinned by a mutual curiosity and desire to question the prevailing ideology, critical pedagogy and the arts appear natural allies. Both critical theory and the arts operate in collaboration with ideas and are typically dedicated to reducing oppression and challenging the exclusionary systems (Giroux, 2007a; Hausman, 1967). Similarly positioned as public intellectuals, artists and teachers both engage with developing ideas to unsettle the dominant discourse. Some notable parallels exist between these two pedagogues, in their discourse and trajectories as eminent and influential practitioners.

Their shared frustration with transmission models of education and dedication to working collegially with students as co-creators of knowledge position them as natural allies. As Bolton (2007) and Boland (as cited in Sayers, 2012, p. 27)
acknowledge, this affinity is strengthened by Heathcote’s desire to create collegial relationships with students and engage in authentic praxis. Her decision to work frequently with marginalised groups and with issues of social justice bolsters this association (S. Davis, 2016; Kipling & Hickey-Moody, 2015). As outlined in the previous chapters, both Heathcote and Freire inspired enthusiastic reverence from their followers, who elevated them to almost mythical status (O’Toole, Stinson, & Moore, 2009; Weiler, 1996). Critics challenged the mythologising of their praxis and the fanatical and uncritical promotion of their work (Furter, 1985; Hornbrook, 1991). Additionally, as purveyors of inspiring but perhaps abstract concepts, Freire and Heathcote were both critiqued for a reliance on universal truths and a failure to interrogate the underlying patriarchal assumptions of humanist thought (Ellsworth, 1989; Nicholson, 1996; Weiler, 1996).

As discussed briefly, the two pedagogies shared a number of commonalities that suggest a potential partnership. They are both committed to concepts of agency, confronting real tensions and challenging established knowledge through co-construction. The following section details previous research attempting to marry these two pedagogies indirectly and explicitly. They provide guidance for this thesis, highlight areas of solidarity and discord between the two pedagogies and inform the potential for drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy. Extending the dance metaphor to the research process, this review categorises significant pieces of research into themes, symbolised through the metaphor of various dance forms. Selected as representative of key aspects of drama education and critical research, these themes are symbolised by a corresponding dance form. Each of the four dances—tango, can-can, rumba and waltz—are explained in relation to both the relevant literature and the overall thesis.
**Tangoing for Transformation**

A passionate and theatrical dance form, the tango possesses a distinctive style which requires a collaborative relationship between the leader and partner (K. Davis, 2016). As a metaphor for this section, it symbolises deliberate attempts by drama pedagogy to emulate critical pedagogy. A dance of lewd entwining, which originated in the slums of Buenos Aires, the tango has been cultivated into a respected ballroom dance form. As an allegory for the transformative agenda, its origins lie with the oppressed, while its final practice is located often within schools and other sanctioned public institutions. Institutions of the dominant ideology, schools are problematic spaces for transformation and critical education. A persistent tension, this section discusses the place of the transformative agenda within theatre education, and drama processes both past and present.

**TIE and Transformation**

Devised participatory theatre, known as Theatre in Education (TIE), developed following the rise of public concern in social welfare, a growing interest in youth theatre and the ascendance of progressive education (Pammenter, 2013). Originating at the Belgrave Theatre in Coventry, it reflected a belief that theatre should be at the heart of democratic life and could be introduced through education (Turner, 2010). A close ally to process drama, Theatre in Education (TIE) has long been associated with a social justice agenda and as a site for transformation (Freebody & Finneran, 2013; Prentki, 2015). Theatre in Education (TIE) blossomed in the developed world during the 1960s (Prentki, 2015) and drew extensively upon the theatrical techniques of Boal and Brecht to provoke responses and challenge dominant social structures.

Boal invited his audience to act as co-creators of the theatrical event and challenge reality through the imagination, while Brecht raised consciousness, through heightened aesthetics to confront audiences with a “theatre of actuality” (Schonmann, 2011, p. 68). These two approaches both sought to make the
familiar strange and the strange familiar and reveal to audiences the artifice of
the world (Boal, 1979; Prentki, 2015). Dedicated to exploring social and political
issues, both Boal and Brecht significantly contributed to the birth of TIE
(Nicholson, 2009).

At its inception, TIE contested the prevailing discourse, which positioned theatre
as an authority by actively inviting its audiences into a collaboration. TIE intends
to build the critical capacity of its audience through disturbing the dominant
narrative and compelling participants to raise difficult questions and make hard
choices. Typically motivated by issues of social inequality, TIE asks its audience
to directly confront characters, rewrite narratives or engage in active discussions
following a performance. Focused upon dialogic learning, TIE complements the
progressive tendencies of drama in education and shares numerous traits with
process drama (Pammenter, 2013; Prentki, 2015).

Often performed in schools and commissioned for social aims, TIE employs
drama conventions to offer immersive exploratory experiences. Similar to
Heathcote’s teacher-in-role and Boal’s Joker, the actor–teachers within TIE
perform and invoke critical reflection, ask questions, make demands and
stimulate the audience (Boal, 2008; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995; Pammenter,
2013). Several researchers have positioned TIE as a potential form of critical
pedagogy and their work has significant resonance for this research.

Adams Jr asserts the potential of TIE as a device for liberation and the enactment
of critical pedagogy, in both his dissertation and subsequent book chapter (C.
Adams, 2012, 2013). He identifies schools as primarily mechanisms of cultural
reproduction that ensure the ongoing dominance of the status quo, and he
advocates instead for education that engages students’ curiosity and passion.
Teaching, he insists, should be a responsive social activity that challenges
hierarchies of power (Lloyd, 2005, as cited in C. Adams, 2013). He suggests that
theatre, as a vehicle for play, participation, co-construction and affective
cognition, offers a vital space for the principles of critical pedagogy.
Key to Adams’ rationale for TIE as critical pedagogy is its commitment to co-construction and its position as a participatory theatre form, akin to process drama (Bowell & Heap, 2013). Adams maintains that engaging with participants as actors fosters agency and references the value of mataxis for enabling participants to imagine other ways of being (Greene, 1993). He identifies three main aspects of critical pedagogy that he believes would enrich the development of a radical TIE praxis. These involve the concept of education as transformation, the focus upon social justice, and an insistence upon authentic dialogue. 

Currently, however, as Pammenter suggests (2013), the transformative potential of TIE is restricted by the compromises required to gain funding and legitimacy for TIE projects.

Pammenter (2013) argues that the frequently utilitarian goals of TIE, and demand to fulfil funder objectives, override its potential to provide critical and aesthetic experiences. In addition, he highlights the underpinning philosophies of Theatre for Development, a prevalent subcategory of TIE, as continuing to marginalise audiences by positioning them as passive recipients. Instead, Pammenter appeals for a new form of TIE that operates outside of formal education systems and employs theatre as a disruption to unsettle the foundations of the dominant ideology. Pammenter advocates for a co-intentional vision for TIE that challenges the dominant ideology and is essential to a pedagogy of hope.

Adams and Pammenter draws distinct parallels between TIE, Theatre for Development and process drama and their potential transformative agendas. They acknowledge the problematic relationship between the TIE practitioners and the funding bodies who require them to generate identifiable outcomes (Balfour, 2009; O’Connor, 2009). Adams and Pammenter’s discussions return to the principles of Freire and share many traits, with the emerging field of critical performative pedagogy (CPP). The next section discusses this theory of performance as a direct response to some work in critical pedagogy.
Critical Performative Pedagogy

Critical performative pedagogy (CPP) seeks “to take a position without standing still” (Giroux & Shannon, 1997, p. 4; MeKeehan, 2002) and has several points of synergy with process drama (McLaren, 1986). The agenda for critical performative pedagogy aligns closely with my research, as do many of the tensions surrounding its practice (Harman & French, 2004). As a response to McLaren’s Schooling as a Ritual Performance, critical performative pedagogy employs elements of theatrical performative and values experiential learning (Pineau, 1994). It attempts to combine critical pedagogy with performance praxis, to marry the doing with the thinking and then locate it within a social context.

Critical performative pedagogy uses a combination of both Boalian theatre techniques and responsive critical discussion. In this process, participants initially re-enact and embody issues through a performance, followed by critical discussion (Harman & McClure, 2011). Rejecting notions of fixed identity and similar to a process drama work, participants in CPP engage through multiple roles (Harman & French, 2004). Harman and French (2004) argue that CPP offers an opportunity to analyse how ritualised performance occurs through the body to validate selected identities and silence others. Equally, Pineau (1994) cautions that within institutions, performed bodies carry with them the “inscription of our differentiated status” (Pineau, 1994, p. 21), both locating and creating our social position.

In addition to indicating or dictating our social status, Pineau argues the body is further categorised according to its function. He highlights this factor when he draws a distinction between, the frequently employed body as evidence of learning and the body as a medium for learning. He argues that performance as evidence of learning, which requires participants to show, tell and do, dominates, while the body as a site for learning “through sensory awareness and kinaesthetic engagement” (Pineau, 2002, p. 50) is less common. Distinctly allied
to process drama, Pineau’s emphasis on the self-conscious performance and acute awareness of the body contrasts with the often spontaneous nature of process drama (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003). While Pineau (2002) advocates for the body as a site of ideological challenge, the focus on performance would likely be inhibiting. The ideology governing theatre conventions and their quality might invoke more conformity than criticality.

However, my review of the literature suggests that the liminal space between performance and reality, where the participant is neither in role nor playing themselves, may offer a place for resistance. It is the body as a site of ideological submission or resistance that could be significant to praxis dedicated to liberation. Kipling and Hickey-Moody’s (2015) analysis highlights the significance of physical position and the body in advocating for process drama as an opportunity for transformation.

**Process Drama as Transformation**

Sitting with children and working alongside them, Heathcote physically rejected her position of authority and enacted her pedagogy of collegiality (Kipling & Hickey-Moody, 2015). Wagner (1980) argues that in Heathcote’s early practice, she worked instinctively and collaboratively to frame learning as an endeavour into uncovering what is unknown. In the fictional frame, participants directed, questioned and negotiated possible solutions and were chiefly responsible for the developing drama. Wagner further contends that in contrast to Way (1967) and Slade (1955), who managed the students’ creative explorations, Heathcote sought a genuine partnership (Wagner, 1980). Kipling and Hickey Moody (2015) agree with Wagner’s assessment and further characterise Heathcote’s practice as a pedagogy of resistance (Freire, 1993).

Heathcote’s early iteration of Mantle of the Expert is likewise nominated as a potential enactment of Freirean pedagogy by Kipling and Hickey-Moody (2015). Teacher-in-role, they contend, challenges teacher authority and enhances the transformative capability of Heathcote’s work. This was illustrated in one
example of Heathcote's practice in which students took responsibility and leadership of the drama when provoked by teacher-in-role as “vagrant” in need of assistance (Kipling & Hickey-Moody, 2015).

Similarly, they consider Heathcote’s commission model, which combines drama with real world inquiry, as transformative because it heightens student ownership (Heathcote, 2003; 2015). In this model, participants work in fictional expert roles on a genuine commission. Repositioned as experts, the students work in a relationship of reciprocal collegiality with teachers. It is this aspect of collaboration and equity which contributes to Kipling and Hickey-Moody’s discussion of process drama as transformation.

While comparisons between Freire and Heathcote’s philosophies exist, the evidence cited by Kipling and Hickey-Moody for their congruence in practice, is insufficient. Kipling and Hickey-Moody’s (2015) discussion of MOTE does not account for the latest evolution of the form, as discussed in the previous chapter, or recognise the problematics of its embedded ideology. Heathcote’s approaches disturb hierarchy and encourage authentic dialogue within the classroom, but how do they address ideologies surrounding the classroom?

This research sets out to examine if process drama as evidenced by the two case studies might provide, spaces for transformation, locate those spaces and guidance on how cultivate them. The next section identifies some of the limitations and concessions made, when attempting to engage in critical discourse through drama in ideologically bounded settings.
Can-Can Compromise

Symbolising the critiques and cautions of process drama, the metaphor of the can, can was selected for two reasons. Firstly, it is a dance fondly recalled by Jonothan Neelands in relation to IDEA 1995, the debate around cultural capital and case study A. He offers the traditional performance of a can, can by dancers at IDEA as evidence of the reliance of theatre/performance upon established understandings regardless of their potential to marginalise. Ironically, as he asserts, dancers had to submit to the movements and costume of this dance form in order to participate in it. Secondly, it offers a suitable metaphor for the adoption and subsequent adaption of process drama.

High kicks, high energy and lots of fun, the can-can, defied strict Victorian values, demonstrated the physical capabilities of women and was arguably an early act of female liberation (Hanna, 2010). However, this rebellious act of social disturbance found itself repackaged and repurposed as a sexualised, commercial dance designed to satisfy the male gaze. As a metaphor, it highlights the ability of the dominant paradigm to absorb, compromise and then domesticate an artistic product. Process drama has arguably suffered a similar fate in some spaces, misplaced and misappropriated to reinforce the ideology it sought to unsettle. This discussion interrogates some of the pitfalls of engaging in drama praxis, the subtle limitations of form and the perils of popularity.

Hero Narratives

Often poetic, the discourse of drama education frequently describes its work as providing magical, “aha” moments (Pheasant, 2015; Wagner, 1999). Cahill (2018) challenges the relentlessly positive rhetoric of drama education for failing to adequately confront and interrogate its missteps. She identifies how constant pressures to meet recognisable outcomes and the ongoing marginalisation of drama within education has deterred practitioners from engaging in rigorous critique. Theatre and drama can activate a discussion, partnering with people and issues to problematize the world, not perfect it (Cahill, 2018; O’Connor &
O'Connor, 2009), and its impacts must not be overstated or its practitioners deified (Balfour, 2009; Etherton & Prentki, 2006).

Process drama has suffered from this tendency to elevate the practitioner’s status and wallow in hero narratives surrounding the pedagogy and/or its facilitators (Hornbrook, 1998a; Pitfield, 2013). Drama educators require not only drama expertise but significant interpersonal and pedagogic skills to remain sensitive to the delicacies of this human art form (Snyder-Young, 2011). Regardless of the facilitator’s intentions, a critical self-reflexive stance is essential, to ensure that simplistic reproductions of preferential ideologies do not occur (Dunn & Stinson, 2011). Fortunately, the book *A Reflective Practitioners Guide to (Mis) Adventures in Drama Education or What was I Thinking?* (Duffy, 2015), which details the blunders of eminent drama academics and the tangled, messiness of drama praxis, offers a welcome counter narrative. These tales of teacher error further illuminate the potential for drama to be naively complicit in supporting dominant paradigms. Facilitators who fall prey to the seductive power of control may manipulate rather than stimulate participants into heart-rending, rather than genuine responses.

**Unintended Harm**

Engineered towards specific objectives or influenced by the facilitator’s biases, drama works can themselves be repressive rather than transformative and might replicate or reinforce existing ideologies. While framed as a creative space, the fictional space is “nonetheless permeated by social and political norms” (Cahill, 2018, p. 174) potentially carried into the drama by the participants themselves. This is likely compounded by the adoption, performance and discursive repetition of ubiquitous everyday practices, which reinforce the mechanisms of power (Harman & French, 2004).

Initial improvisations often draw upon stereotypes, potentially locking existing oppressions into the bodies of participants through re-enactment. If participants only engage in simplistic role play, they may inhabit a variety of roles but never
interrogate the parameters of them. Although emergent drama participants often rely on the familiarity of stereotypes, if left unchallenged, the drama runs the risk of being complicit in reaffirming the status quo (Cahill, 2011).

Ironically, drama facilitators committed to encouraging student voice and agency, may still find that dominant and prejudicial concepts are shared and reinforced by the participants. Saldana (2005b) and Snyder-Young (2011) recall drama works in which students continued to replicate problematic social concepts of gender. Snyder-Young describes the difficult decision she made to honour the participants’ intolerant contributions, despite contradicting the transformative aims of the drama. Reluctant to challenge participants’ views or dispute their interpretations, a potential exists that working in drama may reinforce more hegemonic norms than it challenges (Saldaña, 2005; Snyder-Young, 2011).

Replicating Institutional Oppression

If, as Prentki suggests, hierarchy is “the principal impediment to transformation” (2018, p. 162), then schools and universities appear to be entirely unsuited to successful critical praxis. Typically, hierarchical educational institutions are imbued with authority, influenced by society, and bound by significant regulations designed to maintain the stability of the organisation. This creates a likely impediment to the fervent, progressive ideals of drama facilitators or TIE practitioners or critical pedagogues seeking to challenge existing norms and activate change (C. Adams, 2013; Nogueira, 2010; Snyder-Young, 2011).

Saldana (2005b) encountered this dilemma, while attempting to engage with Boal’s work, in a classroom context and acknowledged an uncomfortable negotiation between his philosophy of liberation and the institutional classroom culture. This is illustrated by the divergent outcomes participants sought, the teachers wanted students to adopt positive behaviours of respect and graciousness, while the students simply wanted to explore what to do when faced with oppression (Saldaña, 2005b). Although Saldana (2005b) prioritised
the students’ views, as the primary stakeholders in the research, he acknowledges that the classroom culture interfered with the emancipatory potential of the work.

As members of educational institutions, participants are socialised into their institutional communities through the repetition of the familiar. This community remains founded upon inequitable power relations and may reinforce an agreement model which conflates community with conformity. Process drama relies on the cooperation of participants and frequently positions them in communal roles. Given their autocratic experiences of community, it seems doubtful they will suddenly engage in acts of individual dissent. Reducing individual agency through an appearance of neutral agreement, drama may reassert the status quo and relegate drama to a curriculum delivery tool (C. Adams, 2012; Snyder-Young, 2011). Finally, this section explores the tensions inherent in teaching curriculum through process drama.

Agendas

A number of process dramas currently exist to facilitate curriculum objectives or cultivate social behaviours (M. Anderson & Dunn, 2013; Baldwin, 2012; Simpson & Heap, 2002). Charged with a clear objective, these dramas are obliged to reinforce curriculum or school values, and any attempts at agency are tempered by an adherence to accepted paradigms of knowledge, behaviour and authority (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). Drama is frequently paired with social studies, and numerous practitioners have cited its benefits for engaging students in classwork (Johnson, Liu, & Goble, 2015; P. Taylor, 1998). Rosler, however, equates the value of drama with its ability to govern behaviour and instigate “excellent behaviour” (Rosler, 2008, p. 266) and reflects the prevailing narrative of schooling, which equates good behaviour with success. Rarely commissioned without purpose, most drama work has an anticipated outcome or a rational rationale.
Our contemporary neo-liberal accountability culture, privileges explicit outcomes, evaluations, and finite answers (Giroux & Artseverywhere, 2018). The literature suggests that process drama and critical pedagogy require a space of exploration, of unknown imaginings, and a recognition of alternative modes of knowing (Prentki & Stinson, 2016). Despite the rhetoric, numerous studies informed by critical pedagogy sought predetermined outcomes as measures of success. Governed by the dominant curriculum, these studies were deemed by facilitators as unsuccessful because they failed to meet predetermined expectations (Markovich & Rapoport, 2013; Snyder-Young, 2011). Even researchers who acknowledged the flexibility of the form and its potential for ambiguity expressed anxiety as a result of failing to hit a predetermined target of success (Saldaña, 2005; Schroeter, 2013).

Similarly, I agree with Davis and O'Sullivan (2000) that Boal’s practice of initiating dramas based on participant contributions will ensure they remain subject to previously embedded assumptions. These assumptions will influence not only the solutions to problems but the selection and presentation of the problems themselves (Snyder-Young, 2011).
**Recent Rhumba-lings**

An appropriate metaphor for the future hopes of drama education, the rhumba is the dance of love, and while the slowest Latin form, it maintains the signature hip sway and sensual feel of its contemporaries (Drake-Boyt, 2011). Popularised in Hollywood in the 1930s, the rhumba is a romantic rather than lascivious dance form, with the heart at its centre. Accordingly, the dramas in this section attempt to find new partners and envisage a romantic, hopeful future. This resonates with the potential dance between critical pedagogy and process drama and Freire’s call for authentic dialogue and a praxis of hope. Returning to the Greek origins of theatre, this section begins with a discussion of the relationship between democracy and drama and highlights the value of playfulness and the body in achieving democratic praxis. Contemporary practitioners recognise the potential for drama and democracy, social justice and an awareness of the need for flexible learners (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015).

**Drama and Democracy**

Dewey suggests that “democracy is about the realisation of human potential through participation in the acts of citizenship” (Dewey, 2008, p. 34). Represented often as a political process of elections and votes, a broader understanding of democracy recognises it as a process that must be questioned and experienced (P. Carr, 2012). Democracy is concerned with the human condition and human interaction, both of which lie at the heart of drama praxis (Cziboly, 2015; O’Connor & Anderson, 2015). Neelands (2008a) contends that drama offers a fundamentally democratic way of exploring, problematizing, re-imagining, and debating the world.

As a forum for engaging in important questions, O’Connor (2013) proposes drama as a plausible dance partner for critical pedagogy through which, participants can employ both affective and cognitive faculties to engage, resist and act. In his practice, O’Connor tackles concepts of democracy and radicalisation through metaphor and reframes these difficult topics (2016).
Positioned within a co-constructed drama frame, participants are invited to contribute, make decisions, and act to directly impact the fiction. These actions are then reconsidered and perhaps replayed, offering participants a forum in which to consider and reconsider themselves as active citizens of the fictional world (Neelands, 2009). This desire to foster citizenship through drama necessitates a connection to the principles of inclusive practice and social justice (O’Connor, 2015). Through fiction, participants are invited to empathise and explore complex responses, and “engender a felt understanding” (O’Connor, 2016, p. 145).

Several scholars recognise applied theatre as a relational pedagogy for developing citizens capable of critically negotiating complex understandings and recognising humanity (Freebody & Finneran, 2013; O’Connor & Anderson, 2015; Prentki & Stinson, 2016). As discussed previously, applied theatre is an umbrella term for socially responsive theatre processes, which operate beyond the paradigm of traditional Western theatre. Currently, process drama remains the dominant form of applied theatre enacted within classrooms. These two forms share foundations, practices, practitioners and research and, consequently, applied theatre research informs this discussion. Evident in current practice is an explicit connection between social justice and applied theatre (Freebody & Finneran, 2013) and the possibilities offered by drama for educating towards social justice (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015).

While contemporary understandings of social justice encompass a variety of political positions, drama’s historical association with the oppression of marginalised people remains key (Freebody, 2018; Freebody & Goodwin, 2018). Sharing concepts of active participation, authentic dialogue, reflection and mataxis, Freebody and Finneran (2013) acknowledge the strong philosophical bond between applied theatre and critical pedagogy. Freebody’s (2018) recent review of applied theatre highlighted these connections and expressed the value of applied theatre as a problematizing device. Freire’s influence is also evident in O’Connor’s repeated assertion that drama can ignite the empathic imagination.
and challenge the inevitability of capitalism (O'Connor, 2015).

Drama as described by O'Connor offers an opportunity to explore the “what if,” resist dominant ideologies and provide participants with a forum for wonder. He argues that liberated from curriculum objectives, drama can offer an active, playful resistance to anti-democratic practice and social injustice (O'Connor, 2016). Social justice and drama education's shared interests of participant agency, emancipation and the unmasking of ideologies hints at drama’s potential as critical praxis.

**Pirouetting with Play**

Drama requires play and actively cultivates a space for imagining and creativity. As a creative form, drama relies on participants exercising their imagination to sustain belief, take on a role and allow for meaning making (O'Toole, 1992). The imagination is essential to critical pedagogy, because it is through imagination that we might initiate the first steps towards a better world.

The imagination facilitates criticality in two ways: it challenges the bounds of the current understandings by playing with them, and it invites the creation of new worlds potentially informed by critical hope. As a “lubricant of transformation” Prentki (2018, p. 169) argues that play may shift the boundaries of normative social behaviour and is essential to making meaning from and in-between both real and imagined spaces. Equally, hope relies on the imagination to see beyond lived circumstances and shift instead into the realm of creative possibility (O'Connor & Anderson, 2015). This shift is most obviously available to drama through the process of assuming various roles.

Through the adoption of alternative positions in role, and motivated by the playfulness of the facilitator, participants might play with their identity and explore new ways of being (Edmiston, 2003; Greenwood, 2016). In addition, Eriksson (2011) identifies the imagined drama world as offering participants a safe distance from which to examine contemporary concerns. Protected by the fiction, participants might take advantage in the drama to take agency and
engage in acts of resistance (Denzin, 2009, as cited in O’Connor & Anderson, 2015, p. 28).

Cahill (2018) cautions, however, against the naïve view of the imagined space as beyond the reach of reality. She concedes that social and political norms infiltrate the fiction, as they must do to enable mataxis to occur. Participants justifiably rely upon the understandings derived from the real world, while creating new ones and improvisations will inevitably lean on stereotypes borrowed from the world, which can be inhibiting and problematic (Cahill, 2018; 2011). This raises the likelihood that participants operating in imaginary roles and spaces that remain too familiar will replicate ideology by virtue of habit. To provide transformative spaces, we need to move more than a few chairs—we need to move minds.

Aesthetically enhancing spaces to embrace colour, light and mess to counter the normal construct may offer fertile ground for playing to transgress against the status quo. Ideology is embedded in conventional social structures, so challenging that ideology requires a challenge to the structure that created and enforced it (Ewing & ACER, 2010). Genuine critique, Prentiki (2018) suggests, requires a visceral, colourful perhaps unintellectual liminal space to unsettle the status quo. As discussed earlier in relation to CPP, the body has recently gained some tenuous acceptance within the academy as a space of knowledge production.

**Embodied Knowledge**

Drama practitioners recognise the body is a space of knowledge negotiation and creation (Norris, 2016). The activation of ideas through drama refutes stagnating discourses and embraces it as “a discourse which has rediscovered its connection to the concrete” (Hirschkop and Shepar, 1989, as cited in Prentki, 2018, p. 35). Crafting meaning through various means honours the complexity of human experience and broadens the receptors, to appreciate embodied and sensory communications (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015). Paradoxically, while drama
enables embodied challenge, it also enables embodied compliance and potentially sutures oppression into the DNA of its participants, through repeated habitual action (Cahill, 2014). Having considered the research around process drama and critical pedagogy, the next section analyses explicit attempts to unite the two pedagogies.
Cheek to cheek

Cheek to cheek, and in seamless unity, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers’ timeless performance provides the chapter’s final metaphor. Responsive to one another’s steps and moving as if one, Fred and Ginger are of comparable skill and operate in genuine partnership. Famously, Ginger did everything he did but “backwards and in heels”. In this review of the literature, I consider how others have placed process drama and critical pedagogy cheek to cheek. As referenced earlier, the first of these is Boal.

Boal

Common to both process drama and critical pedagogy is an underlying philosophy of education dedicated to enhancing the capability of individuals to recognise and create their own world (Doyle, 1993; Giroux, 2004c; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). These pedagogies both advocate for dialectical activities, which refute a banking model of education, and encourage collective participation through praxis, to create meaningful learning (McLaren, Martin, Farahmandpur, & Jaramillo, 2004). A direct response to Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2005), Boal’s (1979) theatre form Theatre of the Oppressed (TOO) explicitly sought to employ theatre as an interactive medium for authentic dialogue.

Boal believed in performance as a generator of change and created a range of theatre forms designed to critically engage audiences and employ “theatre as a weapon of liberation” (Boal, 2008, p. xxiii). The most prevalent of his forms—forum theatre and image theatre—both offer audiences an opportunity to engage directly with the theatre making as “spect-actors.” Facilitated by a “Joker,” participants engaged in forum theatre are invited to interrupt and alter a staged scene to tackle the oppression or create their own moments and provoke critical reflection (Boal, 2008).

Applied theatre and process drama have both drawn extensively from Boalian drama conventions, as evidenced in the earlier discussion of TIE (Howard, 2004; MeKeehan, 2002; Shelton & McDermott, 2010). Similarities between them
include the role of participants as active creators within the drama, the dual responsibility of teacher-in-role, and a commitment to exploratory improvisation. Boal’s theories seek to unmask the relations between social realities and social perceptions and, akin to Freire’s problem-posing model, examine participants’ lived experiences of oppression (Freire, 2005). While there are numerous parallels in the underlying interests of Theatre of the Oppressed and process drama, it does differ in some significant ways. Participants in a Theatre of the Oppressed experience do not work in role but engage from their current social positions. This creates a potential, as Schroeter (2013) discovered, for reinforcing rather than destabilising conflicts between disparate groups. As a theatre form, it also adheres to conventional theatre elements without interrogating their position as signifiers of ideology. Theatre of the Oppressed retains the associated authority of theatre form and remains tethered to its didactic origins and the influences of Epic theatre, Brecht and other dead, white men (Pelias and Van Oostin, 1987, p222 cited in Howard, 2004; Stoate, 2017).

Central to Boal’s writing, and useful to consider in terms of enacting critical pedagogy, is his belief in the centrality of the body in rejecting or retaining ideological oppression (2008). He advocated for a form of theatre that invited participants to enter the physical space and explore ideas intellectually and affectively. Many of Boal’s techniques have been adapted by process drama practitioners as accessible and valuable for exploring embodied and sensed understandings (Burton & O’Toole, 2005; Grant, 2017). While drawing upon parallel techniques, process drama can divert from linear narratives and solutions and instead remain open, playful and responsive to the changing steps of critical pedagogy. Errington considers this to be socially critical drama.

**Errington**

Errington’s proposal for socially critical drama education provides a theoretical discussion of engaging participants in acts of critical understanding, through drama (Errington, 1992). He begins with a review of the three dominant drama education models of the 1990s: neoclassical, liberal progressive and individual
radical. He explains that neoclassical drama, which upheld the values and conventions of Greek theatre, remained too dogmatic, while by contrast, liberal progressive drama allowed for vague self-expression. Although the third form, individual radical drama, viewed drama as process for illuminating and reflecting upon universal truths through role, Errington was still unsatisfied by its reliance on universal concepts.

Errington speculated that through creating fictional new worlds, participants “would be made aware of their impact on the world” (Errington, 1992, p. 42) and alerted to the manipulations present within society. He regarded drama as a transformative space in which to identify and counter the dominance of existing social structures, by reflecting and critiquing both the content and process of the drama (Errington, 1992). He proposed that existing in a space of mataxis furnishes participants with a unique opportunity to interrogate personal belief systems. Errington considers drama a liminal space of boundless exploration in which participants, as social investigators, may create agendas of possibility (McLaren, as cited in Errington, 1992).

Errington’s work complements Doyle’s 1982 PhD thesis Drama as a Critical Form of Pedagogy (1982) and subsequent book Raising Curtains on Education: Drama as a Site for Critical Pedagogy (1993). Doyle’s account of classroom activities designed to explore the relationship between drama/theatre and critical pedagogy has significantly informed this thesis.

**Doyle**

Foundational to my own research, Doyle’s thesis identifies comparable elements or principles in the philosophies of process drama and critical pedagogy. Doyle recognises the synergies between Freire and Heathcote, acknowledging that in Heathcote’s work, “the promise is evident” for a potential critical drama pedagogy (Doyle, 1982, p. 100). Extending his definition of drama to encompass existing play scripts and theatrical performance forms, his thesis also examines other forms of classroom drama.
Doyle (1982) initially set out to reconsider a theory of critical drama by examining the contextual, pedagogical and traditional models of drama practice. He reconsiders a critical theory for drama education to liberate drama from its limitations and provide it with a solid theoretical foundation (Doyle, 1982). He offers several judicious arguments for drama as critical pedagogy; key amongst these are the disruptive nature of the drama space, drama as a powerful interactive communication method, and the virtue of reflection.

He references Barnes’ (1966, as cited in Doyle, 1982) suggestion that a drama for discontent provides enables participants to engage in “arguments” not permissible in the real world. Permitted to misbehave by the fictional drama frame, participants can critique dominant ideologies in action (Heathcote & O’Neill, 2014, p. 74). Theatre, Doyle contends, is a powerful interactive communication method in which performance and audience are engaged in significant, if not always equal, relationships with one another (Courtney, 1974, as cited in Doyle, 1982). Through this relationship, audiences can simultaneously effect and be affected by performances, affirming the potential of drama as dialogue. This dialogue stimulates active reflection, which he asserts elevates drama beyond objectifying culture and towards creating it (Doyle, 1982, p. 93). Reflection is identified and valued by Doyle, not only for developing the narrative but also to incite personal change.

Doyle challenges the rhetoric of drama as a tool for developing social skills and he questions who determines and consequently validates these “skills” (Doyle, 1982, p. 95). He contends that while social competencies of intuition and empathy might be desirable, they remain outside the curriculum and are consequently undervalued (1982). In addition, he argues that early models of creative drama (Way, 1967) failed to complexify existing social constructs and consider the lived experience of individuals as part of wider society (Doyle, 1982). By comparison, he suggests that drama governed by the aesthetics of theatre carries with it the restrictions of cultural capital and that returning to the theatre studies curriculum, as suggested by Motter (1970, as cited in Doyle,
would limit available forms of expression. Unable to refute the culture embedded in these forms, theatre studies, he argues, may only serve to further indoctrinate participants. This correlates with Giroux's caution, that popular media and entertainment offer efficient and engaging mechanisms for transmitting social structure and norms (1999).

In spite of his own criticism of practitioners discounting embedded ideologies, Doyle’s later discussion of cultural capital and student positionality reveals his own adherence to traditional classroom praxis and negates his critical position. Despite wrestling with the burden of his identity and authority within the room, he does not work alongside students but maintains his position as teacher (Doyle, 1982, p. 112; Heathcote et al., 1984). His work remains focused only upon selecting and presenting drama to students for critique.

Encouraged by Maxine Greene's concept of aesthetic knowing, Doyle considers drama as critical pedagogy and hints at the potential offered by drama to improvise possibilities (Doyle, 1982, p. 107). Despite this emancipatory vision, which invites the use of drama to celebrate and indict, his definition of drama as either a discrete curriculum subject or theatrical performance restricts this potential (Doyle, 1982, p. 113). Conceding to the fabricated nature of school and theatre, his vision for teachers transcending these constraints, through a critical analysis of play texts, appears tenuous.

Doyle focuses exclusively on the study and interpretation of existing plays and aligns with Hornbook’s claim that studying the narratives of “historical consciousness” (Hornbrook, 1998a, p. 111) enables students to know and then transform the world. Doyle’s theoretical aspirations for critical drama as critical pedagogy are in solidarity with my own theoretical viewpoint, though I would argue his practical suggestions fall short.

Selecting the plays and scenes he considers worthy of critical examination, Doyle discounts his earlier commitment to authentic dialogue between teacher and student (1993). Critical drama, he explains, invites students to review existing texts, from varying perspectives. Doyle writes about the emancipatory potential of a theatre work, while limiting this opportunity by determining on students’ behalf which scripts count (Doyle, 1993). He positions students as spectators, empowered to respond to existing realities but not create or reshape them (1993, p. 92). Although he suggests a play is “written from the cultural material of its time” (Doyle, 1993, p. 96), he refutes its static position, instead asserting that they are reinterpreted continually through contemporary staging. Although Doyle’s selected plays typically confront issues of social justice, as Euro-centric exemplars of quality theatre, he discounts the ideology and cultural capital they represent. Invited to craft new scenes or adopt characters from the play, participants are offered the option of either rebelling against or obeying the play’s main narrative. Cast into this predetermined fiction and obliged to assent to its ideology, students must identify with characters they did not create. While Doyle classifies the play texts as cultural products, he fails to contend with their ideological origins in terms of either form or content. His reliance upon existing language and norms ensnare his own practice within the realm of critical literacy, which might reveal the world but not reimagine it. I suggest counter to Doyle that provoked by the play texts, students might engage in a critical reading of the words within the world but not the world itself.

Recommending Willy Russell’s Shirley Valentine (1988) as a script for critical drama, Doyle refers to Shirley as an archetypal character and the play as a
“useful vehicle for critical pedagogy” (Doyle, 1993, p. 103). Students in this example remain the recipients not creators of knowledge and Doyle retains the authority to determine the parameters of critical engagement (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Potentially, identified by Doyle as a socially conscious play, the selection of this text, about a middle-aged working-class woman, might alienate participants who recognise this tale of a downtrodden, oppressed women as an attempt to patronise them.

This disjunction between Doyle's theory and practice reappears in his emphasis on performances. He argues for the examination of drama in students' everyday lives but remains chiefly concerned with acting. He does not appear to take into account the ideology embedded within the established formula of Western theatre or its implications for the students. Clar Doyle's (1993) thesis takes tentative steps towards the proposition of drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy. However, despite some gaps between his theory and practice, his core thesis fortifies my belief in the potential of drama and an enactment of critical pedagogy.

**Dance partners**

Although Doyle and Errington proposed a critical form of drama that partnered critical pedagogy and drama in the early 1990s, it has never been explicitly realised or explored. As exploratory pedagogies that employ drama conventions, process drama and applied theatre share many features. Freebody and Finneran’s (2013) book chapter *Drama and Social Justice: Power, Participation and Possibility* highlights the potential union of critical pedagogy and applied theatre and identifies multiple illustrations of practice that address issues of social justice (Boal, Gallagher and O'Connor as cited in Freebody & Finneran, 2013, pp. 51-53). They note the potential alliance between Grady's (2003, as cited in Freebody & Finneran, 2013) three underlying beliefs of applied theatre and their relationship to the principles of critical pedagogy. These beliefs of active participation, aesthetic value and meaningful reflection have informed
Freebody and Finneran’s (2013) own outline of four components for drama in a social justice context: a commitment to critical consciousness, a capacity for mataxis, an emphasis on dialogue, and the centrality of meaningful reflection. These correlate with the synergies I identified through examining the principles of the two pedagogies and signal a potential framework for the creation of critical process drama.

In the current climate of a post-truth world of increasing uncertainty, the capacity to stimulate active citizenship is essential. The critical imagination invites consideration of what the world might be, and as Anderson and O’Connor (2013) suggest, provides a playing field in which to extend thinking and hopefully imagine. Through narrative and metaphor, drama might stretch the limits of the possible and encourage divergent and radical thought. This assertion is echoed by Prentki and Stinson (2016), who identify drama as a relational pedagogy for navigating and imagining active citizenship within the world (Prentki & Stinson, 2016).

Over the last decade, austerity and the rising tide of neoliberalism have eroded the curriculum space for drama; repositioning it as a pedagogy for raising critical consciousness might gift it renewed attention (O’Connor, 2015; Prentki & Stinson, 2016). Errington and Doyle made significant developments in the efforts to unite critical theory and drama; however, this research goes further to explore a genuine practical partnership. Errington’s work remained theoretical, while Doyle’s work relied upon teaching theatre education rather than employing process drama pedagogy. Built upon these works, this thesis considers the relationship of process drama with critical pedagogy to explore creatively and provocatively the problems and possibilities of a partnership of praxis. These studies and foundational texts reinforce the shared philosophies of the two pedagogies while revealing subtle limitations to their alliance in practice. An easy answer is unlikely, but perhaps through this explicit exploration of the potential relationship between critical pedagogy and process drama, this thesis can add another step to the dance.
The next chapter details and analyses the esteemed and controversial drama *The Seal Wife* by Cecily O'Neill. It asks deliberate questions and stirs up historical debate to illuminate and complicate. As a creative and dialogic text, it invites the reader to re-engage with this familiar work through a critical lens and join in a dance of beautiful trouble.
Chapter 6: White Squall/The Seal Wife Workshop

Introduction

Initially, I thought analysing *The Seal Wife* would be a relatively straightforward, simple task, I was wrong. Multiple versions of O’Neill’s original drama and multiple adaptations by other practitioners complicated the process.

O’Neill herself detailed the work in both an article (O’Neill, 1994) and book (O’Neill, 1995). Taylor detailed the drama in both an NJ monograph (P. Taylor, 1995) and later, albeit with slight variations in terminology, in *The Drama Classroom: Action, Reflection, Transformation* (P. Taylor, 2000). Several other practitioners have repurposed it to teach languages (Carkin, 2010; Marschke, 2004), conflict management skills (Chinyowa, 2012) and tackle teen pregnancy (Ngum, 2012). These adaptations are beyond the scope of this thesis.

I elected to study *The Seal Wife* drama presented by Cecily O’Neill, in Melbourne, Australia in 1992. I based my analysis initially upon the published NJ monograph—*Pre-text and Storydrama: The Artistry of Cecily O’Neill and David Booth* (P. Taylor, 1995)—and responses to it. However, during the research, I managed to locate the original source material for the monograph: Muir’s (1993) *Draft Record of Proceedings*. This document proved elusive, and its discovery altered my analysis considerably. The published documents presented the drama activities and analysis of the workshop in sequential order. However, Muir’s account reveals that most of the drama activities occurred on day 1, whilst day 2 reserved for analysis only. Likely, an editorial decision, made for easier reading, this alteration shifted my understanding of the workshop context considerably. As a result of these multiple versions and varying accounts, I rewrote the workshop in role, as a fictional recount, to crystallise differing accounts into a cohesive narrative. A change in font, writing style and format signals this fictionalisation. I invite you now into the imagined space of Caitlin as she details her workshop experience to her colleague and friend, Jane, through her notes, emails, letters, and musings.
10th October 1995

Dear Jane

I hope all is well and that despite the chilly weather in Christchurch you are having a nice time settling in. I got back from Melbourne just over a week ago and as you can imagine have been running around like a headless chicken ever since. Having a few days away at a workshop is lovely, but when you get home to cranky children and a seeming mountain of marking to do that suddenly appeared, you wonder if it was worth the bother! Enough moaning! As promised, I did take a lot of notes over the two days with Cecily and hope that they may be of use to you. You know a lot more about the UK drama battles and will have a better understanding of how it relates to those. Most of the notes I wrote during the workshop, but I managed to get copies of a few other bits, which I have thrown in too.

For a drama workshop, we did quite a lot of poetry, which as you know, isn’t usually my cup of tea; it wasn’t too bad though. It got pretty juicy at times, with one participant clearly unhappy with the workshop.

Please forgive any shocking grammatical errors, misspellings or typos. I thought I would leave it as is, so you can get a sense of the whole thing. You are going to have to excuse me if this seems a bit muddled (particularly the analysis day), as there was a lot of talking. I have named the activities we are talking about during the analysis day, so you can see what it relates to, but I can always explain it in more detail later.

Philip Taylor is also producing a monograph of the workshop and I can give you his contact info if you want to find out when that is due etc.

Let me know if you want to have a chat about this, once you have read it and, otherwise, I will give you a call soon. Ewan and I are thinking of coming down south in the Christmas holidays so perhaps we can visit you then and have a proper catch up.

Take care,

Caitlin
It is a lovely day here in Melbourne and surprisingly warm for October–might even have to break out into a dress later. I am a bit nervous about today: I only joined ACE this year, and while my classes are going well so far–it is still daunting to think I am responsible for teaching drama teachers.

Hopefully, this workshop will give me some useful material to share with them about the relatively new world of process drama. After years of working with Shakespeare and Pinter, it’s still a strange concept for me. Although I have seen the videos and read about Heathcote’s practice, I am a little wary of trying it myself. Many drama educators still talk about Dorothy’s visit to NZ in 1984. Her work seems instinctive and not something I can easily replicate. Still, hopefully this workshop will give me some confidence on how to put those ideas into practice. I am quite proud of myself for making the effort last night, to give O’Neill’s Drama Structures a quick re-read, as it was quite tempting just to lounge about in a quiet and childfree hotel room.

Hilary arrived late last night so I didn’t get chance to grill her on who else might be here, but at least there will be one friendly face. Cecily O’Neill has come a long way to present this workshop, and I am determined to get as much out of it as possible. God, I hope it’s not boring. Well that’s enough coffee for now, it’s getting on for start time–I am knackered already, thanks to the time difference. Oh, look some more drama people. I wasn’t sure what to wear today–I figured we might be moving about so I wanted to be comfortable. What is it about drama teachers, that they all think they need to wear garish necklaces??

Here we go….

Surrounded now by clever sounding people chatting over the introductory cups of tea, we wait to get started. I figure if I keep writing, I will look like I know what I am doing, plus I can surreptitiously check out the rest of the group. There is Philip Taylor; he organised this event and clearly knows many of the participants. There’s Sally–I forgot she would be here. Excellent. Now there are a few more Kiwis, I feel much better. I will pop over and say hi and see how her classes have been going. She knows a few people from the joint NZ/Aussie Drama conference, so perhaps she can introduce me. The anticipation builds as we sit pensively in a spacious but rather dark room…. Oh, here we go, Philip is signalling for quiet

So, I have survived the first part of the day and, so far, it’s been quite good. We had the usual round of intros, which gave me an opportunity to figure out who is who. We plotted where we came from onto a big map–most of us are Aussie/NZ but there were a couple from Kenya and Norway, which surprised me. There are a few big wigs from Australia, but all of us are in teacher education and most are drama people.

Cecily gave us a quick run-down of the situation of drama education in the UK at the moment, and as you know, it isn’t pretty. The theatre purists seem to be on a witch-
hunt for drama in education enthusiasts like Heathcote and Bolton. I knew some of this and Hornbooks’ recent book was pretty scathing about drama in education, but until now, I didn’t grasp how divided the drama community in the UK is. No wonder Cecily felt like a few weeks on the other side of the world, with all that going on at home! We have our moments but generally the NZ Drama community is quite friendly.

I don’t remember reading it, but it turns out that they are going to base a monograph on this workshop and, consequently, the entire thing is being transcribed. Apparently, they are going to create a series of research monographs as a spin-off from the NADIE journal. Thankfully, they are not taking photos. It will be good to have a record of what we do at these things. No one at the College has the faintest idea what I do, and I am sure some of them thought I was sloping off for a sneaky shopping weekend under the guise of work. It will be nice (and scary) to be quoted in the same book as Cecily O’Neill. It is good to think, in contrast to the in fighting in the UK, here we are happy to share our work.

Before we began, Cecily explained that the workshop would be divided up into two parts–today working through the practical drama activities, and tomorrow analysing the drama. This seems a bit of an odd decision, but perhaps Cecily really wants us to experience the drama as learners might. For tomorrow, she has asked us to think about the activities in terms of episodes, dynamics, idea participation, distance, dramatic irony, themes that may emerge, archetypes, language, and how the real/drama worlds overlap.

Cecily began with a detailed explanation of the concept of a pre-text. Sally talked about this, when I bumped into her at Shadowlands at the Mercury last year, but it was good to have it explained further ... and so we began.

We sat on the floor whilst Cecily sat on a stool and told us a story. Her delightful Irish accent, adding an element of other worldliness, meant you could immediately feel the story’s dramatic potential. I have attached a copy. It encompassed both the nostalgic world of Patrick’s fishing village and the mystical realm of a selkie woman.
Teacher narrates the Irish folk tale – The Seal Wife
Long ago there lived a young fishermen named Patrick
One day he was walking by the seashore when he saw a the most beautiful woman he had ever seen sitting on a rock, combing her hair
He crept to watch her, as he did
She picked up a garment, drew it around her body and dived into the sea
She had become a seal
He walked there again the next night and again she combed her hair and covered herself in the garment and dived into the ocean
He went back again the next night and this time he seized her skin
She was completely powerless and had to follow him
She became his wife, they spent several years together and she bore three children
In a small cottage there are not many places to hide things, so he hid her skin in the thatching in the roof
As we all know thatching needs to be repaired every seven years
The thatcher was working on the roof and threw down the old thatching and with it her skin
The children found the skin, picked it up and took it to her to ask what it was
That night as the husband and children were sleeping she took the skin and fled to the sea and never came back

After listening to the story, we got into groups of five and created a tableaux image. As there were only a few men in the workshop, they divided themselves amongst the groups, so we could all have a “Patrick.” Many of the images presented showed the family unit and the seal wife’s struggle between her love for her family and her longing for the sea. Cecily warned us not to get too stuck on creating a realistic story and reminded us that we didn’t know anything except that they were married for 7 years and had three children.

Perhaps, as a result, a lot of the groups created pretty simplistic representations of the family. It was hard to know what to do in this situation. I felt quite nervous having to present something to Cecily O’Neill with a group of relative strangers and was afraid of doing it wrong. Cecily probably sensed this and encouraged us to present images that weren’t in the story and actively questioned us on how the characters felt. Once we all had our images, (six in total) we re-arranged them into chronological order and
then as an audience, we walked around each group’s image. Cecily urged us to pay attention to the faces and eyes, and the differences between the types of images presented.

Quite a few groups showed the birth of a child, which provided a good dramatic image and one that I am sure resonated for all the mothers in the room. Our group created a family beach scene with the family looking happy and enjoying themselves, whilst the seal wife looked sadly out to sea. We were then asked to caption the images and Cecily described the Patrick images as having “a kind of lamenting throughout.” Many were quite melancholy, with the seal wives looking forlorn or in some sort of pain.

After presenting the scenes to the rest of the workshop, we used the image as a springboard for a discussion of the internal thoughts of the characters. The Patricks, Seal Wives, and children were all moved out of the images to create a new collection of images, again in chronological order. Once finished, Cecily asked us to come up with a word that described the images of the Patricks. We didn’t get to do this for the seal wife though, which was a pity.

In many of the images, the seal wife’s role as a mother was emphasised and she was pictured holding a baby and giving birth. Cecily commented on the recurring images of childbirth and the seal wife’s sadness. It seems like Cecily is keen on exploring these further as themes that might resonate.

After this activity, Cecily posed a few questions, asking, “What do we know when we are making a drama? How do we know what to do? What aesthetic underpins our work?” I thought this last question was really interesting, as I didn’t really consciously think too much about the aesthetic component here, and yet, as a drama teacher, I know how to stage a dramatic moment. I wonder whether my students would know this or if this is where I would guide them?

No one seemed really keen to tackle the issue of whether or not Patrick and the seal wife were in a happy marriage or that Patrick had effectively kidnapped her. The story, though told beautifully, was obviously one tinged with sadness for the seal wife. It would have been interesting to see an image of the seal wife and Patrick, immediately after she lost her skin. I overheard another participant complaining that the focus seemed to be entirely on the seal wife, as a mother and wife, not as a person in her own right. I did sort of agree with this. However, we have limited time and no doubt will revisit this issue later. You can definitely sense the group is thinking about the seal wife’s decision to leave the children and how that would impact those around her.

After morning tea–I shovelled down a blueberry muffin from the café I was too nervous to eat earlier and eavesdropped on a proposed group outing later tonight.
Next, Cecily asked us to help create a sense of the fishing community where the family lived. It was fun to gossip in role with other “townsfolk” about what we knew of the seal wife. Cecily told us that the community was “defined by schooling, religion, the fishing trade—there is a simplicity but also a harshness.” I imagined a conservative community who are close knit and follow strict religious or social rules. Given that they worked in the community, they might not have travelled far and have simple language and ideas as a result. It would be a hard life too, I suspect, having to get up so early in often chilly temperatures.

I wonder how the community would feel about the sea. Central to their lives, would they view it in only economic terms or as a source of potential danger. Would they appreciate it as a mysterious space of mystical beings???

This activity was done collaboratively, so we didn’t have to present a finished idea but instead played around with the bits of “knowledge” we created. I was surprised that many people were so unforgiving and suspicious of the seal wife and her motives for leaving. Few seemed to believe the rumours that she was some sort of sea creature, but were instead preoccupied with the idea she was an irresponsible mother who ran away. As a local shopkeeper, my comments were of disbelief, as I knew her well and thought she loved her children and was a good mother to them.

Penny asked if the time period was important to this activity, to which Cecily replied that it was simply “a long time ago—in the world of the text.” Cecily suggested that kids wouldn’t worry about issues of time as they understand the idea of “back then” and that we shouldn’t narrow ourselves by being too specific. I must ask Penny why she thought it was important—I guess if it was present day, the tone of conversations would be different and the concept of a seal woman seem ridiculous. I am not sure.

After chatting in role for a while, Cecily asked us to choose a phrase or word that resonated and repeat them, in a group chorus. This provided an excellent example of how vocal techniques can create and heighten tension. We moved around repeating our words in a chorus of voices, at times quiet and soulful and others loud and fierce. Finally, we stood in small groups and repeated the word as Cecily pointed to us, resulting in an ad hoc performance of sorts.

It would have been useful, I think, to have stopped here and taken a few minutes to talk about how and why some of these attitudes were expressed. The instructions that Cecily gave us about the type of town we lived in were quite specific and perhaps limited our ideas to our existing knowledge of Irish towns (what my mum told me).

Peter (another participant) felt we were really shaping and creating the narrative from our common experiences as reflected in the townsfolk’s general consensus. Is that a problem? We are predominantly white, middle-class well-educated professionals and share quite a lot of common traits. How does that influence what we are describing here as common understandings about the world? Perhaps we are all in easy agreement about things, because we are not a terribly diverse group, rather than because these ideas are just universal? It would be good to unpack this, as I get a sense from some that they are not sure about the representation of the seal wife. I am
hoping we will get a chance at some point to replay her story or explore her previous life.

This next bit should be great, because Cecily is going into role, which gives us an opportunity to watch the master at work. Teacher-in-role is a scary and exciting prospect as it involves actually moving into the drama. The tricky part, I think, is staying in role whilst at the same time managing the drama. I will be interested to see how Cecily does that. In the past, I have happily become absorbed in my role only to find, frustratingly, that I can’t direct or shape the action from that position.

We are split into pairs and each takes on the role of either the seal wife or her child. The “children” join Cecily and sit on the floor, while the rest of the group acts as the audience. Cecily in role as the teacher tells us we are doing a project on the sea and asks us what we already know. She reminds us that we are “very good children” and are going to try new ways of learning that might involve going outside. We are really getting into role, fidgeting and giggling like small children. As the daughter of a fisherman, I am pretty bored of the sea and ask if we really have to study it, but Cecily is not put off and assures me that I will find something of interest. While not a direct no, this deflection is a bit unsatisfying and it is clear that Cecily has an intention.

Cecily raises the tension by warning us that it won’t be easy to talk about the sea. I worry what, if anything, my “mother” will tell me. I know she has a strange connection to the sea and won’t swim, and I wonder aloud if she is afraid. I wonder why Cecily didn’t ask us to talk to our fathers. Robyn was obviously thinking the same thing and asked the “teacher”, “Can we talk to our dad instead?” but Cecily insisted on asking the “mothers.” Cecily explained later that she felt the mother had been a stronger feature in the tableaux and that family and the sea were the main focus. While I understand this, I did wonder if this was really honouring our position as authors of the narrative. This decision helped to shape the drama but perhaps limited us to the focus on the seal wife as a mother.

Next, Cecily asked us to sit on the floor near our “mothers” and make ourselves comfortable. This direction put us quickly into the physicality of a child and established the role quickly. Despite that, it took a few minutes to warm into, so Julie (my mother) and I began with some simple talk. Although it wasn’t a “performed” conversation I was still nervous, asking my “mum” a few questions and it was clear, she was also anxious. Everyone was quite excited by this opportunity to do some drama and it got pretty noisy. Cecily asked us to “gear it down,” which was quite difficult, I was really enjoying this activity and thought the energy in the room was good. However, perhaps we got a bit carried away and off track, so it was good that she refocused us onto the task at hand. This interruption shifted the tone noticeably to one of quiet reflection. While Julie spoke quite softly and thoughtfully, some of the pairs struggled to talk at all and seemed completely stuck. Julie and I hugged affectionately at the end of our talk, while a few of the other pairs kept their distance throughout the activity. Peter later questioned Cecily’s interruption to the “imagined reality” of the drama, but she said we needed the quiet, in order to give space to the developing drama.
Once we had some information from our mothers, we returned to school and shared our discoveries. We did this through a collage of sound, speaking when and how we chose, which felt more poetic and heightened its significance. This activity was quite emotional; the conversation with my “mother” revealed her sadness and her reluctance to talk, implied a troubled relationship with the sea. Interestingly, when she spoke about the sea-life, she seemed happier. For the “seal wives” this must have been hard, because they were hiding their true feelings and real natures.

Elizabeth described her strong connection to her role as a child and wondered how much of her own experiences, she had incorporated into the drama. As participants, we had to juggle our characters’ feelings along with our own at all times. This is exactly how and why I think process drama can engage students by making connections with their lives and valuing them as part of the learning process. Thankfully, Cecily allowed a bit of time to debrief after this activity, which released some of those tensions.

After this, we break into two large groups: one to create Patrick’s dream and one to create the seal wife’s dream. This got a bit frustrating after a while, as no one wanted to make a decision or take the lead. This often happens in my own classroom, where participants are so worried about upsetting anyone or being bossy that nothing happens. Cecily kept asking questions and offering suggestions, but I guess she didn’t want to take over either, no matter how tempting it was. If we can’t do this ourselves, how can we expect children to do it?? Finally, we struck upon using the net as a symbol and this seemed to kick start the creative work of playing with ideas, as opposed to just talking about them.

The fishermen’s net became a symbol for Patrick’s attempt to capture the seal wife’s heart, whilst instead entangling himself. Originally, I was going to take the part of Patrick, but Cecily suggested, “The embodiment of Patrick is a man.” I didn’t understand and thought the gender switch might provide a new way through which to consider Patrick’s actions. In the end, we decided to have the “dreamer” Patrick, portrayed by a man—and Obi volunteered. Cecily’s later comment, “if we see a woman, we see a wife,” upset the group even more.

This began to take shape and Kate took the lead, adding the selkie song into the piece, but there was still a lot of talk, and it took 30 minutes of discussion to create only a few minutes of performance. I am not sure whether this lack of action was still due to fear, inhibition, and lack of ideas or an essential part of the process. I got really frustrated with all the starting and stopping and wondered whether it would be best to just play a bit more, within the “dream” and rely on gut instinct rather than constant talking. We did get to perform the dream twice, which was quite helpful, as we could rework it in the moment.

A disjointed collection of sounds and images, the other group’s dream was rich in imagery and suggested the seal wife’s conflicting emotions. Images included the ocean rolling onto shore and a couple entwined, while sounds of moaning, lamenting, grabbing, and screaming, represented the emotional turmoil. Following this activity, Cecily told us to write in response to the events of the day. Everyone seemed really
interested in this writing and we worked through lunchtime; some members of the
group were obviously very affected by the dream activity and the atmosphere was
tense.

I really enjoyed this time to reflect by myself, and it gave me a chance to really think
about my feelings and create a personal response. To be honest, I am not sure how
thoughtful I have been in the workshop up to this point, as I have been busy being a
“good” participant.

I was quite relieved that it was time to break for lunch. The nice thing about working
in this immersive and intense way is that even though we had only just met this
morning, we already felt like old friends and were more relaxed. Coming back after
lunch was a bit tricky, however, and Cecily perhaps sensing this, suggested we start
with a game as a way of reconnecting with the work.

Working in pairs, we closed our eyes and held hands, taking time to get to know the
pair of hands – once we knew each other, we separated and moved, silently, with our
eyes closed until we found our partners. Cecily gave us several warnings–not to take
liberties and be sensitive to others in the game. Cecily stayed on the edges of the
room, redirecting people who got lost. Once we found our partner, we joined her to
watch the others, which was quite uncomfortable, as you could see their obvious
distress. Cecily described this game as one of “searching and rejection,” which echoed
the themes resonating in the drama, and created a sense of fear and isolation. I didn’t
enjoy it and wondered why we were doing it if it was so fraught with potential
dangers?? I felt manipulated into refocusing my sympathies towards the seal wife’s
children, when we still hadn’t really dealt with her loss or pain.

Cecily explained that the next phase of the work would focus on the action beyond the
pre-text and explore the continuing story of Patrick and the children, suggesting that
the seal wife’s return to the sea is the end of her story. Is that really the end! This
strikes me as a bit limited. I wonder why Cecily made this choice and if we will get an
opportunity to discover more about the seal wife’s life at sea.

Her adaptation of forum theatre fast-forwarded the action 10 years after the seal
wife’s departure. From a few ideas, the group finally chose to focus on the daughter,
who had recently fallen in love and wanted to know about her parents’ romantic
history. Cecily picked up on the idea that once you have fallen in love
the world
looks different.

Staged on a rock by the sea, the group suggested dialogue and shaped the
performances. As the scene evolved, Cecily asked, “What is Patrick like? Is this an
open and loving family?” Having them talk by the sea was a nice way to recall the
seal wife’s origins and stir up some dramatic tension. When analysing the scene, we
all seemed aware of the tension between what Patrick told Katrina about his
relationship with her mother and what he didn’t. As Robyn pointed out, Patrick
blocked Katrina from asking any tricky questions, by jumping in with other things
before she could ask them.
Next, we split up into groups of six and individually wrote a line of dialogue for the scene and exchanged these six lines with another group. After swapping papers, Cecily asked each group to cast a father and daughter and present the scene. We only had a few minutes to rehearse and could change the order but not the words. The room got very quiet and no one seemed keen. I wasn’t sure how valuable this activity would be, but Cecily insisted “you’ve got your text and your actors!”

As each line was unrelated to the next, we were challenged to create a piece of drama that had any meaning. What was interesting about this activity was how the disagreements within the group manifested themselves. It seemed that those who were unhappy with how things were going wrote lines designed to unsettle, shock and suggest the darker elements of the story. The line, “she should’ve stayed with us” was left hanging in the air at the end of a scene and raised a lot of questions. Great dramatic tension was created but wasn’t explored in any depth; we didn’t reflect upon it and instead moved quickly to the next task.

This is the one my group wrote:

Group 2

P: I fell in love with her and... captured her...well
K: Are you telling me the truth?
P: I have not told you the truth before, your mother did not love me; I forced her against her will to marry me
P: There are things in the blood you must never ask about
K: I remember a story she told me when I was very young about the beauty and the freedom of the sea - she called it her home and told me to create my own dance...She came from the sea didn't she?
P: I remember it had been a terrible day's catch
P: (angrily) In many ways you are so alike

Cecily asks us to think over the drama, during our break, and consider what other artistic works it brings to mind. We take a desperately needed tea break and I have a quick chat with Penny from Griffith University–she is funny; thank god for a little humour!!!

By now the group does seem to have splintered off and there is an underlying tension between a few members. I am hoping this will dissipate soon and is just a response to some of the intense emotional work. We talked about meeting for dinner, during the break, which would give me an opportunity to get to know people a bit better and perhaps pick their brains while everyone is relaxed.

Next Cecily asked us to focus our thinking on the texts we generated today. These include the author’s text, individual’s text, director’s text, actor’s text and audience’s text and those generated by rehearsal, fishermen and dream response. Cecily explained that we had done more group work purposefully, because it increased the responsibility but also frustration.
Cecily placed our written response to the dream sequences on the floor—if we had contributed one to the pile, we were allowed to take one out. You really got a sense of the pain that the seal wife had experienced and many of the writings focused on this. While these feelings were definitely stirred up by the dream exercise, they still seemed shocking, as we hadn’t really gotten into serious themes of rape and abduction during the day. Maybe we didn’t get to this stuff earlier, because we were nervous or didn’t want to make things difficult for Cecily?

I managed to get a copy of some of these off Nicole 😊…
Even
If larger nets were knitted, and
Wave-breakers constructed, and
Boats with engines developed -
The everlasting power,
The never ending rolling,
The unconquerable magnificence
- the sea -
Would still render everything else
Insignificant

God keep the sea from me. Bless those who are in it now and forever but God keep the sea from me.

leave me....let me
go...my feet are
torn and bleeding...
I need to float
in freedom...

I had the dream
I felt her hair
I threw the net
And dreamt her there.

The net went wide
I fell beneath
Together no more
The sea, the heath.

And if your day holds air
And sends life's breath
Across the wet beach sand
To habitation dry and warm
Then stepping feet lead
Soul's loss to seven aching years
Of exile from the soul's sea home.

Belonging
Longing
Long
Lost

This stolen skin
Mine
Peeléd
Exposing stolen body
Trapped soul

This trapped soul
Creating
She then asked us to select the most powerful word or idea from each other’s poem and contribute it to a group poem, to be performed as a choral reading. Cecily challenged us to select words that conveyed strong images and had aesthetic potential. Both of these poems were very powerful and demonstrated the depth of emotions experienced. After performing the poems, Cecily suggested two potential scenarios for exploration: either the existence of a family with webbed feet in a nearby village or the rejection of the seal wife’s descendants by the villagers. No one was keen on either of these, however, so instead Cecily invited us to travel 1000 years on from the story, which now only existed as a folk dance. As Sally commented, these dances gave us distance from the initial story but didn’t really do anything else. With silly titles like “Flipper” and “Sealed with a kiss” it was clear most of the participants didn’t particularly value them either. I got a definite sense that some of the participants were really unsure about the direction the workshop was moving in and being “naughty” in protest. I think Cecily realised the dance activity wasn’t working and we swiftly moved on.

After some discussion, the group elected to explore Patrick’s feelings. Those who identified with Patrick took up stationary positions around the room, while the rest of us walked around them whispering, as either the seal wife or the children. This was another point at which I felt that swapping gender positions would offer some emotional safety. Instead, all of the men, in role as Patrick, stood with their eyes closed, while we bombarded them. Cecily asked us to voice strong feelings, without interruption which created disturbing and tense atmosphere.

Dramatically, breaking the spell, Cecily concluded this activity saying, “With the dawn the voices fade” and brought the men back into the group to reflect; they seemed tired and upset by the activity. Cecily then gave out a copy of Seamus Heaney’s version of the story in his poem Maighdean Mary (Heaney, 1972) and asked each of us read a stanza in a choral reading of the poem. In this poem, after returning to the sea, the seal wife drowns. As Helen pointedly said in this version, the result of disagreeing with the dominant social system was death. The seal wife’s choices were either a life she didn’t want or no life at all.

Well, we made it to the end of day 1 and despite some tense moments, I think it was a great workshop. Cecily noted that we didn’t have time to get into all the material we had stirred up before the lunch break but would do so in our own classes. She asked us to think about how much of the work today was driven by pre-text, by participants or by her. Tomorrow will be spent analysing the work, which hopefully will answer some of my questions about the choices Cecily made and the reasons behind some of the activities.
So, after a relatively quiet night out–we went for pizza at a little place in Lygon Street, which was nice. I always enjoy the theatrical element (shocking I know!) of restaurant owners, haranguing to you on the street and chatting with you once you sit down, the noise and bustle providing another welcome contrast to intense, emotional work of the day. Thankfully, despite going out and about and unlike a few other participants, I wasn’t too late and didn’t overindulge in the Chianti. In spite of a few hangovers, we are all in a quite jovial mood today and it seems a shame we aren’t doing more practical work. Now that we all know one another, perhaps we would be less inhibited?

I wonder how we are going to fill a whole day with analysis and to be honest am tired just thinking about it. I know it is important to be reflective, but given some of the participants’ distress yesterday, I am not sure I want to get back into it all again. We started with a story from Opiyo and then got into the analysis

We began talking about the use of drama as a distancing technique and as a method of learning about your own world from the safety of another. Cecily reiterated her belief in the aesthetic experience as a way to push you into new experiences and understandings. She warned us that we would keep encountering “seals” over the next few days, because we were primed to do so.

We talked a bit about how the fictional world heightened the drama, transporting us somewhere else to learn. What I really liked was how the two worlds informed one another, in spite of seeming at first glance unrelated. John described this as a “collision” of two worlds, which nicely captured the energy we felt when working inside the drama world. After this broad discussion about process drama, we talked about each specific activity and Cecily’s thinking. I have put these under headings so it should be easier to follow.

**Discussion Notes**

**Pre-text**

Cecily’s only real comment on her choice of pre-text was that it was a bit more restrictive than normal but that the important thing was not to just re-enact the story.

**Tableaux**

Cecily said that the key reason for using tableaux was its capacity to freeze time so students could “read” what they were seeing and explore alternative views. She wants us to focus less on getting it right and more on finding meaning that resonates. She reminded us that it requires time– not about rushing to the finish but noticing little things.
I think she is right; in my experience, using the “snapshot” quickly creates a piece of drama and stops students from overthinking it. She also recognises the value of the aesthetic and ensuring that students know how to build an effective tableau. We then talked about the images we created, and I was surprised to learn that on previous occasions the images of childbirth weren’t popular. Helen rejected this statement, as she thought these images of childbirth were central to Cecily’s idea of where the drama ought to go.

It was so useful to hear that Cecily felt she had made some mistakes in the workshop. She remarked that when working through the tableaux activities, she had been too bossy and should have kept her mouth shut! She even admitted thinking she should just take up hairdressing and was still debating some of her teaching choices last night!

I always struggle with leaping in myself and trying to “help” students, so I know what she means. It gives me some comfort to think that if a world-renowned expert makes mistakes, I shouldn’t feel bad when I do it. Perhaps I am not such a terrible teacher after all. This led to a long discussion about the authority of the teacher in the drama and deciding when to intervene or not. This is a tricky one—students often look to us for answers and it is so tempting to give them. I try hard, to deflect questions back to the students, but there is still an expectation that as the “teacher,” I should “know.” We talked about valuing your own mistakes in the drama classroom, as part of the process. I struggle with this in my own practice, because I constantly need to defend drama as a subject, and myself as an expert. I worry that if my colleagues see me admit my failings, they will consider my subject (and me) of little value.

Becoming community

In discussing the creation of the drama world through the gossiping townsfolk scene, someone suggested that the seal wife—or perhaps the echo of her—could have observed or commented on what we said about her? Cecily liked this idea but cautioned us against creating improvised naturalistic scenes and instead suggested placing an object or figure in the scene as a symbol of the seal wife. This seemed like a good way to focus attention back on the seal wife and remind participants of the “living being” involved.

School teacher/ Sea topic

Cecily’s move into role as the classroom teacher was the source of some disagreement in the group, as many of us thought this was “teacher-in-role (TIR)” Cecily, however, explained that as the “teacher” in the scene, she remained outside the participant group. Of course, now it seems obvious, because as the “teacher,” she was still very much in authority. This led to an interesting conversation around the function of teacher-in-role and use of irony. I now wonder if she was being deliberately provocative when she limited our choices and emphasised the seal wife’s responsibilities as a “good wife and mother”.

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Cecily explained that TIR is primarily functional and not a place for theatrics. It seems that often teachers get stuck on the idea that they need to do a big theatrical performance. Yikes! I am absolutely guilty of this; whenever I get a chance to participate in drama, I PARTICIPATE. I can see the potential pitfalls though, and Cecily said she learnt this the hard way, often performing lengthy “five act tragedies.” Sally and I agreed, however, that we were afraid that without our involvement, the dramas would fall apart. That sounds a bit arrogant, doesn’t it? I suppose you need to trust that the fiction is solid enough to function happily without you; surely the point is to have the students’ input, rather than placing all the pressure upon yourself? This was a lengthy conversation and one which touched a few nerves.

Next, we discussed the conversations we had yesterday with our “mothers” and in particular the moment when Cecily asked us to tone it down. Some felt this interruption reduced the authenticity of the drama. Instead, it was suggested that Cecily could have set an appropriate tone by directing us to question our mother while she was doing the “washing up.” This suggestion antagonised a few participants by reinforcing stereotypical gender roles and continuing to cast the seal wife as primarily a homemaker. This sparked more questions about gender and whether the men in the room were able to identify with the mother in spite of their gender.

Sharing our sea stories

We continued on talking about using abstract ways of reporting back, rather than going into role again. Some felt this disconnected us from the drama world, but Cecily said it provided more emotional safety. Cecily argued that using the aesthetic meant we didn’t have to make obvious personal declarations or rigidly stick to logic. This returned us to the question of how long anyone should spend in role. I feel like we barely did any “drama” yesterday and a few others seem to agree with me.

Thank goodness it’s break time! Strangely, talking about the work is far more exhausting than doing it. There are some good questions being thrown about and people seem to be more confident airing opinions today. Cecily is happy to consider new ideas and I wonder if these are new questions for her.

Dream Sequences

After coffee, we talked over the dream sequence activity, which was probably the most affecting thing we did yesterday. Cecily apologised for interrupting us while we did this work and acknowledged her own struggle to let go and allow us to experiment. Penny asked about the decision to put us into two large groups for this activity, which I think was part of the problem. At times, the size of the group and our discomfort made for long silences and inaction. Cecily said that making it socially demanding for us was the point and that letting it meander was fine as long as we returned focus back onto the narrative somewhere. While this might be part of the process, I think my students would struggle and I would feel compelled to jump in and help.
The persistent theme of gender in our discussions continued when Kate asked why the dreamer/Patrick had to be played by a “big” male. Cecily pointed out that this choice helped us identify Patrick quickly, and that casting against gender would force us to have to shift our thinking. I am not sure about this; I know what she is saying but so what?? We are already shifting our thinking by using drama, isn’t that the point, can’t we apply our imagination to “bodies” too?? I think that having to shift our thoughts is a good thing and unsettling preconceptions can and should occur in drama.

We talked about the value of performing each dream sequence twice, to ensure we saw everything in these busy performances. Elizabeth asked what we should do if the dreams presented were terrible. Cecily suggested that rather than interfering, we could just ask groups to present it again as a recurring dream. I don’t know if this would really work, because if they start with something really weak, I am not sure it will improve with repetition!!

Poems from the dream

Cecily wants our feedback on the pre-text now, given how much it seemed to stimulate the dream sequences. She is aware that the seal wife tale initially appeared quite limited and culturally specific. She tells us that you can use bits of a cultural folktale without offending the culture, as long as you don’t use it within that culture. This confuses me – does Cecily not do this drama in Ireland then?

Hand holding

The handholding game and the place of games in the drama classroom comes up next. Rob asks why Cecily wouldn’t use games at the start of the lesson (given that many of us do!). She warns us that it signals to the group that you are “that kind of teacher.” Playing them at the start of the class, she feels, can amp them up, when they need calming down. I disagree. Students need the games sometimes—to wake them up and shift their energy, when coming into drama. I suggested that they build group dynamics, trust, and connection with students, but Cecily felt they were better used in the lesson to break or create tension. Afterwards, we discussed the sadness that orphaned children must feel and Philip explained the connection he felt between the hand holding activity and the emerging themes of the drama.

Forum Theatre Scene

The father–daughter scene is discussed next, and we all agreed that staging it at the seashore added an important element to the piece. We talked about why this was devised as a group–forum theatre style rather than workshopped in pairs. Cecily insisted that she was demonstrating various techniques through the day and this method kept us all engaged with the material. She warned again of the danger of allowing participants to become too preoccupied with the performance and suggested choosing the least capable actors as a way to manage this.
Random scenes

Switching the lines of dialogue around, to create random scenes, was a source of a lot of frustration yesterday. Cecily asserted that this was done deliberately to challenge the text and create ambiguity. She argued that creating a “script” in the traditional way would have taken up too much time and not everyone would have felt able to write a complete scene. This method meant we only had to come up with a few words and heightened the tension as we waited for our turn to speak. It challenged us to solve the problem of making it “make sense” and created new resonances for the drama. I think she put us in a difficult position though, and one I am not sure would suit my students.

No one had much to say about creating the poetry (out of the dreams) or the dance pieces. However, the activity where Patrick was surrounded by voices caused a lot of debate! While she valued the way it made participants uncomfortable, fragmented their roles, and incited contrary points of views, many felt it was too tough on the Patricks.

Given the interest in Patrick’s reactions, we decided to explore this further. Cecily suggested discussing Patrick’s psychological state, as the head of a psychology clinic. No one was keen, and the group resisted! It did seem a bit radical and little bit too real. Many felt that it had all got a bit too specific and emotionally dangerous. Cecily tried to encourage us into this approach asking us as psychologists to “hear the voices” as represented by yesterday’s (dream) poetry and commenting that they were “clearly the ravings of a madman.” This drama within the drama was also rejected and at this point: it became a bit of a free-for-all.

Next, Helen raised her concerns about the seal wife’s lack of identity, and while Cecily agreed that her identity was taken, she felt it was reclaimed when she returned to the sea. I don’t know that I agree— the seal wife’s identity was undoubtedly altered by her 7 years on land. Furthermore, the message of the story would seem to be that in order to regain her identity she must lose her family. Why can’t she keep both parts of her identity alive?

Someone suggested that we explore the seal wife’s life at sea, to bring some closure to the work. Cecily seems excited to see the group taking charge of the workshop activities. Maybe the tension about the workshop was another productive tension Cecily planned for? Perhaps she led us into activities where we felt marginalised in order to make us aware of the potential pitfalls of structured drama work— is she that sneaky???

The End

As members of the seal colony, we debated whether or not to allow the seal wife to return. Many in the group emphasised her illicit relationship with a human, while others stressed the position that she is still our sister. In the end, the colony, refuses her because she was captured as a result of her own vanity, had deserted her children, and was polluted by her relationship with humans. Helen, who was sitting next to me, was obviously unhappy and looked quite tearful. Certainly, I felt uncomfortable that
the group decided to reject the seal wife and set her adrift. The group laughed at this end of this, which seemed in poor taste but was perhaps a release of tension.

Helen explained that she was upset not only by the ending but also the lack of opportunity to interrogate the drama as an endorsement of the patriarchy. She felt the seal wife was punished for attempting to regain her independence and resist her position as wife and mother. I agreed that some reflection would have been useful, to unpack the assumptions the “seals” had made and the nature of the “truth” we were discussing. Cecily pointed out we were in a mythical world, but surely it was still our world, as represented by the mythical. Cecily asked about reconciliation and urged us to complete a final stanza of the story—see below.

Yay! The end of the workshop—it has been a great but exhausting couple of days with some useful tools and food for thought. I feel fortunate to have experienced one of Cecily’s workshops first-hand, and will be interested to see what my students make of this work.

The seal wife returned - grieving

Patrick wept

Each night he came to the shore - one night he saw shadows, the next night he heard singing and on the third night he saw dancing - shapes dancing in the waves

All we know now is that he was never seen again.
The ensuing fracas - emails to Jane

From: c.anderson@aucklandcollege.ac.nz
To: JLuton@canterbury.ac.nz
Subject: NJ article

Hello

I hope all is well with you. Things are hectic right now as we prepare for end of semester - it always seems to surprise me, where does the time go? Just wanted to know if you had received the new issue of NJ yet. If not, it has been guest edited by Christine Hoepper and Judith McLean and seems to respond to IDEA, in terms of looking at postmodern, feminist readings of drama.

Helen Nicholson has written an interesting article on the idea of aesthetics, form and genre, which questions the old chestnut of “universal” themes. However, the really interesting bit is an article by Helen Fletcher, who has fleshed out her criticism of the Seal Wife workshop (the one I attended in Melbourne a few years back). She has really gone through the workshop in detail and highlighted her key issues and critique of the two days. She is quite critical of the workshop but raises some good questions.

Anyway, check it out and let me know what you think

Ta

Cait

Caitlin Anderson
Senior Lecturer in Drama
Auckland College of Education
From: c.anderson@aucklandcollege.ac.nz
To: JLuton@canterbury.ac.nz
Subject: Re: Interesting reading

Hey Jane,

I told you it was quite juicy, didn’t I?

You made a good point, about finally doing something useful with all those notes and musings I had on the workshop, so I have had a go at writing an article. Please be aware that academic writing is still new to me and I am still trying to figure out exactly what I want to say. I know I was uncomfortable at moments during the workshop, but it is Cecily O’Neill after all, and I don’t want to rock the boat unnecessarily. Still, if nothing else, this has got me thinking about the importance of reflection and participation in process drama. Maybe now is the time to unleash my theory that Cecily was deliberately trying to unsettle us as adult participants and limit our ability to act within the drama, so we too understood being marginalised. This certainly would be a good use of the dramatic irony she talked about at IDEA.

So, can you pretty please have a look and see what you think? At this stage, it is just an intro on the article and a few observations – I will need to really read it a few more times and get some “academic” back-up if I want to publish it but thought I might give it a go. I have used the seal wife a few times now, so I might include some of my own experiences by comparison.

Let me know your thoughts and message me back or give me a call
Ta

Cait

Caitlin Anderson
Senior Lecturer in Drama
Auckland College of Education
Unsettling the sea: Reflection on reflections by Caitlin Anderson

In *Retrieving the Mother/Other from the Myths and Margins of O’Neill’s “Seal Wife”* drama, Helen Fletcher (1995) deconstructs the Seal Wife workshop presented by Cecily O’Neill as she experienced it. Through a feminist critique, she questions the drama’s use of narrative and the acceptance and reinforcement of patriarchal family structures. Fletcher’s (1995) article critiques the pre-text used, drama activities selected and O’Neill’s influence upon the drama to produce limited and controlled responses. Fletcher questions the ideological neutrality of genre, form, and narrative, which are often taken for granted in drama education (Hoepper & Mclean, 1995).

Published in a special edition of the journal dedicated to post-modern feminist scholarship, this article reflects questions that a few of us shared but only Fletcher dared to ask. She explains how narrative and gender role in process drama may be disabling for students and urges educators to question their practice for assumptions about social structures, class, ethnicity, sexuality, etc., which may inadvertently silence voices in the room (Hoepper & Mclean, 1995).

Fletcher challenges the language and actions of the facilitator in closing down certain responses and draws attention to examples where she feels O’Neill manipulated the activities to reach normal conclusions. Fletcher reiterates the ideals of what she terms “empowerment through drama” and calls for a thorough examination of perceived “universal themes or truth.” She suggests that drama practitioners must examine their own ideological positions, if they are going to claim drama’s capacity to “reform social injustice” and “create ideological shifts” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 26). As Freire (2005) recognises, we do not exist in a bubble and cannot claim to be untouched by the machinations of ideology but instead must name, reflect and then act upon the social structures that construct the world we know.

The assertion of the patriarchy through the language, structure and activities of the workshop is Fletcher’s primary concern (1995). Citing the initial pre-text and title of the drama, Fletcher asserts that O’Neill privileged patriarchal views through her manipulation of the workshop. This culminated for Fletcher in the final moments of the workshop when presented with an ending to the story, in which the seal wife perished, and patriarchy triumphed.

Fletcher felt that the lack of reflection throughout the process endorsed these patriarchal views. Ackroyd (2000) asserts that stepping out of the immediate experience of the drama and engaging in reflection is vital to encouraging a distanced consideration of events. Without this vital component, she warns, “something dangerous emerges” (Ackroyd, 2000). She insists that failing to reflect upon the action within the drama may well allow for indoctrination through drama.
She questions the workshop’s capacity to validate multiple voices and achieve a democratic representation of diversity and difference. Her main critique centres on the pre-text, which reinforces female archetypes, a drama which provided little opportunity for the seal wife to take agency and a lack of reflection throughout. She addresses questions that she perceives have remained unasked in spite of “years of widely published feminist and post-structural theory” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 26).

I believe the questions and critiques offered by Helen Fletcher deserve consideration, if we want to advance our practice towards “genuinely empowering educational drama practice” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 26).

As Fletcher concludes in her article:

Australia has long had a tradition of positive eclecticism, tolerance, and experimentation with a variety of drama-in-education practices. It would be regrettable if Australians were to succumb to the factionalism and in fighting that has dogged the United Kingdom’s tradition of educational drama. Open debate is critical to any move forward. (Fletcher, 1995, p. 37)
From: c.anderson@aucklandcollege.ac.nz
To: JLuton@canterbury.ac.nz
Subject: Yikes – Trouble (right here in river city!) with a capital T

So, the new issue of NJ turned up today and three letters to the editor and an intro by Philip Taylor all remark (putting it mildly) on Helen Fletcher’s article. It would appear that it is just as well I kept my musings to myself (apart from our conversations and my discussions with students).

If you haven’t seen it yet – Oh, my goodness!! I don’t think I have ever seen a letter to the editor section in NJ before and here there are 3!! What seems really odd about this is that I am sure Cecily wouldn’t be at all bothered and she was keen to engage and debate ideas at the workshop.

Anyway, I have to run to teach a class but email me when you have had a chance to read it.

Thank goodness, I didn’t finish that half-baked article of mine

Cait ☺

Caitlin Anderson
Senior Lecturer in Drama
Auckland College of Education
From: c.anderson@aucklandcollege.ac.nz
To: JLuton@canterbury.ac.nz
Subject: Re: The plot thickens

Hi Jane,

In answer to your question, yep you are right only one of the authors of those three authors went to the workshop.

They certainly have a reasonable argument about setting up a sufficient context for Helen’s discussion. Jonothan Neelands’ letter is pretty hard on Fletcher. I don’t know how much of this response is just a gut reaction to the need to defend Cecily and Process Drama from attack. I can understand, after all the fuss and infighting that has gone on between the drama and theatre lot, feeling a bit sensitive but I don’t think Fletcher’s article is a “personal attack” on process drama. I don’t necessarily agree with everything Helen says, but I think she raises some useful questions. Maybe she hasn’t expressed them correctly and perhaps she has been naïve in her analysis, but I don’t think she deserves all this. In the spirit of solidarity, I have written something else as I think this could be a really useful debate. We go to heaps of these type of workshop things and then rarely hear anything critical about them.

I don’t think she got the entire point workshop and agree with a lot of what Julie Dunn has written, but still she should be able to ask questions, without it generating all this venom. It seems ironic to me (irony again!!) that a community that works in a “no penalty” world would reprimand someone so vehemently. How can we expect students and teachers to take risks with process drama and play devil’s advocate when this is the result of asking a few questions?

See if you think what I have said seems fair. I have tried to make it quite detached and academic, but I feel quite sympathetic towards Helen Fletcher.

Caitlin Anderson
Senior Lecturer in Drama, Auckland College of Education
Stormy Seas: Responses to Fletcher’s critique of O’Neill’s Seal Wife by Caitlin Anderson

The three letters to the editor, published in NJ Issue 20, 1996, offer critiques of Fletcher’s arguments and her understanding of process drama. The first comes from Julie Dunn, a fellow participant, who challenges Fletchers grasp of drama theory and offers an alternative view of the experience.

The seal wife pre-text and structure of the drama, Dunn (1996) argues, were intentionally selected to locate the seal wife in a marginalised position. She describes making purposeful choices to show the seal wife’s marginalisation within the tableaux images and that taking them at face value is a failure “to understand the medium of drama” (Dunn, 1996, p. 5).

While discussing the dream sequence activity, Dunn expresses surprise at Fletcher’s rebuke of it as an affirmation of patriarchal values. As she asserts, the dream belonged to Patrick and therefore represented his fantasy, in which he was an understandably sympathetic subject.

Dunn acknowledges a lack of reflection during the workshop but cites the focus of the workshop as the likely cause for this omission. Finally, she recalls her own experience of teaching this drama where students agreed that the pre-text reinforced the marginalisation of women as is often done in society. Dunn asserts that the disparity between Fletcher’s conception and her own reiterates the difficulty of ascribing universality of meaning to any experience.

Recently appointed Professor of Drama and Theatre Education at Warwick University, the author of the second letter, Jonothan Neelands, challenges the validity of Fletcher’s article as scholarly writing. He is familiar with O’Neill and criticises Fletcher’s article for its lack of contextual detail (Neelands, 1996). Neelands labels Fletcher’s letter as “sustained and personal attack on another teacher’s practice” (1996, p. 7) and a selective re-reading of the workshop. He critiques Fletcher’s proposition that process drama’s reliance upon universal themes and communal meanings is disempowering for woman, arguing that theatre relies upon shared understandings.

Referencing a Can-Can performance at a recent IDEA conference as an illustration of the derogatory treatment of women in Western culture, he contends that the “only way they could take part was to submit to the costume and moves of the genre” (Neelands, 1996, p. 8). He urges Fletcher to apply her assessment to the broader realm of the “essentially masculinist canon” (Neelands, 1996, p. 7) of English-speaking dramatic literature.
Fletcher, he argues, fails to understand the aesthetics of process drama or acknowledge the opportunity she had for opposition as a workshop participant. In contrast to Fletcher’s views, he expresses his gratitude towards O’Neill, for facilitating workshops, which invited dissent and debate. His final sentence, deriding the journal for doing “a great disservice to its own academic reputation” and to a teacher who has “dedicated her life to popularising drama” (Neelands, 1996, p. 8) leaves no doubt as to his feelings.

Jo O’Mara, a doctoral student of Philip Taylor, supplies the final letter. Although not at the workshop, O’Mara recounts her extensive experiences with the Seal Wife drama, which contrast sharply with Fletcher’s position. In her experience, participants freely expressed a variety of responses to the Seal Wife pre-text, purposefully selected to “open up possibilities” (O’Mara, 1996, p. 9) and honouring a feminist agenda, by exploring multiple perspectives. O’Mara concludes by admonishing Fletcher for her narrow interpretation of the pre-text and recommends Fletcher reconsider process drama’s ability to “raise new possibilities for both text and participants, new vantage points and multiple ways of seeing the world” (O’Mara, 1996).

As the journal editor, Taylor describes Fletcher’s article as an “unfettered harangue” (P. Taylor, 1996b, p. 4) and challenges its legitimacy as a post-modern feminist critique. Suspicious of her predominantly theoretical critique and disapproval of O’Neill’s praxis, he challenges her to enter a classroom and “demonstrate how vacuous self-aggrandizement produces better research, teaching, and advocacy?” (P. Taylor, 1996b, p. 4). He contends that Fletcher’s critique of O’Neill’s was in response to O’Neill’s reluctance to assume a feminist agenda (P. Taylor, 1995). Taylor contradicts Fletcher’s claims that other workshop participants shared her opinion, and argues that participants created their own responses and were not bullied as suggested by Fletcher.

While some reasonable arguments are provided, the space for considered academic discussion seems to have been quelled. As progressive educators, surely we can allow ourselves to be a bit more generous with one another and address a critique of the work not the person?

Word count: 727 – I am thinking that I would then talk about my own experiences of using the process drama and concerns about doing too much steering of the ship–let me know what you think.
Analysis

Surrounding seas

The remainder of this chapter analyses and considers *The Seal Wife* workshop through the lens of critical pedagogy. Organised by emerging scholars at the height of the process drama movement and facilitated by an internationally renowned expert, this workshop was highly anticipated. Consequently, this section considers the swirling seas influencing and impacting upon the drama workshop.

The academic dispute between theatre and drama in education, in the early 1990s, placed process drama in a precarious position (Donelan, 2001, as cited in M. Anderson, 2002, p. 66). Critiqued for relying upon star teaching and lacking in academic integrity, a clear divide sprang up between curriculum drama and drama as pedagogy (Hornbrook, 1995). Educators in Australia sought to avoid these battles and maintain balance, through a recommitment to their national organisation, Drama Australia and the launch of its own peer reviewed journal (M. Anderson, 2002). Together with the first National Australia Drama in Education conference, this journal established drama’s position within the academy (O’Toole et al., 2009). Into this newly scholarly environment, a renewed interest in postmodernism emerged and instigated a critique of drama texts as neutral works (Hoepper & Mclean, 1995; Nicholson, 1995). Nicholson (1995) began to employ feminist critiques to drama education and encouraged drama practitioners to act as facilitators of inquiry who would contest the hegemony and avoid uncritical reproductions.

As the invited facilitator O’Neill’s prime responsibility was to share the techniques and structures of process drama with experienced educators. Planned as the foundation for a monograph detailing her praxis and conducted over an intensive two-day period, the workshop needed to satisfy numerous agendas. Pitched at “drama leaders wanting to probe further, into what makes for sound improvisation” (P. Taylor, 1995, p. 12), the monograph and workshop
focused upon artistry rather than utility. Understandably, the *Seal Wife* workshop and monograph attempted to feature both the educational and artistic elements of O’Neill’s work (P. Taylor, 1995). Notably, however, it is the theatrical and aesthetic qualities that are keenly emphasised by the monograph and subsequent accounts (P. Taylor, 2000). In the monograph, Taylor cautions practitioners not to use it as a template but as a “model to be related to each practitioner” and their own understandings of artistic practice (P. Taylor, 1995, p. 9).

Although participants had, institutional status of their own, O’Neill’s position and international reputation established her authority. O’Neill was well regarded and followed in the wake of “guru” Dorothy Heathcote, who visited Australia in the 1970s and ‘80s. While Heathcote remained the central enigma, O’Neill filled the theoretical void and turned Heathcote’s ideas into practical realities (Griffith as cited in M. Anderson, 2002, p. 66).

The workshop participants were well versed in the associated behaviour of good students (Jordan & Clark, 2005). Coupled with the status of O’Neill, the pressure to assent to O’Neill’s authority throughout the workshop would be considerable. Muir’s observations hint at this possibility when she comments that “there is much discussion around me that centres on getting the image right” (Muir, 1993, p. 8) and later that “everyone is being terribly polite” (Muir, 1993, p. 16). The purpose and tone of the workshop swiftly cast participants as relative novices, conscious of their public presence and trying to do their best work in front of the visiting master. The next section specifically analyses the workshop in relation to several conventions of process drama: pre-text, role, agency, tension, teachers as colleagues and reflection as identified in the literature (O’Neill, 1995).
Fishing for the features

At the time of the workshop, O’Neill was the most prominent authority on process drama. This section considers how some of the core components of process drama—pre-text, role, agency, collegiality and reflection—operated within the workshop. Through this analysis, I begin to explore which aspects of process drama might be significant when attempting to enact critical pedagogy.

Pre-text and The Seal Wife

One of Fletcher’s central criticisms is the selection of the Seal Wife folk tale, as pre-text for the drama. In this version of the selkie myth, the seal wife must choose between her human life and her seal colony. This established a dichotomy between the sea and land, which marginalises the seal wife and ensures her fate. While O’Neill recommends that an ideal pre-text “be sufficiently distorted or reworked so as to be, in effect made new confronted or transformed” (O’Neill, 1995, p. 42), the seal wife pre-text provides little space for alternative possibilities or transformation.

A pre-text, O’Neill asserts, should stimulate “expectations, establish patterns, imply roles and suggest a setting” (O’Neill cited in P. Taylor, 1995, p. 12). The particulars of the pre-text, she insists, are not as important as its capacity to foster themes and ideas. Although O’Neill admits that the Seal Wife offers a constrained pre-text, she believes it “defines the world of the drama and engenders the emerging themes in the work” (O’Neill, as cited in Muir, 1993, p. 3). Evoking obvious settings and roles The Seal Wife partially fulfils O’Neill’s criteria for a successful pre-text, yet it does not suggest a direct actionable task or provide opportunities to transform events (P. Taylor, 1995, p. 14). While offering a rich context to explore, I wonder if revealing the seal wife’s fate at this early stage inhibits participants from imagining it otherwise. O’Mara and Dunn who recount their own teaching experiences defend The Seal Wife pre-text and commend the potential of this pre-text to incite exploration. O’Mara argues that in her experience, The Seal Wife spawned numerous interpretations and easily
satisfied the criteria of a useful pre-text (O'Mara, 1996, p. 10). In her own practice, Dunn (1996) felt the seal wife’s oppression stimulated discussion and provided rich material for participants’ tableaus. Dunn (1996) argues that O'Neill deliberately employed this pre-text to highlight the disparity between the seal wife’s two worlds and that this dichotomy raises the tension and fuels the narrative.

Tension is essential to drama, to arrest attention, motivate and advance the narrative (Heathcote & O'Neill, 2014). However, tensions that rely upon binary oppositions may invite simple or defeatist resolutions. In *The Seal Wife*, the blunt, binary pre-text potentially curtails the opportunity to explore motherhood, freedom, duty, responsibility, and family. The pre-text offers little hope to the seal wife whose fate is determined. While providing a historical background, the pre-text establishes few details about the seal wife herself, and she remains largely absent from the story. In returning to the sea, she forsakes her family and is victimised either by the loss of her freedom or her children. After recovering her skin, the seal wife flees almost immediately, seemingly confirming her previous incarceration while contrastingly, her decision to disappear at night frames that decision and by implication her as illicit and immoral. The circumstances of her life appear to have little bearing on her culpability or her removal from the story. It may be argued that the finite pre-text denies the story’s capacity for hope or reconciliation between the seal wife and her family. Her final actions as outlined in the text offer little space for agency, questioning, or imagined alternatives within the drama. Perhaps, despite the best intentions of a facilitator to explore events, when a fixed ending exists, participants will struggle to create a new one.

**Role and the seal wife**

Fletcher (1995) argues that named only as wife, the seal wife remains the incidental "other" who exists only in relation to her family and is denied her own identity. Named solely for her marital status and physical appearance, the seal
wife remains subject to external definitions. Associated with concepts of fidelity, love, duty and ownership, the word wife as a name is left undisturbed by the workshop and largely accepted by participants. The repeated descriptions of the seal wife “combing her hair” (P. Taylor, 1995, p. 16) establishes a preoccupation with her physical appearance. This reinforces traditional feminine interests in beauty and contributes to her rejection by the seal colony. Failing to adhere to the accepted social boundaries of either selkie or wife, she is denied the opportunity to craft her own identity. O’Neill maintains that as a folktale archetype, the seal wife is exempt from this criticism and that she purposefully employed this generic character to ensure “complexities cluster around simplicity” (O’Neill, as cited in Muir, 1993, p. 12) and that “attitudes, not characters are of chief concern” (O’Neill, as cited in P. Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 36). Dunn (1996) proposes that the name deliberately reinforces this oppression, a key theme of the drama, and that changing the title would “dilute the dramatic and social potential of the drama” (1996, p. 5). Although I appreciate O’Neill’s intention, the implications of this terminology and the authority gifted to it via its repetition and acceptance remains problematic.

Despite this, her marginalised position within the narrative is typical of key roles within a process drama.

Often, facilitators will position characters in a process drama purposively within a marginalised position in an attempt to provoke thinking and incite efforts to assert or gain power. It is through experiencing the world in the shoes of the oppressed that drama can examine relations of power (O’Toole, 1992). If, however, the drama seeks to challenge power relations and facilitate transformation, these dynamics need to be named and reflected upon (O’Toole, 1992; Winston, 1998). As O’Toole, Stinson and Moore (2009, p. 204) argue, drama “pokes into hidden business, plunders cultures, strips icons and drags out secrets for ironic examination” (O’Toole et al., 2009, p. 204). Characters’ opposing views, needs, desires and agendas fuel the tension on which drama operates. If all the characters in the drama negotiated equally with one another,
there would perhaps be little in the way of drama. Within a process drama, participants should have the opportunity to interrogate and alter these power imbalances. Absent from this drama is an opportunity to challenge, reconsider and transform those relationships. Reflecting upon participants’ experiences within these positions would alleviate this concern and increase the potential for action.

The in/action of the seal wife

Process drama practitioners advocate for participants as active agents within the drama capable of taking action (Bolton & Birmingham, 1998). However, the opportunity for the seal wife to act independently of her role as wife and mother is minimal. As a character, she is largely absent, and her role is not created or negotiated by participants. We learn little about her as an individual, her actions are only gifted significance in relation to others, and her only option to regain her identity is to leave it.

Fletcher (1995) describes the early tableaus of the seal wife as favouring the seal wife’s maternal role following O’Neill’s intervention, one tableau transformed from a simple line up, to a child clinging to the seal wife as she attempted to flee (Fletcher, 1995, p. 29). Taylor (1995) maintains that this demonstration of O’Neill’s artistry enhanced the dramatic significance of the image. Fletcher (1995) argues, however, that it privileged themes of motherhood and, subsequently, the continual objectification of the seal wife. By contrast, Dunn (1996) describes creating an image of the seal wife in childbirth explicitly, to indicate her marginalisation. Dunn (1996) suggests that through drama, participants playfully explored aspects of the seal wife’s life, rather than their personal viewpoints. She recalls the drama, providing many opportunities for divergent thinking and experimentation within the “penalty free” zone (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Neelands (1996, p. 8) challenges Fletcher’s claim that “process drama is specifically disempowering for women because it tends towards universal
themes and the social expression of communally held meanings” (p. 8). He argues that as a social and public art form, theatre relies upon common understandings. Additionally, Neelands (1996) questions Fletcher’s knowledge of the aesthetics of drama and questions her understanding of Cecily’s artistry. Nevertheless, the aesthetics, while integral to drama, are also bound by an ideology and not immune to critique. Some theatre practices are disempowering and without challenging these aesthetic norms, surely, they will be accepted, replicated and endorsed. In this workshop, with little space for reflection, these repeated constructs of female oppression are left hovering.

Considered by participants as artistically fulfilling, the group dream sequences provided an opportunity to explore Patrick and the seal wife’s hidden feelings (Fletcher, 1995). Describing the seal wife’s dream as an incomplete and ambiguous expression of feelings through fragmented and rich imagery, Patrick’s dream, by contrast, follows a logical narrative in which the seal wife attempts to prevent him from drowning. Dunn (1996) agrees that the dream activity enabled an exploration of the private world of the seal wife. She argues, however, that Patrick’s dream did not signal the seal wife’s forgiveness but his desire to be absolved of blame.

Fletcher (1995) regarded the later decision to devise a scene in which Patrick’s daughter asks him for advice about her love life as reinforcing the stereotype of women as fixated on marriage and babies. In addition, as one of few devising opportunities, it contributed to the concept of women, already in play. The subsequent focus upon the performance of this scene overshadowed early concerns and granted it uncritical acceptance. However, an opportunity for exploring the seal wife’s feelings occurred later as participants in role encircled Patrick and whispered their thoughts aloud. Following this activity, no further reflection or actions were explored, curbing the seal wife’s agency and re-establishing her as the victim (Fletcher, 1995). In the final moments of the workshop, the seal wife’s solitary decision to leave her family and return to sea is explored and her fate decided. While debating her fate, a number of strong
opinions are voiced before laughter breaks the tension. Rejected by the seal colony, the seal wife is left adrift to conclude the drama, and the group completes a story template provided by O’Neill in which Patrick visits the shore again and then disappears.

**Teacher as Colleague: Facilitator as Artist**

In *Drama Worlds* (1995) O’Neill asserts that despite the appearance of authority, facilitators of drama should remain responsive and avoid arbitrary or individual decisions. She contends that participants are responsible for making key decisions and that as the facilitator, it is her job to craft these into what Lin Wright has called “playable action” (Wright, as cited in O’Neill, 1995). O’Neill repeats this assertion early in the workshop and describes the facilitator as instrumental in structuring but not instructing the work (1995).

Fletcher (1995) notes that her experience of the workshop was quite different and felt O’Neill maintained a great deal of authority over the drama, through both direct manipulation and the workshop design.

Fletcher argues that O’Neill demonstrated this behaviour when she rearranged an early tableau while stating, “the mother is very strongly there nurturing” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 29). O’Neill’s further question to participants “does the prisoner ever love the jailer?” (as cited in Fletcher, 1995, p. 32) seems to reinforce the validity of the conventional family unit. This provocation undercuts Patrick’s kidnap of the seal wife and invites participants to reconsider Patrick as an adoring husband. Fletcher (1995) believes that O’Neill’s conservative values privileged the family unit by restricting alternative discourses and shaping activities to emphasise the theme of motherhood. I agree she manipulates elements of the drama, but perhaps as Taylor (1996b) and Dunn (1996) suggest, this manipulation is the artistry required to craft an aesthetic experience.

As responsive, creative pedagogues, it is anticipated that drama facilitators will intervene and artfully craft the drama work. Conscious of their influence and preferences, this artistry must be negotiated with participants to ensure it “is the
participants who shape the emerging themes and drama” (O’Neill, as cited in Muir, 1993, p. 7). Neelands (1996) contends that Fletcher failed to exercise her ability to influence the drama, disputes Fletcher’s (1995) helplessness and commends O’Neill’s courage as a facilitator open to dissent and alternative views. Some disagreement over the seal wife’s portrayal and the direction of the drama is evident in both Fletcher’s reaction and responses of participants.

Although O’Neill happily engaged with dissenting interpretations after the drama, where was the space for this dissent within it? The participants’ poems indicate some difficulties with the seal wife’s portrayal, with stanzas such as,

- Belonging,
- Longing,
- Long,
- Lost,

offering complex responses, largely absent from the workshop. Without a reflective space, these emotive ideas remained in the margins of the workshop.

Inadequate reflection

Moving sequentially through the drama activities and deferring the analysis to the next day, participants had little time to recover from emotionally taxing activities or reflect upon the workshop. Reflection is a key distancing device (Eriksson, 2011), it ensures that discourses are interrogated and challenged, and it allows for the creation of new meaning. Heathcote argues that reflection is essential to making meaning and that “without the development of the power of reflection we have very little “(Heathcote, as cited in Edmiston, 1991, p. 5).

O’Neill’s decision to debrief the Patricks after hearing the seal wife’s thoughts spoken aloud, while leaving the seal wives in silence, excluded them and denied them a distanced place for reflection (Fletcher, 1995). Without this distancing,
female participants were left with the undiluted repercussions of the felt experience. Potentially, O’Neill intended to silence participants in these activities to cultivate greater empathy for the seal wife, though this was never explained.

Insufficient reflection may not only reduce opportunities for meaningful critique but also risk the unconscious replication of existing oppressions, as illustrated during the fishing village gossip activity. Driven by O’Neill’s suggestion that the “community is defined by schooling, religion, the fishing trade/a simplicity but also a harshness” (Muir, 1993, p. 11), many community voices were quick to condemn the seal wife. By repeating conservative and patriarchal views without reflecting upon them, they simply embodied existing prejudices. Instead of confronting the seal wife’s oppression and disputing it through this activity, they exemplified it (Cahill, 2014; Fletcher, 1995, p. 31).

The group’s final decision to refuse the seal wife back into the colony on the grounds she prioritised her vanity, associated with humans and deserted her family, was regarded by Fletcher as indicative of the workshop’s ideological agenda. Although the group made a collective decision, the “truth” guiding the seal colony was never problematized. This barred participants from engaging in a critical examination and an opportunity to reflect upon how female victims of violence may be doubly victimised (Fletcher, 1995). Failing to consider female objectification, her initial abduction and the cost of female emancipation, the seal wife is held responsible for her fate. Fletcher (1995) compares the seal wife’s position to the oppression of indigenous populations through colonisation. This adheres to the discourse that suggests that jailer’s judge captives according to their own laws and subsequently punish captives for failing to quietly, submit.

Drowning at the end of the poem Maighdean Mara (Heaney, 1972), the selkie’s “death is branded by Fletcher as the fate of a woman who bucks the patriarchal system” (Fletcher, 1995, p. 34). A bleak finale to the drama, female subjugation remains unexamined and implicitly reinforced. Dunn (1996) agrees that it warranted further reflection and cites the time limitations and teaching
objectives as likely reasons for its absence. In her own practice, Dunn (1996) describes following each Seal Wife activity with greater reflective discussion. Perhaps, as a result, participants in her classes identified the seal wife as disempowered but valued the drama as an opportunity to examine it.

Reflection is significant for generating and acknowledging shifts in participants’ understanding (Gallagher, 2007; O’Toole & Dunn 2002). O’Neill (1998) and Heathcote (1995) agree that building the reflective and contemplative capacities of participants is crucial for making meaning and achieving a sense of alternative possibilities. Although Dunn (1996) suggests that drama should transform the position of the oppressed, it appears that by repeating activities, which marginalise and deprive women of agency, drama may contribute to this oppression rather than contest it.

Fletcher’s adverse response to the workshop reveals the pitfalls of insufficient reflection and drama’s potential for unintended harm. While I disagree with Fletcher’s assessment of the drama as intentionally marginalising feminist perspectives, its failure to confront the dominant ideology rendered the workshop deeply problematic. The Seal Wife workshop does little to engage participants in a deconstruction of the dominant ideology, and though it explores significant human topics, it never challenges the structure that enabled it. This lack of critical space, either within the drama or beyond it, leaves many of these issues unresolved.

While a noteworthy one-off event, I identified several aspects of this workshop, which struck me as significant in terms of drama’s capacity as a critical art form. These emerged through a lengthy examination of the data in combination with a reconsideration of relevant literature. These include the drama’s intention, power, the institutional and ideological influences upon the drama and its artistic elements. In this final section, I review the potential limitations and opportunities of these aspects in relation to critical pedagogy praxis and suggest relevant provocations for case study B.
Provocations

In *The Seal Wife*, the competing obligations of the workshop as an instructional class and an immersive participant experience guaranteed compromise. Accountable to the monograph publication and participant expectations, O’Neill focused upon providing an extended piece of work at “the participants’ own level” (O’Neill 2003, as cited in P. Taylor, 1995, p. 12). While this potentially weakened its position as a demonstration of exemplary praxis, the negotiation of multiple agendas is typical of a process drama (Balfour, 2009). In schools, process drama is frequently subject to curriculum objectives, requiring facilitators to negotiate between a commitment to the participants and the institution’s objectives.

In our accountability-driven educational environment, curriculum objectives dominate the schooling paradigm (Crawshaw, 2015). As Apple (1979, pp. 63-64) proposes, schooling can preserve the inequalities, favour the governing population and validate knowledge through curriculum. Jostling for legitimacy, the talents, interests and abilities of individuals grapple upon an uneven dance floor with the values, subjects, skills, and attributes deemed valuable by the governing population (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 4). When working alongside a process drama, curriculum is guaranteed supremacy by virtue of its location in schools. I propose that teachers, aiming to engage in authentic dialogue with students, will always struggle while subject to a curriculum. If process drama can abandon the school agenda, it might pursue genuine questions through drama and engage in critical discourse free from the tyranny of objectives-focused thinking (O’Connor, Miller, & Stinson, 2016).

In an attempt to circumvent the hierarchical relations of power, teachers work collaboratively with students and eschew their institutional power, through teacher-in-role (Aitken, 2009). Repositioned alongside the students in a role of mutual authority, this device aims to neutralise the hierarchy of power within the classroom. However, as Ellsworth (1989) warns, the institutional power of
the teacher endures no matter how hard we try to engage in collaborative and equitable practices. Long-standing habits of power are unlikely to evaporate simply by a shift into role.

Despite inviting participation and advocating for participant authority, O'Neill’s status as a drama education guru ensured that inequitable power dynamics permeated the workshop. Given this environment, it is unlikely that authentic dialogue as advocated by Freire is possible. In addition, the hierarchical power structures represented by the roles of folk-dance organiser, classroom teacher and seal colony leader reinforced a notion of leadership synonymous with authority. Participants may have been empowered within the drama, but the position of power itself went unquestioned.

Whether we consciously know it or not, the relations of power constantly mediate social interactions. Exemplified by an oppressive government regime or the Instagram of a Kardashian, power informs, censures and gives structure to the worlds we inhabit. Potentially, the ideology surrounding us is a case of better the devil you know, and without it, society would fall into chaos.

I think that human beings adapt and manipulate social interactions to resemble their existing understandings and make them make sense. I find that frequently when I try to share authority with students their eyes flash with fear and they initially struggle. Structures provide not only limitations but also a comforting sense of certainty. If drama gifts participants a new world, they are likely to replicate familiar structures to guarantee a sense of safety and avoid discomfort. I suggest that it is the transparent machinations of drama, rather than its realism, that renders it valuable to critical pedagogy. Oscillating between roles of fictional authority and real oppression, participants can access the crack in between, and in this liminal space realise critical pedagogy.
Hope/Discord

Hope is the fuel for imagining the world better (O’Connor, 2015). As a finite story, which spent little time contemplating the seal wife as a subject, *The Seal Wife* failed to provide a space for hope or transformation. The workshop focused largely on the impacts on the seal wife’s family but did not offer many opportunities to explore rework or play with the seal wife’s fate. However, as the workshop progressed, participants appeared to gain confidence, challenging O’Neill’s authority, and playfully misbehaving. Actions such as attaching silly names to the folk dances and refusing suggested activities on day 2 denote an increasing sense that the participants could disrupt. O’Neill’s comment following a group debate that “now we’re cooking with gas” (Muir, 1993, p. 34) indicates her enthusiasm for this energy.

Whether deliberately sought by O’Neill or a happy accident, this dissent does suggest participants felt hopeful about making change. Giroux validates the place of educated hope within the critical paradigm, not as fatalistic bemoaning or wishful thinking but as an integral ingredient to possibility thinking (Giroux, 2010). While I suspect Fletcher’s rebellion was an unintended consequence, it hints towards the elements necessary for critical engagement.

Reflection/Action

Reflection allows participants to distance themselves from the affective aesthetic of the drama and identify its meaning on both a personal and social level. Inadequate reflection seems to be one of the major causes of the confusion and dissatisfaction with the workshop. Although the poetry and letter writing enabled participants to reflect privately, the lack of substantive public reflection potentially muted responses and stifled the negotiation of a shared narrative. Despite the facilitator’s intention for drama as a collaborative art form, the opportunity for responses remained private and informed chiefly by the individual’s unique combination of experiences and understandings (Greene, 2007c). Failing to negotiate ideas publicly lessens drama’s capacity to be critical,
because it discounts understandings of the world as socially mediated.

As Bolton (1996) advocates reflection occurs in and through drama, operating as theory in action. In order to engage in the drama, participants must reflect in action and dialogue for meaning both individually and communally (Edmiston, 1991). Likely viewed as an assessment by participants, reflections immediately following the drama will be subject to the surrounding preconceptions. If summative reflective discussions are equated with learning, there is risk of privileging what participants say over what they do, resulting in a practice that contradicts the efficacy of drama as an embodied art form and reinforcing language as the supreme creator and conduit of knowledge.

**Aesthetics/Dramatic Irony**

This discussion considers the influence and impact of the aesthetic in the workshop and process drama. I propose that the aesthetic can spark greater personal resonance and invite ambiguities. Despite the well-documented battle between artistry and pedagogy in drama education, the two are not mutually exclusive (Abbs, 1994; Bolton, 2007; Hornbrook, 1998b). Applying artistry in a process drama enables participants to harness the value of the arts for encapsulating ideas and stimulating thought.

O’Neill argues that drama transports participants beyond themselves to another plane, upon which they may engage in a social “liberating act of imagination” (O’Neill, 1985, p. 159). Aesthetics can shift an experience out of the logical and explainable into something ephemeral and ambiguous. Meaning is made through the self, in interaction with others in a fictional, affective space in which the aesthetic maps the path of discovery. Our judgements of the aesthetic remain ideologically determined and yet, as an aesthetic process that transcends reasoned analysis, it might offer something more than rational logic alone.

O’Neill’s chose tone, language and actions to create “dramatic” tension in the workshop (P. Taylor, 1995). Through the inclusion of art forms such as poetry or
music, O’Neill focused participants’ attention and heightened the significance of particular moments. The artistry of the facilitator, as in all teaching, is to be responsive to the participants and the learning. Perhaps O’Neill employed this artistry deliberately to encourage the emerging debate amongst the participants.

In/Conclusions

O’Neill states that process drama should develop “insight and understanding about the world we live in” (P. Taylor & Warner, 2006, p. 36), signalling a focus on revealing rather than reconstructing the world. Recognising the ideologically determined world lays a foundation for engaging with critical pedagogy but falls short of being an enactment of the approach.

What constitutes good drama is culturally determined, ideologically specific and contains predetermined notions of beauty or skill (Geertz, 1976). O’Neill considers the parallel aims of process drama as developing drama skills and exploring complex situations. This potentially restricts it as an enactment of critical pedagogy, because in reproducing drama skills, it adheres to a prescribed paradigm. I suggest that while we rely upon mediums of communication such as language or dramatic forms to make meaning, we will continue to disseminate the dominant ideology through our practice. Learning goals compromise imaginative freedoms and replicate ideals of knowledge and suitable surrounding discourses. Perhaps this is where the emphasis on process rather than performance is key to drama as a form of critical praxis, as participants engage to make meaning for themselves rather than share meaning with others.

As an exemplar of process drama, The Seal Wife workshop demonstrates a number of conventions but lacks a malleable pre-text and spaces for hope and reflection. It appeared to maintain its fidelity to set intentions, and the role of the facilitator was problematic. However, it also welcomed the place of the body in the creation and production of meaning. While the pedagogical aim of the workshop compromised the workshop, the controversy surrounding it indicates its potential as a site for challenging dominant views, raising questions and
inspiring critical responses. Over 25 years later, *The Seal Wife* drama is still worth talking about because of its capacity to raise new questions even now.

Drama can be a hopeful space, because it may alter whose voices we hear, and where and how, allowing participants to “not simply reflect reality but to rewrite it” (Nicholson, 1995, p. 36). Process drama operating as a site for transformation needs to challenge the dominant authority and provide spaces to create, dream and explore the possibilities of existing within another world (Prendergast, 2011).

Process drama as a partner for critical pedagogy must seek to ask questions rather than provide answers, resisting tidiness of finality and instead inviting participants to imagine debate and question the world they have experienced. This correlates with critical pedagogy’s description of the world as ever in a state of making and remaking. Final endings appeal to an oppressive ideology by preventing a space of hope and reinforcing an inevitability. Ambiguity allows for the complexity, instability and the playful collection of multiple voices. I suggest that process drama has the potential to enact critical pedagogy, because it deals in the unknown creative space and values different ways of knowing. As a pedagogy of social interaction, it is complex, which is both beneficial and problematic to its potential as an enactment for critical pedagogy.
Coda:

Attempting to locate a copy of the workshop transcript, I contacted several participants of the Melbourne workshop and communicated with Philip Taylor, Helen Fletcher, Cecily O’Neill, and others. Cecily O’Neill indicated her support for my renewed interested in *The Seal Wife*. She remembers the Melbourne workshop as an unusual teaching experience and vaguely recalls the controversy that surrounded it (O’Neill, Personal Communication 2013). Philip Taylor offered me his best wishes for my research but declined to comment any further.

I spoke with Helen Fletcher several times regarding the Melbourne workshop and its subsequent fallout. She recalled Philip Taylor encouraging her to submit her analyses to him, which she subsequently expanded into the infamous NJ article (Fletcher, 1995). Helen Fletcher passed away in 2017, after a short battle with cancer, and I hope this thesis will honour her bravery and willingness to speak out. I have not spoken with Julie Dunn, Jo O’Mara, or Jonothan Neelands about their experiences. I spoke to several other drama educators who recall the monograph, the workshop, and the environment of drama education at that time and provided a sense of the surrounding context. Janette Crowe, a workshop participant whose poem is included in the monograph, sent me a copy of the draft record of proceedings.
Hooks for the next fishing expedition
**Fishing it forward**

The preceding image reflects the thoughts emanating from this first case study, study A and directs the analysis and observations of case study B. Deliberately placing these as lightly sketched words upon the water, these responses remain cautious as I continue to wonder and explore what may lie beneath.

This study used thematic analysis to interrogate the data to learn, explore and generate a conceptual description of the phenomena (Silverman, 2011, p. 276). A lengthy reviewing of all documents created the initial themes, which I reflected upon and re-considered in relation to the documents over several cycles. All themes identified something significant about the generated data in relation to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and sought to capture the essential and repeated elements of the data (Ely, 1991). This reflects the dialogic and reflective nature of critical research, which continues to evolve, and views social order as historically situated, relative, socially constructed and changeable. This analysis began during the rewriting in role and extended through the data collection for case study B and beyond.

After grappling with the literature and evidence surrounding *The Seal Wife* workshop and forming tentative theories as to its potential relationship with critical pedagogy, I have struck upon some emerging themes. These elements—ambiguity, agency, hope, reflection, agency and aesthetics—are emerging as significant components in whether the drama offers space for critical pedagogy.

These emergent components provided initial stimulus material and guided my observations of the MOTE. This did not exclude additional themes from arising or limit my observation but guided my research to areas that seemed vital for casting a critical lens upon process drama. This next chapter reflects these underpinning ideas as they relate to the example of MOTE practice observed in case study B.
Chapter 7: Jumping the Shark

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion and analysis of the 6-week Mantle of the Expert (MOTE) unit at Plainview School, written through the innovative methodology of rewriting in role, as detailed earlier. This short introduction positions MOTE in context, gives a brief synopsis of the unit, and explains the staging of the analysis as a conference panel.

Developed by the classroom teacher and drama facilitator to complement the school’s environmental focus, the MOTE centred on designing a tank for an endangered shark. In the first 2 weeks, the facilitator “hooked” (Abbott, 2009; Bowell & Heap, 2013) the participants into the drama, established their roles as professional augmented reality designers and introduced the commission via a letter from the Ministry of Fisheries. Over the next few weeks, they engaged in various activities within the drama, to support their design project; these included: “visits to an aquarium,” “a visit from the Science division” and experiments with water quality and soil samples. At the end of the final week, the company presented their designs to the Ministry of Fisheries and then enjoyed a bit of rest and relaxation in “Wellington.”
Setting the stage

As detailed in the methodology, this chapter employs rewriting-in-role to structure and analyse the case study through the aesthetic tools of drama. This fictionalised conference panel, chaired by Michael O’Connor and featuring Bernard Garcia Jameson, Caitlin Anderson and Claire Coleman, centres on the potential of Mantle of the Expert as a transformative pedagogy. It examines 10 key extracts, as indicated by PowerPoint slides, which proceed each discussion. This analysis method enables me to play with assumptions, consider and contrast viewpoints, and invite the reader to engage in the dialogue as a fourth voice. I negotiate the themes generated by this debate in collaboration with those emanating from The Seal Wife analysis in the penultimate discussion chapter.
IDEARS 2015
International Drama in Education Alliance in Radical Spaces
Future Education Institute
Helsinki, Finland

Panel Discussion Transcript Wednesday 27th September 2015

MOTE: The Dumb Gulper

A critical discussion on a long-form piece of Mantle of the Expert praxis, presented as part of the IDEARS 2015 conference. The panel observed a series of lessons taught by an experienced Mantle of the Expert facilitator working with a teacher and her class. Through the dramatic inquiry form Mantle of the Expert, students were invited to work in role as designers and commissioned to design a tank for the endangered Dumb Gulper shark.

The panellists discuss 10 key extracts of the drama, supplemented by accompanying PowerPoint slides, and chaired by esteemed Professor Michael O'Connor. The panel included three academics with varying levels of expertise in Mantle of the Expert and Transformative Pedagogies: Professor Bernard Garcia, a leading scholar in critical pedagogy; Associate Professor Caitlin Anderson, a leading drama practitioner; and Claire Coleman an emerging researcher in critical drama praxis. The following is a transcript of the panel discussion; please note: APA academic references were added to the transcript for publication at the request of the panellists and to ensure academic transparency.

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Michael O'Connor:

Before we launch into the analysis and discussion, I would like to begin by introducing and welcoming our three panellists.

Sitting immediately to my left is Bernard Garcia Jameson. Professor Jameson is a public Professor of Education and founder of FreedomLearn.Org. For the past 30 years, Professor Jameson has played a central role in the development of critical pedagogy theory. A prolific author committed to the dissemination of radical education discourse, he has contributed to a wide range of journals, books, and digital discourses throughout the world. He is considered one of the foremost theorists in critical theory and social justice today.

Seated to Bernard’s left is Associate Professor Caitlin Anderson. Dr Anderson is an experienced academic and widely considered one of the field’s most experienced practitioners. Dr Anderson is an expert educator in theatre and drama and an innovative arts-based researcher, scholar, and published author. Caitlin has co-authored several Process Drama guides and is currently writing a new book of
resources. A familiar face for many of us, we are no less thrilled to see her once more.

Our third panellist is Claire Coleman. Miss Coleman is an emerging researcher who has worked in a variety of education institutions in pursuit of enhancing student learning experiences through drama and creative pedagogies. Miss Coleman has published several articles on the vitality of play within tertiary teaching. She is currently completing research on the devolution of critical theory in democratic schools.

We have 10 key extracts from the MOTE, which have been observed and considered by the panel prior to today’s session. The discussion will centre on each of these extracts, which I will briefly outline as we go and are punctuated by the PowerPoint slides above. Panellists are invited to present both prepared remarks and engage in direct dialogue with one another. Before we move onto the first of the 10 extracts, I will briefly outline how this MOTE was conceived, planned, and executed.

MOTE: The Dumb Gulper
Mantle of the Expert as transformative drama praxis.

Chair: Michael O'Connor
Panellists: Professor Bernard Garcia Jameson
Associate Professor Caitlin Anderson
Dr Claire Coleman

Outline of the Presentation and Analysis

- This discussion is based upon a long form Mantle of the Expert work, observed as part of the IDEARS Critical Network prior to this conference.
- These 10 selected moments were chosen for their relevance to the question of MOTE as a transformative pedagogy.
- A complete overview of the entire MOTE experience was provided to all panelists prior to the panel discussion.
- Finally we wish to thank Aaron, Lisa and all the students and teachers for sharing their practice with us.
Michael:

Bernard, would you like to open the comments on these first moments of the MOTE session.

Bernard:

Thank you, Michael yes. This apparently casual "put the agenda up" is contrasted by an inflection of voice and authoritative stance, recalling every well-meaning teacher depicted in U.S TV movies. The status and supremacy of the teacher verbally refuted while simultaneously reaffirmed via institutional signals. Whether in role within the fiction or not, the facilitator continued to sing from the same song sheet, albeit with a slightly different tune.

Caitlin:

Bernard, you have to appreciate that Aaron's move into role is purposefully subtle at this point. Great "acting" is unnecessary, he is still the teacher, participating alongside the students in an agentic role and employing what O'Neill terms as leader in role (O'Neill, 1995). Teacher-in-role is not a convenient disguise behind which the teacher may relinquish their own identity. It is an act of conscious presentation and negotiation, through which the power relationship between students and teachers may be negotiated and subverted (O'Neill, 1989, 1995).

Claire:

Caitlin, I agree, O'Neill isn't advocating for the teacher to take the authority, but rather to actively encourage participants to make the majority of decisions, while they obey the developing logic of the piece (O'Neill, 1995). The teacher-in-role, while not professional performance, is designed to provide clues for students to read. Students recognise and interpret these clues to learn more about the fictional world and actively occupy their positions within it. Teachers who attempt to manipulate the drama for their own ends, O'Neill warns, may incite a mutiny, amongst students, savvy to the rules of drama and find themselves forcibly ousted.
Bernard:

MOTE advocates romanticising teacher-in-role as a way to subvert and counter institutional power dynamics in the classroom. You contend that positioning the teacher in a role of lower status will compel students to take onus of the learning and renegotiate the teacher–student relationship. Well, that seems really simple, job done, critical pedagogy sorted!

Caitlin:

In terms of drama, teacher-in-role and working from within can challenge, model, support, raise tensions, and shape the experience. Through role, a teacher may shift participants into the imagined space, a space of transition and transformation in which the rules of the classroom are suspended. O'Neill (1989) draws parallels between the liminal servant and Heathcote’s description of the authentic teacher. She cites the key features of this technique and its parallels with McLaren’s own description of teacher as liminal servant (McLaren, 1988; O’Neill, 1989). As liminal servant, the teacher can challenge the constructed realities of the classroom, to disturb common assumptions and attack the familiar (P. Taylor & Warner, 2006). This parallels with Brecht’s alienation effect, which uses art to problematize and complexify the known world. O’Neill stresses that disturbing commonplace perceptions is central to an understanding of Heathcote’s work as “prismatic” (Bolton, 1986).

Bernard:

Invoking McLarens “liminal servant” is a lofty aspiration, which keenly attempts to marry the MOTE experience to critical pedagogy, and yet, I fear it is a faithless marriage. Liminal servants are transformative intellectuals, challenging the dominance of the rational paradigm and actively critiquing the logic of school life through oppositional discourse (McLaren, 1988). They recognise knowledge as a construction and the influence of social, historical context and power relations upon it.

Michael:

What about giving the students a sense of ownership over the fictional space by guiding the trainees around the company offices–doesn’t that seem in keeping with critical pedagogy?

Bernard:

Refreshing though it was to see students released from the spirit-crushing confines of their desks, even this movement was bound by invisible ideological shackles. the early comment, “I like the quiet way you are moving through the space” serving as an unwarranted reminder, that a good child/employee is docile, reticent and obedient. Even the simple act of walking must be policed by the “appropriate” codes of conduct as dictated by the teacher/secretary/joker/authority.

Whether understood as a teacher’s instruction, or an assistant’s request, the implication of “rule-following” remains the same. Both physically and relationally, the space, though apparently different, is fundamentally the same. Whether identified here as students or employees, participants are encouraged to negate their physical impulses and submit to the neoliberal edict to dehumanise its population and
domesticate them into complacent units of labour. “A child's place of work is the school” (LeCompte, 1978, p. 35). As Bowles and Gintis (1976) noted almost 50 years ago, schools actively encourage traits including punctuality, obedience, perseverance and dependability, and it would appear little has changed. Currently, the creation of good consumers is more valuable than good employees; however, the essential viewpoint remains. Schooling is designed to nurture skills and attitudes deemed essential for useful participation in society—the question is, useful to whom? Dominated by the ideology of neoliberalism, society remains dedicated to normalising the authority's position, as Kings of the Castle.

Claire:

Admittedly, as Anyon (2011) suggests, there is a high correlation between a student's school experiences and their preparation for the social reality of life. Mirroring the value systems of capitalism, current Western education models develop and reward behaviours suited to the workforce. However, even you must admit Bernard that designing their company office supports three of the central tenets of a critical pedagogy. Firstly, it values students' existing knowledge as contributors to their education (Freire, 2005); secondly, it realises their efforts tangibly, and finally it takes their needs, albeit as company members, as its starting point (Freire, 2007). Irrespective, students relished this opportunity to move about the room, share their designs with the “trainees,” and take ownership of the physical space. The question I am grappling with is what ideology is being reinforced in the fictional realm? Is it different, and if so, is this shifting of the ideology enough to align it with the principles of critical pedagogy?

Bernard:

It isn't different at all Claire! The students’ office designs were not of radical alternative workspaces: it appears students had a fairly good idea of what an office looks like and adhered to it. Students are not blank slates, untainted by ideology or the finely tuned mechanisms of the capitalist machine. Evidentially, many had a uniform idea about suitable work environments. How did this predisposition inform their design and where and how was space created for imaginative and alternative thinking? Where was the space for reflecting upon these designs and an acknowledgement of the powerful messages communicated via the configuration of the physical space? When drama draws from existing student knowledge, how are the preconceptions carried across from the real world to the “fictional” manifested or challenged? In this initial activity, the threads of neoliberal rationality have overrun the fictional world without question. My fear, within this relatively benign student task, is that it merely re-inscribed the established. Where is the place for critical reflection upon or within this new, old world?

Caitlin:

While valuable questions, students arrive at school with established views of the world, inevitably informing their engagement with the drama, and as Heathcote asserts, “We cannot live the lives we didn’t” (Heathcote, 1991).

Claire:

Yes, Caitlin you can't ask students to forget the ideological knowledge embedded by default, but rearranging the classroom here allows students to create anew and recognise that physical space is not fixed but may be altered. Similarly, they adjusted
easily enough to the shift in the relational space when the preservice teachers were cast as company trainees and they needed showing around. This role places the adults and children into parallel status positions and may contribute to an authentic dialogue as envisaged by Freire (1974). This relational and physical shift offers gentle but important steps towards naming the world “in order to change it” (Freire, 2005, p. 88).

Claire:

As you know Bernard, a dialectical understanding recognises schooling as site of both potential domination and liberation (McLaren, 2003). Schools are not sites of unproblematic skill delivery, but of complex social, structural, and personal interactions indivisible from the surrounding ideology. Admittedly, renegotiating the teacher–student construct within an established class is likely more challenging, but in either case, drama may still work to disrupt the status quo. Arguable is how successful this renegotiation might be, given the historical and institutional legacy of this relationship. Perhaps, however, even a slight shift in the perception of this relationship is enough to reveal the mechanisms of its construction: glimpsing the man behind the curtain and igniting a potential reimagining.

Bernard:

Gaining awareness of these ideological constraints may enable you to oppose them, but it won’t make you immune to them.

Caitlin:

Yes, but the reality is that working in schools requires an adherence to protocols, patterns and rules to enable them to function effectively; these inevitably communicate tacit understandings. As an educator working in this setting, it would be unrealistic to expect students to disregard the world they know so well and dive with reckless abandon into an unknown sea.

Claire:

I know what you are saying Bernard and MOTE is largely preoccupied with logical, outcome-driven endeavours, but it still encourages participants to ask questions and invites them into an alternate lived experience. To deny students or teachers the capability to challenge, imagine and question, simply by virtue of their current status, seems fatalistic. Hope manifests itself within the opportunity for change and is located within the bodies and interactions of young people. Potentially, this is enough to unsettle the hidden curriculum of obedience, uniformity, or dominant rational thought.

Michael:

Let’s pick up on that thread about unsettling the curriculum of obedience with the first obvious use of drama conventions.
**Extract 1b: Freeze frames in the office**

Next, participants are asked to stand next to the area they designed and create a freeze frame located in that area. These frozen images are performed for viewing and contemplation by the rest of the class/company. After a brief moment looking at all 5 together, Aaron moved towards James who was positioned as if shooting at someone (gun pointed at Aaron) and asked him quietly to change this position. He stands upright with his arms crossed instead.

and later….

**Extract 1c: Thought Tapping**

Aaron asks groups to relax their poses and then one by one, activates those images to life and through the technique of thought tapping to reveal what they (in role) are thinking or doing. In the storage room, Aaron thought taps individuals who respond, examples include; “I am a guard, I am a drunk person, I am filing.” In the next room, Aaron asks a student to activate the scenes and the group continue. When Aaron resumes activating students in the testing room, the responses responding to one another as if they are speaking lines of dialogue. In the next room the students replicate this pattern and a collective narrative starts to emerge; the group is co-operating to construct a story about their workplace.

**Bernard:**

If drama offers a transgressive space, in which the fiction protects participants from real life consequences, why was “gun pointing” rejected and the cherished “no penalty zone” ignored (Heathcote et al., 1984; O'Toole, 1992). MOTE, as a transformative pedagogy, wimps out! It conveniently ignores the ideology, embedded within its own fictional construct and structure. Students may be in charge, but only if it aligns with the teaching agenda. No attempt was made to incorporate this image into the narrative, and instead the teacher quickly expunged it. Despite the glaring complications a gunman would have caused, why not explore the idea? How does the rejection of this student’s offer demonstrate the honouring of student contribution? Reminded of classroom expectations, MOTE is an illusionary liberation.
Jagger said it best “Anarchy is the only slight glimmer of hope” (cited in Wiener, 1991, p. 66). Anarcho-syndicalist theory supports the notion of free association, whereby people cooperate organically and reject the interference of a mandated structure (DeLeon, 2006). The MOTE invites participants to associate, but this association is based on common objectives and organisational structure, both of which the MOTE engineers. As DeLeon (2008) suggests, anarchy has a great deal to offer critical theory, and by combining these two approaches we might reignite the conversation about radical practise in schools. What would happen if these ideological structures of behaviour and rational supremacy were challenged? If students were granted their autonomy, not only within the classroom but from the classroom itself, wouldn’t that be a position from which to be “naming the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 88)?

Caitlin:

Oh Bernard, let’s get real. As a public good, schools are responsible to parents, government, students, and community. While a theoretical argument exists for connecting the principles of critical pedagogy with an anarchistic pedagogy, how would this operate in practice? Teaching 30 students without a structured day, curriculum or clear set of learning objectives would be exhausting and chaotic. Drama invites participants to engage in a communal activity, but maintaining recognisable boundaries ensures it does not alarm participants. Educators have a responsibility to provide a safe teaching environment. At best, schools provide an interesting, educational, and enlivening place for young people; at worst, they simply keep them off the streets.

Bernard:

Operating deviously throughout schools, the hidden curriculum is often the site where prejudice and bias, fashioned by the dominant ideology, reveals itself in all its grotesque glory (McLaren, 2003). While naively referred to as the unintended outcomes of schooling (Valance, 1973 cited in Kentli, 2009), they are entrenched with such tyrannical tenacity that there can be little doubt of their thoughtful inclusion. Individual teachers, while perhaps not explicitly directed to these controlling processes, are no less subject to them.

Michael:

This is an area of intense negotiation, but you must agree that the students need to work towards some common understanding in order to build the drama.

Claire:

Of course, learning within drama is a collective endeavour; it requires social cooperation and a shared commitment to the fiction (Baldwin, 2012; O’Neill & Lambert, 1982). We all have to agree to pretend, agree to the rules of the game and support “the big lie” with the appropriate language and behaviour (O’Toole, 1992).

Bernard:

Well that definitely happened! They had fun, creating characters, responding to each other and making up dialogue, but while it might have been good drama, it wasn’t critical. Approving smiles and nods from the teacher gave these stories legitimacy and led to a dearth of similar linear narratives. Participants in this “allegedly”
exploratory drama form were primarily driven by teacher pleasing and the demands of public performance. The public nature of this activity, paired with the signals of praise for these "spontaneous" narratives, ensured that no risky behaviour occurred. In this moment, individual agency became collective compliance and equated citizenship with civil obedience: conformity rather than creativity apparently the required currency.

Caitlin:

Critiques of this sort have been made about process drama since the very beginning. Perhaps this is the way the students chose to conduct themselves, rather than an ideological mandate. Drama is valuable, precisely because it functions according to the same rules found in life; characters exist in their environment, operate in the present moment and make decisions based upon their knowledge and experiences (Heathcote et al., 1984). As Heathcote advocated, this similarity enables participants in the fiction to experience the feelings associated with their lives while remaining at a safe distance.

Bernard:

Heathcote’s acceptance of the rules of life as normative and unquestioned highlights for me the dangers that lurk within drama. What influences have determined the rules participants accept and incorporate into their lives? Rules of race, sexuality, class and other variances have become conflated with a populist narrative that subjugates them to hegemonic control. Her practice was notoriously sexist and ostensibly a product of her time, so you can hardly argue it’s infallible!

Caitlin:

Heathcote is referring to how people operate in respect to encountering events in their lives, rather than socially accepted patterns of behaviour. They can’t “know” any other life than their own.

Claire:

Yes, but Caitlin, I think what Bernard is saying is that ideology frames how we make sense of experiences and has a substantial influence. By rationalising our actions and identity for the approval or sanction of others, in all process drama and MOTE work what parts of our lives are deemed worthy and according to whose rules? Do the students decide to participate because they genuinely feel enabled to collaborate, or out of a sense of fun, habit, or duty? If participants have been coerced, then how can the creation of drama be an authentic dialogue? Do students have a genuine opportunity to create alternatives to narratives?

Michael:

A vital beginning but let’s move on now to one of the most essential parts of the MOTE process, introducing the commission and hooking in the participants. This is essential for capturing participant interest and instigating some practical tasks to explore through the drama. This problem-focused process drama form has obvious connections with Freire’s problem-posing model, which invites participants to draw upon their own knowledge and values their agency (Freire, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2010). Before we look at the next slide, would anyone like to comment on this commonality?
Caitlin:

Yes, thank you. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is realised through drama in Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, where audiences are encouraged to become active contributors in negotiating with problems presented to them through theatre (Freire, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2010; J. Thompson, 2000). Freire and Boal utilise the problems of individuals, whereas MOTE unifies the group, through the creation of a shared community and then presents that community with a problem.

Claire:

I think it has definite synergies, but it is hard to argue that they are entirely comparable. Whilst participants create and build belief in the design company, this act of construction is spurred by the curriculum and teacher motivations (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Unlike Freire and Boal’s model, MOTE provides an externally imposed problem. It is hard to evaluate how this might be related to individuals personally or meaningfully adopted, given the collaborative nature of MOTE.

Michael:

Okay, thanks. Let’s now consider the introduction of the commission; having established themselves as the ARS Company, the group holds a morning meeting at which the commission letter is introduced.

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**Extract 2a: ARS Morning meeting**

Aaron begins by identifying himself as the executive assistant to the CEO. This typical auxiliary role in the MOTE allows the facilitator to disseminate information and manage the MOTE. Acting as a conduit to the CEO of the company, rather than an authority, locates him in a collegial role with students.

Physically Aaron stands on the mezzanine floor behind the students and away from the whiteboard. This distinct location, separating him from the rest of the company who sit around the classroom tables.
Bernard:

Before we get into the commission content, I would like to comment on the oppressive deployment of physical space. Foucault (1980) recognises how space significantly influences social interactions, while Popen (2006) argues “changing the dominant structure of power requires unpacking the way in which space performs or acts on us” (p.?). Sovereignty of adult over child, teacher over student, and manager over employee is reiterated by the position of bodies and objects in space.

My initial impression is that despite the rhetoric, MOTE looks a lot like school. The teacher determines the focus, while students sit and wait for instructions. The authority speaks, others quietly listen. The school looks like the office and the office looks like school. Both establish the hierarchy as normal and socialise participants into the role of compliant worker. Corporate behaviours are uncritically accepted and participants brainwashed into the capitalist models of management.

Claire:

While MOTE may challenge the power imbalance of schooling through a dramatic representation, which reshuffles roles, it does little to address the mental policing Foucault calls “governmentality” (Foucault, 1991, p. 102). Countering the view of knowledge as power or knowledge as distinct from power, governmentality recognises knowledge and power as symbiotic (Lemke, 2002). Justified by its benefit to the wellbeing of its population, truths about the society and the self are produced and managed by political forces (Peters, 2009).

Bernard:

Riots make news but internalised social structures, designed to dominate, are far more pervasive than panopticons or police states (Popen, 2006). Becoming literate in a Freirean sense requires untangling the world, to reveal how power is exercised through a network of disguised controls that normalise thought. Dominance in our modern Western world depends not upon obvious mechanisms of control but obscured social structures, designed to subtly craft our social reality (Lemke, 2002).
Caitlin:

This is too fatalistic. If our thoughts and ideas are controlled and subject to an internalised governmentality, how can we possibly escape them? Boal sought to address this question, through theatre, employing abstract drama techniques to contest notions of common sense and resist simplistic binary oppositions. Boal seeks to find the spaces between that may offer a space of transitive learning “aesthetic spaces to conjure alternative images and possibilities for those of us who are in the world but not of it in many ways” (Popen, 2006, p. 125).

Claire:

But, simultaneously, Heathcote describes MOTE as functioning upon common sense values and requiring a specific and structured context. Despite the rhetoric of power sharing and collaboration, at this early stage MOTE is often business as usual. The facilitator, whilst attempting to resist their dominance through role, is always still in power and his agenda influences the classroom and its students (Souto-Manning, 2010). The paradox of Mantle of the Expert, perhaps, is its ability to dissolve obvious oppressive teacher–student relationships, while reinforcing other veiled forms of oppression.

Bernard:

Indeed. While MOTE invites increased dialogue, based upon my observations, it would be unreasonable to suggest that this dialogue is equal. Equity is an essential requirement of authentic dialogue (Giroux, 2007b; Giroux & McLaren, 1989). Regardless of the rhetoric, the adults possess the high ground and resources, while the students sit and wait. Defying the ambitions of MOTE as an inclusive, cooperative meeting of equals, the visual reality renders such bombast illusion.

Caitlin:

Striking a balance between the fiction of MOTE and the realities of the classroom will always be a challenge. At this stage, facilitators are still guiding the participants into the fictional world. A company meeting provides a recognisable task for gently shifting participants into the fictional world and parallels their previous educational experiences of sitting on the mat and listening to the teacher.

Claire:

A reasonable claim Caitlin, except an archetypal meeting structure so often adopted within MOTE structures potentially contradicts the rhetoric of MOTE for constructing the fictional world, through equitable negotiation and collaboration. Participants are asked to contribute to the organisation of the physical space, but not the social space.

Bernard:

At the start of this “meeting,” two boys resist the designated roles and continue to act as security guards. Standing brows furrowed and arms crossed, they thoroughly embody and commit to their chosen roles. Despite not causing a disturbance, the persistent teacher attention acutely implies their “wrongness.” These roles are not welcomed in the MOTE and the students’ reluctance to conform, censured.
Caitlin:

At this point, Bernard, students need to accept the commission in order to progress the drama and facilitate the big question regarding the dubious funding of the shark enclosure.

Bernard:

Oh, who cares, why sharks?? This doesn't seem a very strong thread! Why and how do the participants identify with a rare, endangered shark? Sharks are a species that engender both fear and fascination. The realities of the great white shark, regularly amplified by the fear mongering of mainstream media and celebrated through events such as Shark Week (Kissell, 2015). Dumb gulpers, however, are not great whites.

Why should the students care about deceiving a shark about its habitat, or the realities of its freedom? Is this shark meant to symbolise the students and their own incarceration within a “tank” of ideological structures? If so, how wonderfully ironic!!

Caitlin:

Animals and fantasy characters often provide the connection point for participants in a MOTE, who associate human traits with these characters. Viewing the sharks anthropomorphically enables the students to identify with them, whilst simultaneously providing a fictional distancing. While planning the MOTE, Aaron mentioned the value of the Eli story, for providing ARS with a comparable human example, believing that he could connect the participants to human dilemmas through the experience of the Dumb Gulper.

Bernard:

But, even if this is true and participants identify with the sharks, this activity drags on for almost an hour. An uneasy marriage of a curriculum-driven task and rhetoric of the liberal “entertainer” ensues. The learning objectives might as well have been emblazoned in neon above the lesson. How was this drama? Given a copy of the commission letter, participants proceed to decode it; returning to familiar teacher and student behaviour, students resort to colouring in the letter, while another comments, “this is just comprehension”.

Asked to “arm themselves with a pencil and highlighter,” colleagues were praised for their obedience. Sanctioned critical thinking skills are employed, to decode the letter, but no questions are asked about the structure of the company or who the letter invites or excludes through the complicated language, the legitimacy of the fictional context decided by mass compliance. There is nothing radical about “how it is” and everyone relaxes back into familiar territory.

Claire:

Interesting, if unsurprisingly, students unanimously cited these meetings as the least engaging aspect of the MOTE, perhaps indicating their feelings about “typical teacher tasks” (Students Interview 3).
Bernard:
Students and teachers were allegedly in role throughout this entire session, although it didn’t look very dramatic to me. While role might be seen as simply a repositioning, to me, it looks more like an airbrushing.

Claire:
Repositioning is an established concept within process drama and, can be, likened to a “joker” position, through which he oscillates in and out of role as necessary. Aligned with Abbot’s (1982) description of shadow or twilight role, the teacher follows the action of the drama to ensure the safety and well-being of the players (Abbot, 1982). Moore (2013) insists that twilight role pays attention to possibility, both physically and metaphorically, and as such “lacks concrete definition because even though it conveys something from its previous stage, it has not yet become the new one” (Bogart, 2007, p. 72 cited in Moore, 2013, p. 23).

Caitlin:
Heathcote designed this stance of shadow role to be purposefully bland and ambiguous to allow for more malleability early in the drama. In this position, Heathcote adopts a shift in attitude which may be almost imperceptible to the participants (Wagner, 1999), citing it as a useful stance to take while figuring out the necessary roles or when the inquiry needs greater leadership.

Claire:
Students offered numerous explanations of Aaron’s identity within the drama while acknowledging that “he was kind of like a teacher.” When asked in the final interview about Aaron’s role, students responded with:

Barry: he is like, pretty much he sort of like the boss a bit but not really, he is like a I co-kinda boss thing
Peter: He is like a secretary
Dhira: He leads the trainees
Miley: he is not the boss, but he sort of takes
Evan: he takes like the lead role

Student Interview Notes
Sustaining a character within the drama is always difficult, but even more so if you are attempting a shadow role. The issue of repositioning versus role illuminates a core aspect of the potential for process drama to enact critical pedagogy. Moving into a distinct fictional space where participants actively take on roles affords them the opportunity to “play” and explore: their identities not eradicated but relegated temporarily to the position of spectator/commentator. In this position, they can examine the world from a space of safety and liberation. Shifting between the two spaces allows participants to see the world from another perspective and recognise not only their position in the world but how it is constructed.
Caitlin:

This reminds me of Julie and Madonna’s recent article and certainly there is a notable concern, within the field, that practitioners who fail to value and employ artistry thoughtfully may inadvertently do more harm than good (Ackroyd, 2000; Dunn & Stinson, 2011). A solid understanding of role and its potential is vital to successful process drama praxis. In her early MOTE work, Heathcote worked explicitly in role to develop and heighten emotion in the drama, while moving out of role to provide distance for reflection upon the drama: this defined move in and out of role, perhaps ensuring that participants remained consciously in role and were deliberate, not only in their actions but the location of those actions. Later, Heathcote developed notions of role that were more malleable and cautioned against a reliance on theatricality, asserting that teachers may need to switch abruptly between fiction and reality with perhaps just a word or raise of the eyebrow (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

Claire:

MOTE is considered an accessible form of process drama for generalist teachers. However, this accessibility might be its chief limitation, for operating as a transformative pedagogy, teachers undertaking MOTE without an acute awareness of the use of aesthetics will perhaps unconsciously mimic their own behaviours, oblivious to the ideological stance they endorse. A significant concern raised by Sayers’ PhD thesis were the high number of MOTE teachers who knew little of Heathcote’s original work and lacked discernible drama expertise (Sayers, 2012). If teachers stay in their comfort zone and shun defined roles, they can avoid facing their own culpability in the dominant relations of power. Teachers repositioning rather than relinquishing their role will likely return to familiar patterns and resist the radical shift required by critical pedagogy.

Bernard:

Unequivocally, it is this sameness that potentially breeds complacency. The everyday setting of the MOTE—a design company—undermines the potential for critical praxis: the space of possibility overwhelmed by the vestiges of the familiar.

Caitlin:

While MOTE does not claim to represent an enactment of critical pedagogy, I admit it has tended towards the rhetoric of empowerment and transformation (Bolton, 1984; Raphael, 2014; Sayers, 2012). Brecht believed that to critically engage your audience, you had to provide the Verfremdungseffekt of Epic Theatre and “make the familiar strange” (Willett, 2001, p. 98), creating distance through framing and consciously reminding audiences of theatrical devices employed. He sought to ensure audiences resisted being immersed in the narrative, instead keeping them detached from the action as critical observers. Thus, framing provides an alienation effect through which participants can see the social structures acting upon them.

Claire:

Is MOTE making the familiar more familiar? If through overexposure, the fictional becomes the new real and participants lose themselves within it, isn’t the MOTE simply replacing one hegemonic construct with another? The corporate environment so often established by MOTEs can be unproblematically accepted, and neoliberal concepts of professionalism dominate. By favouring collective agreement, is the
value of dissent ignored? Will MOTE inadvertently educate participants into preferred sameness? Does MOTE (through its structures and curriculum alliances) privilege one idea of what that entails and conflate homogeny with democracy?

If we are interested in critical engagement, perhaps we need to resist the dominating shackles of talk and privilege the body. Drama, as Greene suggests, demands a “particular kind of interchange or transaction” between the “art form and a live human consciousness” (Greene, 2007c, p. 2), which, depending on the human involved, creates anew. Where participants moved distinctively through the space, sat somewhere else, and resisted through action—they countered the rhetoric with a new language. When reduced back to the familiar medium of talk, familiar patterns and behaviours dominated. When students are in control of their physical being, they have a chance at transformation, countering the dominant narrative of compliance through movement. Students free to move may recognise and then employ the body as a means of active dissent, giving authority to the space occupied and negotiated by the body. Whilst the cops have got into our heads, perhaps, they are not yet in our hearts.

Michael:

*Some thoughtful responses and big ideas to unpack. Before we take a short break, let’s consider one of the most interesting moments of the drama. In this extract, the group was asked to pack for a business trip to Wellington, once more affirming the fiction and progressing the narrative. Before the drama begins, however, Aaron praises the class’ behaviour and engagement so far. How do you think this preamble contributed to the participants’ work, and what effect might it have had?*

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**Extract 3a: Working in the drama**

Before moving into the drama today, Aaron complimented the class on their ability to be responsible and mature both in the fictional world and the real world of the classroom. Emphasising that “One of the things that makes this kind of drama work well, is when people who are taking part can find the difference between what feels funny or cool and what feels right or true, for the world we are making together” (Teacher Notes). He explained later that he did this, to encourage those who are still tending to make ‘offers’ that are comic or over-the-top, to reconsider on the “aptness” of that offer.

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Claire:

Well, this cautionary suggestion is an understandable attempt to curb the outlandish offerings a few students have made so far.
Bernard:

This interference revealed the hidden curriculum that has underpinned much of the practice so far. Students are encouraged to challenge power dynamics, within the context of MOTE, but not the power dynamics of the MOTE itself. Chastising participants for testing unusual ideas, going off-piste, and contradicting its own rhetoric of experimentation.

Absurd is the demand to stick to what is “true,” given the laughable fuzziness of this precondition—how are students supposed to know what is right or not? Knowledge is a construction, reflecting how the world has entered into the consciousness of each individual. Relying upon the feeling of what is “true” will merely reflect the narrow ideological logic they have encountered so far and uphold the status quo?

Caitlin:

I think you are being unfair Bernard; reducing what Aaron said to an argument over the fragility of the word “truth” within a postmodern context disregards the drama context. Heathcote’s response when asked if something is true is “not true like real but truthful because we can all agree to keep it feeling truthful” (Heathcote & O’Neill, 2014, p. 121). Participants need to create and commit to the fictional world, through making choices and decisions that will further the development of the drama. Drama needs this contract to progress, but it doesn’t have to be easy or unproblematic.

Michael:

Okay, I can see the parallels to the earlier discussion around the pervasive power of the teacher in spite of the use of fiction and role. Let’s shift now to the use of drama conventions to mime the packing of suitcases and subsequent conflict.

Extract 3b: Packing for the trip

During this task Aaron asked a few students to describe the packing. Responses included; “I’m taking my iPad because I might need to take notes”, “I’m taking this modelling clay (it was obviously heavy), so I can sculpt possible designs” and “I’m packing my scarf because we all know how windy it can be in Wellington” (Teacher Notes). At this point one boy asked, if the company was a high stakes operation with a big budget, he might carry a hand gun? Aaron asked him to “decide what feels right or true for the kind of company we are” - and later we saw him carefully packing his computer keyboard instead.

Bernard:

In light of the time limitations, the purpose of this activity eluded me. Perhaps attempting to liven things up, Peter suggested that as security, he needed to bring a handgun. Unsurprisingly, he was quickly asked to rethink this and while it may have
been an attempt to upset the teacher or relish in some juvenile gunplay, it would have added an element of tension that was sorely missing.

Caitlin:

It could have raised the tension dramatically and enabled these students with little life experience of gun violence to explore this concept within the safety of the drama (Dickison, 2010). Then again, it might have just allowed one student to literally hijack the drama.

Claire:

Significantly, Peter justified his suggestion by arguing that the company might be “a high stakes operation with a big budget” and secrets to protect (Teacher Notes). By creating a plausible reason for the gun, isn’t Peter affirming his commitment to the fiction? This could spark numerous possibilities as to why the company would need such extreme security measures and how that level of fear might influence employee behaviour. Raising the stakes of the planned trip and shifting the consciousness of participants, well beyond what it is likely to be. Drama is about the human condition and big picture–moral questions are surely at the centre of that? If the group does determine the gun to be an unwelcome addition to the narrative, isn’t that a decision the group could make together? Rebelling against the accepted norms of business conduct, Peter resists the MOTE agenda from within. Referring this decision back to the group and exploring the consequences of the gun could have established Peter as an active creator of the drama, asking him to rethink what is “right” or true

Bernard:

This student was demonised the next day when Lisa reminded the class of the incident and referred to Peter’s idea as “an option but not the right option” (Observation notes, Wednesday 14th August). Peter was praised for packing a keyboard instead of the gun, emphasising once more the undeterred campaign of compliance. What is the difference between how the teacher operates here and their modus operandi within the classroom space? The message of dominance and supremacy of existing hierarchies remains.

Caitlin:

That is over the top Bernard and resists the everyday needs of classroom teaching. I share your perspective that the “gun” opportunity could have been handled differently, but this is easy to say in hindsight. While the fictional space can offer a place of exploration, it exists within the real world of the classroom and as such the teacher must reconcile multiple considerations. Introducing a gun into the narrative, would have derailed the MOTE. The facilitator needed to progress the drama and this element would have derailed it. Furthermore, as a public professional, introducing guns, even fictional ones into a classroom, could panic the school and community, who see it as endorsing or inciting violence.

Claire:

Even so, the swift and unilateral decision against the gun does seem to counter the key “no penalty” aspect of a MOTE experience (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).
Caitlin:

Drama is an experimental space, but not a free-for-all, and actions within it cannot contradict that space. Taking a gun onto a plane is plausible but is deeply problematic in other ways.

Claire, you will remember the POW camp drama in which Heathcote productively brings guns into the drama. She encourages them to imagine their guns as the only thing between them and the Germans and honours their interest in the theme of war. Later, when one asks if they have “bazookas,” she resists this advanced weapon, not because it’s a gun but because it would negate the tension of the drama. Greater significance is gifted to this later, when Heathcote, as a German officer, demands the prisoners hand over these “standard rifles. Incorporated into the drama, the boy’s earlier request for a bazooka becomes a meaningful contribution and raised the tension for the outgunned prisoners of war (Smedley, 1971).

Claire:

Perhaps we might understand that participants in MOTE are agentic only within a prescribed set of circumstances. The social systems and structures of behaviour are not up for debate. Students may rearrange the deck chairs, but the Titanic still sinks.

Michael:

*On that final metaphorically apt note, let’s take a coffee break and regather in 15 minutes. Please be back on time at 10.30 and we will continue our voyage!*
Bernard:

MOTE seems to centre on meetings. What is being taught about the world via the insistence of all these meetings? That power likes to perform. Students sense that these tedious bureaucratic undertakings, do little to progress the action. Hierarchies and institutional power take centre-stage and the rhetoric of inclusion and transformation are swept aside in a tidal wave of tedious, repetitive talk.

The adherence to the meeting formula prevents critique or challenge to the operational design of the company. Implicit is the assumption that this is how companies should behave. Left unquestioned, the construct of “company” is treated as absolute. Far from inviting the creation of a new paradigm, it merely advocates one embedded within its own ideology, MOTE keenly enshrining the views of business pragmatism (McLaren, 2003).

A raft of mixed signals from the teacher and facilitator maintains a state of confusion between the fictional and real world—students don’t seem to know where they are! While another employee ostensibly runs the meeting, it is Aaron who asks all the questions. There is a predominance of teacher talk and employees behave like students, raising their hands to gain attention and yielding to authority.

Caitlin:

I see what you mean: the attitudes, and actions taken within the drama world, should be different to those outside it—this is the value of operating within the imagined space. Heathcote labels this shared understanding of the fiction as the “big lie” to which all participants subscribe (Heathcote et al., 1984). Operating within a space of play requires an active performance by the participants to establish that the behaviour within the drama is “not meant” (O’Toole, 1992, p. 25). Subsequently, decisions, ideas, and actions undertaken within the fictional framework should remain separate and clearly delineated to protect participants from risk.

Claire:

Without a conscious, committed decision by all participants to operate in the fictional world and consciously perform within that world, participants happily submit to the
teacher’s authority. Altering only superficial features within the drama, such as name or title, does little to transform ingrained behaviours or the alluring steps of the familiar dance.

**Bernard:**

Making cups of tea, sharing formal handshakes, and practically curtsying. Modern Western business models dominate without challenge, the “businessnification of the lifeworld”, (McLaren, 2005, p. 17) as subtle as a brick. No consideration is made of Maori protocols or valuing the multitude of other cultures represented within the room. The souls of indigenous and migrant cultures side-lined in favour of the apparently foregone conclusion of best of British!

**Claire**

In the final moments before Bruce’s visit, they rearrange chairs, make coffees, and get water. Participants did seem relieved and energised by this opportunity to be physical and resist the formality of company/classroom by doing.

**Bernard:**

Yes, but once again this is predominantly about running around after Bruce, giving him coffee, offering him the prime spot at the whiteboard and surrendering their power to him.

**Caitlin:**

Once he arrives, this dynamic is exacerbated by his portrayal which drifts uncomfortably into stereotype; he is, as I am sure you will point out Bernard, a tie-wearing white male, with a pocket full of pens. This danger is highlighted by Anderson (2012) and Cahill (2012), who warn drama participants working in role about the easy option of merely invoking stereotype.

Yet again, I think it is the lack of reflection or collaboration which undermines the efforts of empowerment. How does this “in role” work challenge these stereotypes, when the space to reflect, critique, and problematize this performance is notably absent?

**Bernard:**

Garry’s portrayal of Bruce and the participants’ responses to him emphasise the pervasiveness of capitalist agendas. As a professional expert, he is treated as the superior, acting as a poster boy for the neoliberal ethos of the knowledge economy. This is what successful looks like, no questions please!

*Bruce* is supposed to be a colleague and yet he quickly casts off this costume of collegiality and regains his authoritative position, his performance redrawing the barriers of status and reaffirming the hierarchal normality, upon which oppression relies. Placing another adult in role as adult expert alleviates the group from the discomfort of contradicting adulthood as a precursor to knowledge. Similarly, while students are enrolled as “experts,” the definition or image of expert is never addressed but a uniform concept easily accepted. In either world, submission to authority is the preferred mode of conduct and that authority remains: adult, white, and male.
Michael:

But Bruce doesn’t just transmit knowledge, he asks for their help and employs a central element of MOTE, placing the student in role as expert colleagues.

Bernard:

These clunky attempts to integrate curriculum are hopelessly inauthentic. Bruce’s plea “I need your help to pick out sounds that are natural ocean sounds” and reminders “to use their ears” are hardly evidence of collegial equilibrium.

Caitlin:

Drama does not always have to involve obvious theatriecs; working in role and accepting the fiction is drama. MOTE is clear about its curriculum aims, and while the task may lack authenticity in the real world, the important question is how valid is it within this context?

Bernard:

Okay, I admit it, the dumb gulper project provides a context for this activity, but its significance to the ARS designers is tenuous.

Claire:

The problem is that very quickly, the distinction between the real and fictional space is obscured. This thinly veiled task returns participants to the classroom mode and curriculum focus, the interaction between Bruce and the company mirroring the traditional paradigm and negating authentic collaboration. While operating within this apparently benign fiction, Bruce’s question, “do dolphin sounds belong in the natural world or are they interference?” invites students to jump through the appropriate hoop.

Curriculum as a tool of the educating state categorises and privileges content which supports the dominant ideologies (Anyon, 2011). It is the means through which schools organise the world to be received by students (Freire, 2005), fitting the student to the world as if the world is impermeable and natural. Dominant groups manipulate and dictate this vision of the world to ensure they dominate. The curriculum supplements the experience of schooling with learning content that supports, validates and maintains the status quo (Anyon, 2011). Schooling communicates not only selected curriculum content but regulates the mechanisms of society through the hidden curriculum. MOTE cannot offer a space in which to genuinely engage with philosophies of critical pedagogy when it accepts so many of these mechanisms without critique.

Michael:

Thanks, Claire, for that considered discussion of curriculum and its place within process drama work. I know this is negotiation that both applied theatre and drama educators struggle with. In the next selected extract, the participants tackle one of the problems posed by the MOTE and Bruce’s visit.
Caitlin:

In this moment, Barry created a community of his own, developed a separate team, and attempted to enact his own agency. His behaviour wasn’t disruptive and, in many ways, demonstrated the skills of ingenuity and creativity sought by the modern classroom and MOTE. He got the iPads out himself, showed initiative, and pursued his idea.

Bernard:

Aha! The noble requirement to honour the “truth” of the fiction, vanquished by the need to tick boxes. As you suggest, Caitlin, Barry showed wonderful initiative and creativity, so why was the action shut down and the group re-orientated back to the lesson? Well, we know why! Barry’s idea would have obliterated the curriculum- and assessment-friendly tasks. How does this mechanical adherence to curriculum recognise student agency or challenge the status quo?

Caitlin:

The MOTE is required to meet certain obligations, which undoubtedly restricted Aaron’s choices. Aaron drove the session by emphasising certain suggestions and led the MOTE in a definite direction. The teacher in role maintains the role of teacher. Worth considering is how many of those choices were the result of prior planning and institutional obligation and how many remained available to respond to the drama itself.

Claire:

Working as a whole class, Barry’s actions are potentially a management challenge. An obvious tension exists between the authenticity of the MOTE and the requirement of the curriculum. Where curriculum and student interest compete, what options do teachers have? How can we expect teachers, held accountable by the arbitrary assessments of neoliberal education, to stand up for authentic student interest?
Curriculum is political and working within it problematic, but perhaps not insurmountable if, as Giroux (1988) suggests, educators can operate as active and reflective practitioners.

Bernard:

In the meantime, the message in this MOTE persists: your interest and ingenuity are welcome, as long as it is still in service of the curriculum and sticking to the script … otherwise, give me your iPad!

Michael:

*Thanks, Bernard. I want to shift tack slightly now and look at the use of role with regards to the participants. Another key element of MOTE is often the capacity for inviting students to take on new positions of power and responsibility not afforded to them in real life. This MOTE planned purposefully for enrolling the participants as designers and attempted to be inclusive of the entire class.*

**Extract 6 : Boys**

Boys were an explicit behavioural and achievement focus for the MOTE, mirroring recent public concern with the purported decline in boys’ achievement. The initial ARS epitaph of skateboarding, hospital captive Eli, and selection of a “shark” related topic (Observation notes, July 23rd) designed to capture the boys’ interest.

Whilst most of the participants remain in blanket role, James is referred to by name and he is gifted with numerous responsibilities.

Bernard:

Well, of course, they need special plans … boys are difficult and respond homogeneously to themes of action and danger. Directing the drama specifically towards the management of boys adds yet another element of bias to a process allegedly dedicated to fair collaboration. This panic about boys’ achievement conveniently disregards contextual details such as a decline in trade jobs, impacts of class or ethnicity, the perceived feminisation of subjects and contradictory evidence regarding maths and science (Mendrick, 2013).

Caitlin:

The decision to manage the boys’ behaviour through role allows the drama to progress unimpeded, while giving them space to assert some level of independence. Admittedly, the gender stereotypes appear an unfortunate oversight; a MOTE is often
designed so that all participants are at least, initially, in the same role (Kana & Aitken, 2007). As designers who work for A.R.S., they have a shared kinship through their occupation. This role suggests a common set of attributes, provides implicit curriculum opportunities in the area of design, and offers a mutual goal. This blanket role (Bowell & Heap, 2013), binds the group together and aligns it with the collaborative focus expressed by critical pedagogy (McLaren, 2015).

Claire:

Overwhelmed by the tirade of media attention on boys’ underachievement, it is of little surprise that the boys garnered this additional focus. It does raise numerous questions, however; how does the catastrophizing of boys’ achievement influence other choices in the MOTE experience? Is privileging an assumed male topic going to be effective in capturing their interest? How might this disadvantage the girls? How do targeted outcomes influence the authenticity of the inquiry? What tacit understandings about behaviours are being communicated via this discriminatory management to boys about being boys?

Bernard:

Well, obviously, males are more important! They require special treatment, extra focus, and suitable exemplars to ensure they take up their appropriate societal role.

Claire:

Role models for men were plentiful, as despite numerous female participants, all the authority figures were male: the CEO of the company, visiting scientist, and the shark expert. Bruce exemplified this position, providing the prototype for acceptable masculinity: likeable, authoritative, rational and professional.

Furthermore, casting the bulk of the students as designers determined a vague norm identity, with no specific skills or experience. How did this lack of identity impact on the participants’ sense of autonomy and efficacy within the MOTE? Lumping them all together, as cogs in the corporate machine and further dehumanizing them. There were some notable exceptions: Lisa and Aaron were gifted explicit job titles, while disruptive boys were given distinct roles and responsibilities.

Claire:

But, if you continue to work in a blanket role, that only requires participants to behave like themselves; as O’Toole (1992) contends, isn’t there a danger they will merely revert to their typical behaviours outside of role? If the fictional identity mirrors their “real” identity, then surely it is just reinforcing the construct not challenging it. Existing habits of behaviour will resurface and overwhelm “role” if that role is undefined and barely distanced from their real selves.

Participants need the playful fictionalising element of drama to recognise their identity as socially constructed and capable of transformation. Ideology infiltrates consciousness, and shapes how we think; dialogue is required therefore not only between individuals, but also within them. Drama can offer a space to create an identity that operates deliberately beyond that ideology, while still remaining within it, positioned beyond the real word, to talk back.
In addition, what about the potential for a group think mentality? Within all this collaborative and collegial thinking is there space for dissent as a democratic principle? Does this carefully constructed sense of community preclude them from individual dissent?

Bernard:

Not everyone was welcomed into the blankie—what about James!

Identified earlier by Lisa as a boy with poor attendance and diagnosed (and medicated) learning difficulties, James is excluded from the community by his own special role. Why does the MOTE ostracise him further? What opportunity is he being offered to genuinely participate as part of the community?

Caitlin:

James is given this positive attention to help manage his behaviour and encourage his participation within the group. The MOTE requires the co-operation of the collective, which might mean mollifying him for the greater good; it can't possibly be a magic bullet for all.

Bernard:

These strategies remain grounded in marginalising discourses. Making him an executive assistant was an obvious attempt to address the child who must be managed. Regulating James' behaviour through special treatment reinforces his position as the “other,” immediately suppressing any potential alternate behaviours through role and repositioning him in exactly the same place. Paradoxically, given more responsibility, he has less; James doesn't find his own voice but is perhaps given one—to silence him.

Caitlin:

Being an actual teacher and managing a classroom might be more difficult than you think Bernard.

Michael:

*Considering how to manage students who present with behavioural or learning disabilities is often a tricky topic and as you acknowledge requires careful management. I think it is crucial to consider what student issues the facilitator is aware of and how they plan to mitigate those issues. Staying with thinking about the boys, let us look at the security officers, which were popular roles for a number of boys.*
### Extract 7: Security

Throughout the course of the MOTE, a group of boys kept trying to establish themselves as the company's security detail. They verify the use of the swipe cards, secure the doors and position themselves around the perimeter at meetings. They are deeply committed to this role and each week take time to perform this job.

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**Bernard:**

Once more, denying the visceral interests of students for failing to harmonise with the mythology of modern Western society, as peaceful and benign. Primary school teachers are likely nervous about pursuing any interest in guns for fear of zealous, parental repercussions.

**Claire:**

Bernard, be fair... Sensing they were restless and needed to move, Lisa did allow the boys to act as security on occasion. But asking these boys to check all the doors became something of a byword for being playful and wasn't really the business of the drama.

**Bernard:**

An interesting choice of words! How does swiftly rejecting the boys' interest in security equate with the student-centred rhetoric? Security guards typically possess physical power, which can be instrumental in enacting obvious and extreme oppression. Perhaps the boys are interested in exploring physical power? NO, this isn't the power that MOTE wants you to explore, sanitised power only please!!! Isn't experimenting with physical power and its responsibilities and consequences something they should explore?

**Caitlin:**

Student centred is not the same as student led but is an approach responsive to the needs of the students (Aitken, 2013).

**Claire:**

I think that what Bernard is trying to say is that once more it is the facilitator who determines that these suggestions of security and guns don't feel "true." Surely, only
taking actions within the drama that feel “true” according to the facilitator obscures the complexities of the social construct it claims to circumvent. After all, where does the concept true come from?

Society’s equation of masculinity with strength and aggression dominates Western cultures and is a likely interest for these boys (Giroux, 2012). Given the focus of MOTE to provide engaging, meaningful relevant experiences, failing to pursue this idea seems a missed opportunity. As Freire cautions, without a depth of understanding, oppression cycles will continue as people replicate the existing structures and mimic the only model of humanity they know (Freire & Freire, 2014). Possessing, welding and dealing with the consequences of power would invite an exchange of divergent ideas. Providing students with the capacity to make reflective decisions based upon experiences might enable them to deeply consider their own role as an accomplice to the dominant model.

**Bernard:**

Yes, isn’t it better that they explore power and dominance in drama than on the playground? Speaking of play, disregarding the security role as mere “fun,” negates the significance of somatic learning and contradicts the arguments given for drama as embodied knowledge, privileging, yet again, intellectual discourse over an affective embodied response!

**Claire:**

I hadn’t thought of that, but of course! Moving about as security acts as a physical challenge to the etiquette of the classroom and employs the body as a site of resistance. Reframed by the teacher as fulfilling a “need to move” defuses the body as a space of resistance and power.

Jump jam, Go-Noodle or toilet tag movement in schools is similarly devalued as merely fun or co-opted as part of the behaviourist reward system, deflecting any challenge and assuring that the classroom currency of academics dominates, and the real business of school continues.

**Michael:**

*I think we have hit upon some fascinating ideas, and while I don’t want to stop, it is time for another short break. I think you can agree: it is hard to tear ourselves away from such vibrant debates, but time marches on. Please take a 30-minute break to recharge and refuel. We will recommence at 1pm.*

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**Michael**

*We will begin this final discussion at the introduction of the major tension. In this lesson, Aaron revealed that the tanks were being commissioned by a shark oil manufacturer rather than the fisheries, who sought to breed Dumb Gulper sharks for their oil.*
Bernard:

This split a complex issue into a straight binary and happily applied an economically minded cost benefit analysis to the decision. Despite its guise as “drama,” it favoured an unquestioned rational process, which law courts would heartily approve of. Where is the drama here?

Caitlin:

When a character has a key decision to make, using a conscience alley can hold the moment still and allow the entire group to influence the decision (Baldwin, 2012). Standing in two lines offers the chance for debate and a consideration of alternative views. It is a well-established drama convention that I have used very successfully in my own practice.

Claire:

The students were highly reflective, engaged, and spoke as serious-minded, responsible human beings. Nevertheless, the physical positioning of this activity tends to suggest a binary opposition. The implication that the final decision is limited to two contrasting options further affirms an ideology insistent upon rational answers and tidy conclusions.

Bernard:

I don’t see any complex ethical dilemmas here … you can almost feel the warmth of John Key’s heart swelling with neoliberal pride as an entire classroom of students justify through an academic debate the relinquishing of their principles and endorse the murder of endangered sharks.

Claire:

Admittedly, it privileged rational thought and an adherence to the prized academic skills of debate and argument. Confident and eloquent English language speakers flourished, repeatedly raising their hands and voicing their ideas. The discourse of
the classroom, closing the gates, to students inexperienced in the parameters of white, middle-class, rational voice.

Regardless of the final decision, Lisa recalled this as a difficult decision and a lengthy debate. The next morning, Lisa distributed the design template without hesitation, the decision to finish the project apparently a forgone conclusion. The Company decided to voice their concerns to the boss about the ethics of the project client but continue with the design work and fulfill their obligation. Later, participants revealed that they were indifferent to the ethical implications of shark farming and primarily focused on preserving their reputation and securing the client.

**Caitlin:**

While the company did reach a fairly conventional business decision, it does not discount the sense of community and ownership they may have felt. The teacher, mindful of the need of the MOTE to continue with the proposed design planning, expedited the final decision, but that doesn’t invalidate the students’ meaningful negotiation of issues. Does it matter if the students made the final choice or just believe that they did? They recognized themselves as part of the decision-making community even if ultimately they did not actually make the final decision. The MOTE had prescribed curriculum goals and classroom restrictions. If the participants had elected to quit the project, where would the drama have gone then?

**Bernard:**

What a triumph! The neoliberal corporate ideology embedded within the MOTE annihilating any moral or ethical considerations, potential misgivings silenced by the bombastic chorus of the all-powerful company, its victory assured by the students’ “professionalism”, dutiful in their role of slavish subservience.

This sense of community co-opted them into their own oppression. Who cares, if you have the ethical high ground, if you ruin your professional (corporate) reputation? An understanding endorsed by the student’s earlier debate in which corporate ideals were internalized, and the language of rationality embraced. Valued neoliberal concepts of success and competition easily defeating economically worthless beliefs like ethics.

**Michael:**

*Thanks, Bernard. We are going to look now at the penultimate moment of the drama, where the company finally present their designs to NZ fisheries and pitch for the tender.*
Bernard:

Caitlin and Claire, I have been confused since the start of the MOTE, about the lack of delineation between the real world and the fictional world. My understanding of process drama is that the fictional space allows for participants to operate with one foot in the real world and one in the imagined world. During this MOTE, the two frames have continually merged, with no reflection or critical analysis being paid to either. This is problematic when associated with the suggestion of MOTE as a transformative, negotiated space. Ironically, and likely as a result of this uncertainty, authority figures are sought out by the students, like lighthouses in a storm.

Caitlin:

As facilitators of process drama, we often cite the capacity for engaging simultaneously within two worlds as a fundamental benefit of process drama. Process drama proffers this space of mataxis as a key ingredient to enabling considered reflection, which leads to the potential for change.

Bernard:

Warning the company that the client is “quite important and you aren’t to mess with them” (Observation Notes, Week 6). Encouraged to cower in the face of authority, this serves as a textbook example of the dehumanising effects of capitalism (Anyon, 2011). The authority and superiority of the client affirmed, the message to A.R.S. is BE AFRAID.

An implication reiterated through the tense dress rehearsals and selection of “stern voices” is that the power is firmly held by the fisheries and the fear of failure saturates the room. Despite the transformative hopes of MOTE, this familiar pattern of power relations continues well into the presentation.

Caitlin:

This fear seems somewhat justified, however, as the delegates pose several sticky questions to the company. They ask about budgets and technical specifications,
none of which the group contemplated in the drama. This strikes me as unusual; given the concept of ARS as a top-notch firm, it seems inexplicable these issues weren’t considered earlier.

**Bernard:**

Perhaps, Caitlin, Motes don’t want to admit their capitalist origins…. Why wasn’t money a factor before? Is it because “money” is a dirty word in MOTE or drama education? The capitalist ethic has been happily sutured into the structures and mechanisms of MOTEs, and yet is conspicuously missing from the design process. Would the preoccupation with money be too unseemly for the allegedly neutral and altruistic goals of education and curriculum?

**Michael:**

*Claire, you seem deep in thought–what’s your take on the company’s presentation?*

**Claire:**

This extract highlights for me a discrepancy between the social constructs that MOTE replicates and the emancipatory fiction it advocates. During the presentations, the class sits quietly and echoes customary classroom behaviour. The company explains in detail the significance of the tank design and how their knowledge of shark habits, food sources, etc., contributed to their designs. They explain the soundtrack, mathematics of the tank and facts about the shark, and while the client looks uncomfortable, at the mention of shark oil, none of the students address the controversy directly. They continue to comply as the employees of the big corporation, reducing tension to a stifled gasp and whisper.

As you note Caitlin, despite what would appear to be an obvious early consideration for a design company, the financial component of the design brief was conspicuously absent from the planning. Finally, I was again struck by the tacit reminder of corporate etiquette, as the company formally thank the delegates.

**Bernard:**

Is the purpose of MOTE to teach manners and respect, the metaphorical talisman of the ruling classes? These reiterations of societal norms, as unproblematic patterns to be replayed, seem to be in complete opposition to its reputed transformative aims. What are the participants really learning? Conformity is good, take your lumps with a smile, and don’t forget to say thank you, as corporate interests steal your soul.

**Michael:**

*Well, I think we are getting a real sense of the tensions of MOTE as it relates to critical pedagogy. In this final phrase, the company lets loose and has some fictional fun in Wellington.*
Caitlin:

Preparing to share these images with the group, the students rushed about excitedly figuring out what to do and positioning themselves accordingly. While providing a physical release for participants, any other purpose was unclear, although they certainly enjoyed it.

Bernard:

Two significant elements struck me, as I observed the final moments of the MOTE. First, that this “photo” activity granted participants a physical freedom, seldom seen in classrooms and, secondly, that within this ostensibly light-hearted morsel of frivolity, the dominant ideology of subservience and reverence to the system prevailed.

There was a real sense of joy and liberation. This energy and activity transgressed the traditional model of classrooms as spaces of quiet, disembodied learning. In the body, students were uncontrolled and uncontained. As they played and explored with things they wanted to do, questions, reflections and ideas arose physically, shifting away from rationalisation and endless talking to doing.

Caitlin:

It challenged the hierarchies of discourse that elevate words, and offered an alternative that recognises and values the body as a site of knowledge and world creation—a world beyond those restrained by the rational and described by Ellsworth as “the inaccessible-through-cognition-or awareness events of mind/brain and body” (2005, p. 16). Alongside the revelatory sense of joy offered by this task, some of the images suggested a resistance to the MOTE. Through physical actions, participants explored taboo topics and cast off the role of dutiful ARS employee.

Claire:

Potentially, it is these embodied and enacted moments that offer an accessible language for critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy needs to create its own formative
culture and language of revolution (Giroux, 2015a). Relying on words alone as a demonstration of knowledge and a pathway to critical engagement conflates dialogue with truth. Freire advocates for literacy and communication, but not necessarily words.

Words can be so reductive and serve to validate the dominant discourse that authorises and skilfully deploys them. Burbules and Berk (1999) share these views on the fetishisation of dialogue, while Giroux draws attention to the relationship between rationality and language (Giroux, 1981). Rationality serves the needs of a neoliberal ideology by disembodying understandings, through dialogue, reducing complex, social, affective, and enigmatic understandings down to words. It is only through the correct assemblage of vowels and consonants that society recognises and validate understandings.

**Michael:**

*As you note, it is not necessarily what people say but what they do, and that was really evident in the extract with the boys.*

**Claire:**

Yes, in amongst various freeze frame photos of photo bombing the Prime Minister, bargain hunting and bungee jumping, a group of boys created a freeze frame which appeared to show them mid-battle with guns in hand. When asked to caption the image, the meaning of their words, “fight for yourself, freedom for all” remained joyfully ambiguous.

**Caitlin:**

All of these photos were collaborative, physical, and energetic. The groups took this opportunity to create in drama, relishing in their own power as a being within the space. These images enabled the participants to physically occupy the space in a new way and confirmed drama as a mode of active learning.

**Bernard:**

James with his head stuck in the bars of the casino fence was by far the most developed narrative. Eagerly, he explained getting stuck, while attempting to sneak back into the casino, after being ejected for fighting. Magnificently challenging the scope of the MOTE and returning to the recurring security guard theme. He delighted in telling this story and resisted good behaviours, rules, and physical barriers to enact his own will: the corporate mandate of the MOTE fully rejected.

**Claire:**

It was remarkable how the noise and energy levels shot up and students revelled in this chance to play. Garnering the most excitement of the entire MOTE, students affirmed later that it was the highlight of the MOTE (Student Interview 3). This buzz only slightly tempered when they realised that these images would be part of the corporate record and viewed by Clive.

**Bernard:**
We can’t let them just play, have fun, and challenge the corporate dominance with this naughty behaviour. Quick, raise the stakes. Reframed from private imaginings to assessable goods, ready for consumption. Big brother is everywhere! Modern day oppression mechanisms, surveillance culture, and the abolition of privacy, happily injected into the narrative. The stakes are raised, and employees threatened with judgement both now and in the future. Referring to the Orwellian Eye of Clive the boss, Aaron asks, “I wonder what he thinks of his employees when he sees the choices they have made”. These few lines, cautioning company members, about the consequences of their private behaviours, upon their professional lives.

Marrying itself to a growing comfort with the surveillance state and the destruction of privacy, this unproblematically conflates the private and personal lives of its participants, subtly inserting corporate ideology into everyday existence and supporting a Facebook culture, which stimulates a false sense of community and negates our rights or desire for an identity unencumbered by popular opinion and likes (Giroux, 2015b).

**Claire**

Participants engaged fully and sought autonomy through the creation of a variety of activities and photographs. Paralleling the “security guard” moments, this appears to have been gifted to participants by the facilitator as an opportunity to release tension and have fun.

**Caitlin:**

Using tableau is a typical drama technique, useful for expressing an idea through the body in a succinct way. It encourages clarity of thought as participants seek to tell a story physically and can allow for valuable reflection and discussion (Neelands & Goode, 1990). Students were initially given creative license and enjoyed being playful.

**Claire:**

When ideological constructs are allowed to fade into the fabric of the fictional world, it becomes mere reproduction. Applying the philosophies of critical pedagogy to all aspects of the dramatic encounter might splinter reality and reveal the cracks in the apparent logic of the normal world.

**Michael:**

*What a wonderful point to end the formal discussion on. I would like to thank my panellists for their candour and professionalism. I am sure you will agree this has been a fascinating discussion. We are not taking questions at this stage, as I think you will agree the panel has earned break but we will have a plenary response to the panel tomorrow, and I am sure they would be happy to talk to you later this evening at the book launch, wine, and cheese. Thanks again for your attention and engagement. Good afternoon.*
Conclusion

Through this chapter, I identified the parameters of the MOTE unit and considered it in relation to the principles of critical pedagogy. Presented as a panel discussion at a fictional conference, I staged this analysis through rewriting in role. These multiple voices playfully dance between and through competing, complementary and challenging viewpoints and expertise. The subsequent chapter explores themes generated through a reflective consideration of both case studies in relation to the potential of process drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy. It identifies and discusses the constraints and prospects of partnering critical pedagogy and process drama as suggested by the two cases. As exploratory research, while I provide no final answers, I present possibilities for educators seeking to engage in a critical process drama.
Chapter 8: Dancing A Rainbow of Ribbons
Introduction

Maypole dancing—the complex weaving of both children and ribbons into temporary patterns—continues the dance metaphor and provides a valuable allegory for this chapter. While analysing the data, I employed various highlighters to identify emerging themes and made a colourful mess. Conceptualised as an interwoven temporary pattern, these themes are separated only by the linearity of the text and singularity of the colour. This correlates with my growing scepticism of singular, detached concepts and behaviours and ensures the creation of a colourful plait rather than a “red thread” (Thomson, 2018).

Reliant upon the collaboration of multiple synchronised dancers, the start and the end are immaterial and indiscernible as dancers move over, under and around one another, to create multiple, collaborative patterns. As you read the following sectioned out ribbons of the rainbow, imagine them swirling together around the question and travelling various pathways. Founded upon reflections from both studies, these ribbons or themes are not exhaustive but reflect my current understanding for exploring the enactment of critical pedagogy through process drama.
Figure 2 Overview for critical process drama

The diagram above illustrates and evokes the aesthetic of the maypole dance: the colourful pattern created, and the graceful movements taken to tangle and untangle the rainbow. These six ribbons represent aspects of engaging in process drama that I believe require attention when working to enact critical pedagogy. Invited to inform, disrupt, problematize, deepen and create anew, these ribbons swirl around the central theme of the drama in varying configurations. This chapter explores each aspect and considers it in relation to the literature and its location within the two case studies. I detail possibilities for engaging in critical drama praxis and offer hopeful ideas for my continuing practice.

A….gency
A….esthetic
A….ction
A….mbiguity
A….gitation
H….ope
Agency: You can lead but follow my steps

A rat in a maze is free to go anywhere as long as he stays in the maze.

—Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale, 1985

Introduction

The rhetoric of transformation in drama education is at its most potent when advocating for drama’s capacity to grant its participants agency. Freire (2005) considers, participant agency an essential ingredient for engaging in authentic dialogue and critical pedagogy. This section considers agency, as understood by process drama and critical studies, and interrogates what aspects of the case studies inhibited or liberated this agency and what possibilities this suggests for a critical process drama.

The ability to enact and effect change, agency is a central concept to teaching for transformation and often identified as an outcome of engaging in process drama (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018). Central to both process drama and critical pedagogy, agency is not just about surviving within the world, as it exists but engaging with others in a democratic process, not to just respond to the world but also to create it (Giroux, 2011). Genuine agency cannot be gifted or withheld but is contextual, flexible, fluid and relational (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998).

Aitken identifies agency in O’Connor’s applied theatre work with Everyday Theatre as the moment in which participants recognise the rules of the game and assert their rights within it (Aitken, 2009). This concept of agency is tied to the parameters that define it and as experts within the drama, participants have agency to engage within the drama but not beyond it. Similarly, many practitioners regard the shift of responsibility for the narrative from teacher to student in a MOTE, as an example of student agency (Heathcote & Herbert, 2009). In these examples, however, agency is contingent on an ideological definition that privileges adults and rejects actions it does not recognise. I have identified three predominant constraints to genuine agency in the case studies. These are the prevalence and adherence to the hidden curriculum, the privileging of adult voice through the drama, and the dominance of the facilitator.
Barriers and Opportunities

Teacher-in-role is widely recognised as a mechanism for collaboration and eliciting student participation as experts and/or colleagues within the drama. In the Shark MOTE, Aaron sought help from the class, in deciphering the “complicated” language of the commission letter. Although designed to signal the transfer of ownership of the inquiry to students, the parameters for enjoying that agency, relied upon familiar educational objectives. Agency, it seemed, was dependant on literacy. Another pathway to gaining agency within the drama required the replication of designated appropriate adult behaviours. As Bruce Garry modelled agency as the province of rational, educated, well mannered, white males who serve the company interests. One possible reading of this denies physical or emotional responses, and equates democratic participation with agreement.

This preoccupation with mimicking adult behaviours reveals the veiled oppression of adultism, largely overlooked in schools and society. Adultism is the favouring of adults over children, which denies their experiences and humanity, in favour of indoctrinating them into the “adult world” (John Bell, 2000). This prejudice ensures that children’s responses are discounted, and schools can ignore the child before them while privileging the concept of adulthood they wish to cultivate. Supported by Piaget’s theories of child development, childhood is perceived only as a necessary pathway to destination adult (Williams, 2015). In this paradigm, children are classified as apprentice human beings and unproblematically subject to the authority of adults.

However, not all adult behaviours were encouraged, and participants who tried to engage in transgressive adult behaviours, such as getting drunk or arrested, were quickly chastised. Established as professional adults, the MOTE invited participants to engage only in the idealised behaviours of intelligent, thoughtful, and compliant adults. Students were not transformed but instead practised “how boring it is to be an adult” (Barry, Interview Notes). The MOTE actively encouraged students into adult-like behaviours and endorsed the superiority of those behaviours by using them as barometers for success. Students expressed
the understanding that MOTE was supposed to be “making us learn about being adults” (Interview 1). Correspondingly, O’Neill (Farmer, 2013) asserts that students are commonly positioned as adults within her drama work, precisely because it gives them a position of power. This practice is echoed in much of the literature (Aitken, 2013; Baldwin, 2012; Sayers, 2012) but fails to question how this reinforces the dominant position of adults and undermines children’s own responses. It changes the position of the players but not the game.

By contrast, the position of the facilitator restricted the agency of participants in The Seal Wife. The predetermined fate of the seal wife prevented participants from seeking agentic behaviour, and little space provided for exploring alternative paths. Predominantly dedicated to the responses of her family the drama left decisions regarding the seal wife unexamined. This stimulated a tense drama work but, as evidenced by some participant responses, a disputed amount of agency to determine the direction of the drama. Remaining predominantly outside the drama frame, O’Neill maintained her authority and moulded the direction of the workshop. As discussed, these restrictions limited agency within the drama and may have provoked rebellious acts of agency beyond it. Participants’ misbehaviour was apparent in both studies and despite the best laid plans, revealed glimpses of purloined agency. This section examines the mis/behaving of participants and attempts to take agency beyond the ideological bounds of the dramas themselves.

Within the MOTE, agency was bestowed on students through the blanket role of company designers, whose chief responsibility was the shark tank design. Several students, however, attempted to play alternative characters or contest the honourable paradigm of the company, by suggesting violent or illegal behaviour. A small group of boys resisted the assigned role and instead quietly and repeatedly played “security guards,” despite numerous attempts by the facilitator to dissuade them. Several others made suggestions such as taking a gun onto the plane, stealing another company’s designs, planning corporate terrorism and getting drunk in the storeroom. Although these moments were brief, they reveal the participants’ ability and willingness to seize their own
agency. Similarly, *The Seal Wife* participants’ refusal to engage with O’Neill’s suggestion of the psychologist role-play on the second day of the workshop hints at an increased sense of agency. In both cases, while the misbehaving was either averted or ignored and relatively low level, it persisted. Having considered the place of agency within these two case studies, I suggest that process drama seeking to enact critical pedagogy might foster genuine agency by validating children’s voices, enabling subversive play, and ensuring continual reflective practice.

**Possibilities**

Positioned as dependent, naïve and helpless not-yet adults, current educational models marginalise children and deny them their rights to citizenship (John Bell, 2000). Freire (1993), however, recognises children as human beings, capable of participating as active citizens within the world regardless of age. Recognised for their ability to be completely engrossed and holistically engaged, potentially, children are better equipped than adults to critically engage and imagine (Leafgren 2008). Children rely upon their sensed understandings to instinctively respond and experience the world with a quality that requires not only presence but also action (Eisner, 1991). Genuine collaboration in a critical process drama requires that all voices are equal and that assumptions of superiority are treated with suspicion. Critical drama educators need to respect, respond and invite a range of ideas from multiple and perhaps youthful foreign sources (Freire, 2005) to create and explore worlds they could never have imagined.

The agency, however, is in the action, and participants need space to play beyond authorised normative boundaries and establish their own worlds. Participants need to define their own agency and actively create and play with actions and choices that might not be popular. Although the drama needs to maintain its structural integrity and not drift into magic, the drama can have its boundaries interrogated and stretched. Without being an architect of the matrix, participants invited into the drama can only ever play the pre-existing game.

While the facilitator has an essential role to play in adding levels of complexity and critical questioning (Edmiston, 2003), they must collaborate with
participants in a space of authentic dialogue, not only to stimulate the actions within the narrative, but about the narrative itself. Facilitators dedicated to critical praxis must be self-reflexive and aware of their own limitations and biases. As demonstrated in these two cases, maintaining a balance between colleague and facilitator is difficult. One way to counteract the dominance of the facilitator might be through frequently alternating between the roles of facilitator and drama participant. This serves two purposes; it illuminates the constructed nature of the drama and the pliability of role, and provides space for exploring new perspectives on the drama work.

**Conclusion**

Agency sometimes occurred at moments in these case studies in spite of, rather than because of, the drama. These moments of agentic rebellion offer clues to creating a satisfying and lively piece of dance. A critical concept of agency is contextual rather than conditional, and responsive to the ebb and flow world surrounding it, whether real or imaginary. A critical process drama needs to conceive of agency that enables participants to hang on to hope, while asking tough questions and making choices that take them beyond the current game. For participants to gain authentic agency, they must recognise the break in the storm and chart a new course.
Aesthetic: Playing Pretend

Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable.

—Cesar Cruz, 1997

Introduction

The arts can cross boundaries, evoke emotions, alter thinking and arrest attention in powerful ways (Leavy, 2014). Concerned with feelings and artistry, the aesthetic appeals to the senses and encompasses a holistic study of the nature, creation, experience and relation of arts within the world (Greene, 2007a). A crucial element of drama, the aesthetic values multiple ways of knowing and honours the ephemeral nature of social interactions. Equally, the arts provide a medium for critically engaging with ideas and problematizing universal constructs. This section considers the function of the aesthetic in drama and its ability to incite critical understandings.

Process drama practitioners cultivate and value the aesthetic, in order to facilitate meaningful and evocative experiences (Cahill, 2018). Drama is an artistic endeavour that can arouse, communicate and provoke emotions and understandings (Bailin, 1993b; Neelands & Goode, 1990). As Dunn (2017) acknowledges, the aesthetic creates a specific form of knowing and experiencing that moves the drama out of the ordinary and enables participants to engage, through the brain, body and emotions (Ewing & ACER, 2010). The aesthetic made a significant impact upon both case studies, either for its notable presence or for absence, as I will now discuss.

Barriers and Opportunities

The Seal Wife workshop highlighted O’Neill’s teaching artistry and her ability to render affecting moments but offered minimal opportunities for participants to create. Participants had few artistic devices through which to distance themselves (Eriksson, 2011) and occupied their usual role through much of the drama. Episodes of drama were and chiefly employed naturalistic techniques of representation that remained faithful to the original narrative. Similarly, tasked
with clear curriculum objectives, the MOTE presented few aesthetically driven moments. It adhered to a linear narrative, cast participants in blanket roles and engaged in predominantly logical and realistic activities. Many of the activities resembled those of the typical classroom, and while teachers worked in role, these subtle performances minimised the aesthetic element and obscured these shifts. While its aesthetics were largely ancillary, in its moments of performance, the MOTE remained faithful to the dominant aesthetic of Western theatre. Participants were urged to employ drama skills, to create believable representations of real life, and were commended for following linear, narrative logic. As illustrated when the improvised speaking aloud of individual thoughts quickly coalesced into a linear narrative, this moment revealed the dominance of linear narrative aesthetic, its unproblematic acceptance by the group and discounted the ideological implications embedded within it.

Comparably, in The Seal Wife workshop, the moments of greatest significance to the participants were reliant upon deliberate theatricality, such as the abstract dream sequences or fragmented creation of the script. Defying easy explanation or logic, the dream sequences utilised abstract drama devices and operated outside the linear narrative. Although evocative and powerful, this activity, which notably stirred emotions and stimulated participants’ engagement, did not impact on a reimagining of the narrative. Equally, aesthetic devices employed in the MOTE, operated to enhance and embellish the narrative. When “travelling” to Wellington, for example, participants were invited to create freeze frames and share their feelings in role as they packed their belongings. Although participants enjoyed creating narratives around the trip, this activity did not advance the tension or invite critical thought. Despite the use of drama as an art form, these studies offered few opportunities for employing the aesthetic to make meaning. Essential to enacting critical pedagogy through drama is the capacity of the aesthetic to elevate consciousness beyond the reach of socially constructed thinking, being and doing.
Possibilities

The pretence of drama is a significant element of its potential for criticality. By liberating participants to be conscious of the fiction and the manipulations occurring within the drama world, they can experience the impact and effect of various choices. Through mataxis and reflection, they can compare these choices with their real-life options and consider making change. Drama challenges the parameters of ideological constraint through artistic inventiveness and employs imagination that “establishes the possible in excess of the real” (Butler, 2004, p. 248).

Enhancing the aesthetic aspect of process drama improves its capacity to be critical, by encouraging other forms of knowing and making sense. If we can engage beyond realism, we might avoid replication and counter the performative, carefully managed, superficial and purposeless (Cahill, 2012). The artistry and fantasy of the drama remain essential to shifting participants’ thinking and action beyond the status quo. Facilitators need to work to foster the imagination of participants to create and build fictions, based upon real understandings negotiated in new ways (Balfour, 2016).

The facilitator employs their theatrical skills not to stage a moment but to add productive and aesthetic tensions to the creation of the drama as it happens. The drama facilitator must possess an aesthetic sensibility in order to elevate the experience beyond words, activities, and simulations and infuse the process with artistry. Far from neutral mediators, drama facilitators are active agents within a creative process and must cautiously and critically reflect upon their own aesthetic heritage. Committed to a critical process drama, facilitators need to respond and reflect on their own role within the drama and create moments that can broaden and complicate participant experiences. In a critical process drama, the challenge for the facilitator is to unsettle participants from assumptions based upon existing narratives and enable the artistry to shift understandings in unknown and unknowable directions.
Conclusion

As discussed earlier, a natural alliance exists between the arts and critical pedagogy. Arts pedagogy provides participants with a broad range of tools and skills with which to perceive and create the world (Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011). The arts dwell in the imagination, a space of new realities and new possibilities, which challenges ideologies in action and creation. Natural allies, educators and artists, Giroux asserts, must co-operate to engage individuals in a pedagogy that can foster hopeful and energized citizens (Giroux & Artseverywhere., 2018). Praxis underpinned by critical pedagogy must view this work as in the public interest, deliberate in raising consciousness and unveiling structures of power and politics through a variety of means.
Action

Knowing is not enough: we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.

—Leonardo da Vinci

Introduction

Moments of physical activity in both dramas were key to animating the work, engaging participants and enabling a critical discourse to emerge. Students in the MOTE appeared to revel in transgressing their usual static classroom positions and took every opportunity to explore the space in new ways. Equally, the movement orientated Seal Wife dream sequence provided the most illuminating and heart-rending activity of the workshop. The rise in energy and sense of playfulness erupting from these moments suggests the vital importance of being physically active within the drama. As Shapiro argues, the body is the place from which "human actions and creativity emanate" (1998, p. 158); it needs to be involved.

In drama, the body acts as a site for knowing, which brings both being and matter into relation with one another to make meaning. This collision of memory and experience is, as Todres asserts, “where being and knowing meet” (Todres, 2007 Grady, 2013, p. 20). While early Western philosophy severed the symbiotic relationship between the mind and body in recent times, the body has bounced back (Damasio, 1994, cited in Vass & Deszpot, 2017). Drama educators recognise the body as a site for knowledge construction and consequently as a potential site of its deconstruction (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015). This section highlights the position and movement of the body in the two dramas and its relevance to enacting critical pedagogy. I consider the impediments to embodied knowing, moments of joyous physical liberation and possibilities for future practice. Recognising the body as integral to the process of knowing, this shift accepts knowledge as specific and contextually located.
Barriers and Opportunities

There are two dominant barriers related to applying physical action within a drama seeking to enact critical pedagogy, which both stem from the marginalisation of the body and affective or emotional knowledge.

As discussed earlier, education continues to privilege intellectual forms of knowledge and reason. Schools as sites of disembodied knowledge privilege the cerebral and positions students within the space as “no-bodies” (Shapiro, 1998, p. 156). Although The Seal Wife drama invited physical activity through its use of drama conventions, the subsequent discussions or writing about these experiences had greater significance and weight within the drama.

The hasty move to intellectualise these sensory experiences and return them to the safe confines of definition and explanation potentially countered their disruptive potential. Likewise, the MOTE echoed this focus, relying predominantly upon verbal debates, and reasoned discussions when making key decisions. Opportunities within the MOTE to be physical were incidental, rather than purposeful, and bodies remained largely still as participants sat, stood, talked, or listened. While movement was minimised within the dramas, participants did take advantage of moments to move, resist, and play.

These physical moments garnered the most enthusiasm from participants and provided openings in the dramas to challenge, explore, and innovate. Students in role as designers delighted in the fiction of making coffees, moving around the offices, and choosing their own seats. While tacitly managed, participants took obvious pleasure in playing in the space, as evidenced later, when they chose to get their heads stuck or go bungee jumping in “Wellington.” Equally, the use of movement in the dream sequences, to explore the character’s emotions, spurred the most vital responses and reactions from the participants. A sense lingers in the monograph transcript that this engaging sensory experience affected and infected participants on a transcendent level (Muir, 1993). In addition, participants in The Seal Wife expressed greater personal resonances through tangibly exploring alternative ways of being and doing in role. Strong reactions to the handholding game further highlight the impact of a physical interaction,
even when framed as a game and detached from the drama narrative. This suggests not only the significance of the body in action to enrich cognitive understanding but also to challenge it. When cautioned for their shoot-out pose during the freeze frame activity, the boys retitled it as a game of paintball but maintained their animated position with guns pointed. Notably, despite publicly deferring to the facilitator and his authority, they did not alter their physical stance.

**Possibilities**

The concept of the body as a space of knowing in action, is essential to critical pedagogy. There are two central ideas to consider; firstly the body remains the participants’ private domain and secondly that all attempts to interpret movement through language is inherently flawed. The visible body may be forcibly controlled, but the internal spirit/mind/body is never really known and remains potentially rebellious. Outward appearances can deceive, and attempts to claim knowledge of an individual, based upon the body or its movements, frustrated by homogenised language and interpreter bias. Words are mediated, ideologically encumbered, and culturally limited; I suggest that participants’ actions, reactions and their spontaneous physical expressions have the greatest emancipatory potential. Accordingly, the actions of the body in Western education settings remain, ironically, of both nominal public interest and severe anxiety. Although minimised as a site of knowledge production, it is regarded socially as a site of danger and must be controlled, covertly through social norms and self-surveillance (Foucault, 1991). Couched as social niceties, this pervasive assent to the status quo is internally policed; it is the cops in our head, rather than those on the street, that stop us from dancing down stairs rolling on floors or running onto the pitch.

Paradoxically, the eroded status of the body as a constructive force that enables it to operate as subversive space. Scott (1990) suggests that while yielding publicly to authority, oppressed peoples can exist in a duality of being, which is simultaneously subjugated and rebellious. This concept of a duality of being is useful in considering the performed behaviour of participants in the drama. In
the MOTE, several students rebelled peacefully against the imposed role of designer by quietly seizing moments to enact their preferred role. These acts did not blatantly threaten the status quo or register as a protest. While the majority self-governed and behaved according to expectation, these few, employed furtive mechanisms of dissent. Although through habitual patterns of movement the body operates as a site of social reproduction (Österlind, 2008), it may also be one of rebellion.

While processes of colonisation have dominated through the division of mind and body (Butterwick & Selman, 2012; Ellsworth, 1989), through the reunification of mind, body and spirit, drama can decolonise (Butterwick & Selman, 2012). Engaging in active embodied experiences reconceptualises the educational process as one of reflection in action and counters dominant ideology through the recognition and creation of alternative meaning through the participants themselves. In the drama world, participants purposefully position the body to generate and communicate meaning. I suggest that this capacity for embodied inquiry is essential to the possibility of enacting critical pedagogy and creating a counter narrative. Akin to dramatic irony, saying one thing while doing another enables the body to be a site of disruption rather than agreement. This enables multiple viewpoints to engage in an internal dialogic exchange, not in harmony but in debate.

**Conclusion**

Physical resistance in the body can destabilise a society reliant upon complacency and apathy to co-exist with polite niceties and embolden participants to take a critical stance upon the world around them. Enmeshed in the rational paradigm of Western political thought, critical pedagogy has submitted to the supremacy of the rational, and despite its poetic longings, subjugated alternative visions. As Giroux (2010) reminds us, “the theory and language that give daily life meaning and action, must also be constantly subject to critical reflection” (p. 339). As both a private and public space of alternative knowings, the body and its actions can offer tangible spaces to reflect, rebel and remake the world.
**Ambiguity**

Dance as though no one is watching

–Leigh & Clark, *Come from the heart*, 1987

**Introduction**

Small children explore space freely; they start and stop as they wish, delighting in movement and do not care to explain it to those around them. It is fun, it is their own, and that is enough. Unfortunately, the joy of uncertainty remains unwelcome in most social settings, including education, where answers are required and the unknown feared. This section details the oppressive role of certainty, endings, and linearity within the two cases and the opportunities created by their absence. Productive and provocative, this section claims the significance of ambiguity for drama work seeking to engage with critical pedagogy.

I consider ambiguity as welcome uncertainty: a resistance to endings, boundaries or linearity and a willingness instead to entice, include, and play (Eisner, 1997). Productive ambiguity evokes rather than denotes and invites a complexity over simplicity that resonates with critical pedagogy as active, evolving and contextually responsive (Delon, 2008). As a partner for critical pedagogy, ambiguity reflects the uncertainty of the world and “actively recognizes the possibility of alternative views and seeks them out” (Arrow, 1992, p. 47).

McLaren (2001) argues that ambiguity and impermanence are at the core of the basic human condition, which is in a continual state of becoming (2001). Drama as a relational form of social interaction engages continually in ambiguities, accepting that the received message may not resemble the intended one. Far from leaving the themes or developments of the drama to chance, the ambiguity suggested by this thesis is intentional. It resists easy binaries and invokes an uncertainty that creates space for various interpretations (Freebody, 2018). I suggest that an ambiguity of purpose and meaning is central to notions of a critical process drama. Opportunities to engage with ambiguity, in both form and meaning, were restricted in both case studies but not entirely absent; the next
section discusses the place of ambiguity in the two dramas.

**Barriers and Opportunities**

Presented as an opportunity to learn from an expert practitioner and create an associated resource, The Seal Wife workshop had specific outcomes to fulfil. Correspondingly, the Shark MOTE had a responsibility to the school to plan a series of lessons which adhered to curriculum objectives. Sutured into each session, the curriculum objectives informed the overall drama planning and the selection of activities. As identified by the students themselves, some activities within the drama, such as the soil testing or comprehension, were obviously curriculum driven. Provided with a deadline for the shark tank presentations, the MOTE adhered to a pragmatic, linear model. The fast-approaching deadline for the ARS presentation provided not only an obvious endpoint but the chief source of tension and replicated logical models of business and inquiry learning. Participants had to agree to the commission and their role within it and attempts to resist the established behaviours of the company were redirected.

Equally, while *The Seal Wife* workshop explored the impacts and emotions of the seal wife’s departure on other characters the known ending ensured that her story remained static. It too followed a linear path, which denied participants the opportunity to create histories and add complexity in favour of a satisfying conclusion. Participants imagined and created understandings for Patrick and the children but were unable to revise the seal wife’s history. In its final moments, the performance of Seamus Heaney’s poem and addition to O’Neill’s story template attempted to end the drama with a satisfying conclusion.

Obliged to meet the requirements of an authorised educational experience and consequently defer to an existing plan, both dramas arrived at a clear endpoint. While often delivered in process drama experience, I suggest that a nice tidy ending inhibits the participants’ capacity for creative and ongoing imaginings and questions. Participants who have engaged critically with complex ideas raised by the drama should struggle to find an ending they can all agree upon. If the experience is designed to trouble the thinking of its participants, a final consensus seems unnecessary and contradictory. Gifting participants with an
answer to the tension discounts their role as its creators and denies them the efficacy of their own imaginations.

However, O'Neill invited moments of ambiguity during the workshop through her use of drama conventions and her challenge to participants to be playful. Her insistence on arranging the lines of poetry written by participants at random ensured that a logical narrative was averted, and they created a deliberately jarring aesthetic (P. Taylor, 1995, p. 27). Similarly, her insistence that the dream sequences rely upon abstract movement and images ensured that the ambiguity remained. Despite the MOTE's fixed outcomes, occasional moments of ambiguity were also evident in the students' physical interactions. When creating frozen moments around the office, students demonstrated a sense of playfulness and defied expectations. They provided brief moments of unknowingness. These flashes of ambiguity produced moments of heightened aesthetic engagement and criticality.

**Possibilities**

Curriculum influences on content and objective compromise the capacity for critical pedagogy. Institutions governed by a structure of accountability need to meet objectives and consequently favour certainty over complexity. Additionally, the need for an ending applies a paradigm of performance to a process-orientated experience and requires participants to rationalise their engagement for external approval and appraisal. Contrary to the emancipatory discourse, this returns participants to a value-laden, ideologically saturated environment in which they must perform. The next section briefly summarises my proposal for the inclusion of ambiguities within a process drama seeking to enact critical pedagogy.

At odds with the dominant philosophy of schooling, critical education cannot comfortably co-exist in a land of fixed objectives. It acknowledges participants' diversity and engages them in a community of collaboration, which resists the comfort of easy, unanimous answers. Ambiguity heightens inclusion, by regarding all possibilities and negating the appraisal demands of neoliberal education, which rank, reject, and invalidate. A critical process drama must allow
for ambiguity, which values non-linear, playfulness, reflection in action, imagination and counters the linearity of technocratic rationality.

Adhering to an episodic structure, a critical process drama can shatter linear narratives and offer opportunities to replay and re-examine (Bannister, 2012; Holland & O’ Connor, 2004). Akin to Brecht, this technique can defamiliarise conventional concepts of reality, incite questions, and invite resistance through reflecting and knowing in action (Greene, 1993; Prentki, 2011; Schön, 1987). Reflection in action has kinetic and kinaesthetic potential to create a diversity of knowing that might circumvent dominant ideology and invite creative play.

Play encourages creativity and exploration through sensory experience and is the first instinct of children experimenting with their place in the world (Leafgren 2008). It poses a threat to hegemonic dominance by treasuring the essential elements of humanity devalued by the dominant neoliberal ideology (Kaufman, 1978). However, this playfulness needs to extend to the portrayal and exploration of ideas to avoid replicating the bounds of present social realities and engage in active disruption. I agree with Cahill’s (2012) critique of realism and the capacity of naturalistic play to incite change (Cahill, 2012). Participants operating in role while beholden to the concept of what a character would “really do” are restricted to either adhering to or rebelling against that established norm. She applies anti-naturalising conventions and aesthetic tools to purposefully structure for critical disruptions and provide spaces to dismantle (Cahill, 2018). As she explains, anthropomorphic games in which participants engage as objects or states force lateral thinking and relieve participants of having to perform the agreeable norm (Cahill, 2011). This deliberate move beyond the comfort zone offers no inevitabilities and unsettles participants into a space of ambiguity and opportunity.

Ubiquitous to the concept of education are the overriding concerns of finding the answer, developing the skill and making the grade. Widely accepted as the obvious goal of schooling, these objectives neglect the ideological paradigm that underpins them and reinforce their supremacy by replication (Etherton & Prentki, 2006). However, I suggest that education and its ongoing fondness for
answers is a direct consequence of a positivist epistemology designed to legitimate the dominant power. Within this paradigm, knowledge with certainty and privileges curriculum with strong disciplinary boundaries and seemingly stable facts, to enforce cultural imperialism (Bleazby, 2015). Through this careful curation of accepted knowledge, marginalised populations may be disregarded, disheartened and disenfranchised. This fidelity to determined outcomes ensures that schooling affirms the dominant culture, disguised as a foregone conclusion. Despite the contemporary rhetoric of the value of creativity, the quest for certainty and its supremacy remains, ensuring the dominant hegemony perpetuates its existence. Certainty facilitates failure, and if someone is right, then someone else is wrong. This isolates marginalised students even further and positions them as failures. These feelings of hopelessness are internalised and perpetuate a cycle of negative self-concept (Coleman, 2010). Outcomes mean you can fail, and that failure is extrinsically determined, whether you know it or not.

Despite the rhetoric, process drama often seeks an outcome or product from its participants. Facilitators may look for a change in the participants’ understanding or the acquisition of new knowledge as evidence that the process drama worked. Final reflections, student writing, or greater topic engagement are frequently cited as indicators of these objectives (Aitken; O’Connor & Dunmill, 2005; O’Toole & O’Mara, 2007). Comparably, critical pedagogy continues to adhere to rational intellectualism, and validate its theories through intellectual argument. This reliance upon the foundation of Western political thought and the supremacy of intellectual discourse restricts what can be said or imagined (Freire, 2005). I agree with Giroux’s call for a new critical language (Giroux, 2016) of new configurations and mechanisms that can operate beyond academia.

**Conclusion**

As detailed above, process drama enacting critical pedagogy must invite a shared productive ambiguity (Eisner, 1997), while ensuring that the drama or facilitator does not trick participants. If drama wishes to operate as a work of genuine
collaboration in accordance with critical pedagogy, then participants must be conscious of their position in the drama. The fictional and real spaces need to be distinct to ensure that participants make an active and informed choice to engage intellectually, in either. If participants cannot see the boundaries, they cannot consciously explore them or breach them. Mataxis provides sufficient ambiguity regarding the operational space of the drama and a liminality for criticality. As signalled in both case study A and B, where role is vague, participants default to familiar relations of power, quashing the potential for authentic dialogue and critical engagement. Critical drama should provide a rigorous, reflective and embodied experience willing to cross borders and generate personalised rather than unanimous meanings (Prentki, 2018).
Agitation

Ya got trouble, my friend, right here,
I say, trouble right here in River City

—Wilson, M, *The Music Man*, 1957

Introduction

I regard agitation as central to enacting critical pedagogy through drama, to disturb, arouse, unsettle, and churn up surface waters to see what lies beneath. A central element of drama, this nominated trouble or dramatic tension must confront participants’ current understandings and compel them to think, reconsider and act (Bundy, 2004; Haseman & O’Toole, 1986). As I often say to my students when they are planning a process drama work, the most important thing to remember is: Why should participants care? Drama must be about something and that something needs to matter. This section details the significance of agitation, its relation to critical pedagogy, and how it manifests itself within the dramatic context.

As a pedagogy of questioning, critical pedagogy thrives upon debate and the reconsideration of knowledge from multiple perspectives and contexts. Historically, critical scholars have typically found themselves in trouble for advocating for pedagogy as a political and moral practice (Arnett, 2002; Giroux, 2001; Giroux & Arseverywhere., 2018; Porfilio & Ford, 2015). Drama has similarly maintained its historical position as a source of critique and challenge to the status quo (Bresler, 2007). Similarly, all drama needs a tension or a conflict to motivate the action, engross the participants, as without it, drama flounders and morphs into simulation.

Tension propels the narrative and engages participants (Heathcote & O’Neill, 2014) while mundane quiet moments punctuate the action and provide essential reflective time. Tension operates not only to motivate characters into action but to invite participants to identify with them and their struggles. It needs to capture the participants’ interest and offer them something they can relate to and interpret for themselves. Heathcote’s (1977) insistence that drama requires
“the real tense situations of life” correlates with my own understandings and the critical underpinnings of critical pedagogy.

**Barriers and Opportunities**

While O’Neill added elements of tension to individual scenes, *The Seal Wife* pre-text failed to pose a problem, and instead dealt with the tensions created because of the seal wife’s departure. Participants were engaged as either a community of similar members or a community subject to an authority. The finite ending and marginalised position of the participants ensured that they had little opportunity to voice dissent. Moments of tension occurred within the drama but did not propel the process itself. Although omitted from the exploration, a distinct tension arose between participants regarding the direction of the workshop itself. Despite the intention and undoubted skill of the facilitators, the Shark MOTE similarly lacked meaningful tension. The ethical tension of shark oil farming superseded by the upcoming deadline and presence of competing design firm–Global Solutions–as the central causes of tension. Quantifiable and accountable to an unseen external body, these tensions reinforced the paradigm of the market and normalised the dominance of corporate interests. These interests were compounded by the creation of collective identity through the participants’ role as ARS designers.

Subject to the ideology of the company employee, individuals were dissuaded, and collective thinking was branded as a demonstration of professionalism (Leafgren, 2018). Previously socialised into a unified community through schooling, participants are likely to submit to this collective identity by force of habit and to avoid social isolation (Soloman, 2006). The creation of community through a common goal or shared identity is often a prerequisite for a successful process drama (Heathcote, 2010) and considered a valuable tool for building a pro-social common culture within schools (Neelands, 2009b). This experience of community tends to suggest that all the individuals agree and that the community is always positive. There is a danger that a focus upon unity will supersede anything else and prevent the active, critical citizenship required for democracy. High levels of surveillance and assessment in schools exacerbate this
and ensure that individuals unwittingly adapt to the appropriate behaviours of the institution (Fenwick, 2016). Compliance models of schooling consider transgressive students in need of fixing, while social media helps to dictate and disseminate society’s norms and standards. As Freitas (2107) argues, “to conform to the expectations of future employers, mentors and other people in power seems to require the appearance of perfection and a complete lack of opinion” (Freitas, 2017, p. 260). Essential to the ongoing hopes of an active democracy is a space in which individuals can freely disagree, challenge, explore, and voice their own understandings.

While moments of tension were rare, participant inquiries or refusals to comply troubled both case studies. This disruptive play contributes to the potential of process drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy. The Seal Wife folk dances described as jovial and amusingly titled “Flipper” and “Sealed with a Kiss” (Muir, 1993) imply some playful misbehaving. Equally, the images generated in the final MOTE activity notably depicted active, rowdy activities, such as jumping out of planes or photobombing the Prime Minister. While these moments existed on the periphery of the two dramas, they reveal the potential of drama to stimulate imagined disruptive behaviours.

**Possibilities**

As detailed earlier, The Seal Wife stirred up most of its tension through the handling of the workshop itself and subsequent responses to it. The significant controversy generated around Fletcher’s postfeminist critique of the workshop, further demonstrates drama’s capacity to agitate both cognitively and affectively. Troubled by the work, participants generated responses and debates that have extended well beyond the workshop itself. A drama that is sufficiently disruptive will continue to resonate and agitate participants, as they return to their lives to invite critical reflection and potentially transform their actions in the world.

Trouble is interesting and complex, and participants in both cases demonstrated a keen interest in thorny issues. In my own experience as both a drama participant and facilitator, there is something tangibly delicious about behaving badly in the drama and playing with trouble (Smedley, 1971). Instead of avoiding
difficult subjects, I suggest that a critical form of process drama might embrace and explore them. Education, which does not allow students to consider the multiple available viewpoints, options, and consequences, will do little to develop informed and capable citizens. Through enacting difficult behaviours and challenging beliefs through reflection, participants can prepare to make difficult decisions based on an embodied knowing and not a restricted telling.

**Conclusion**

Agitation is a vital factor for considering the development of a critical process drama and educational spaces as spaces of public critique (Apple, 1979; Giroux, 2006). At risk from the present supremacy of an oppressive accountability culture, the inextricable relationship between education and productive dissent is essential (Stitzlein & Rector-Aranda, 2016). Dissent holds power to account, ensures the generation of new knowledge, and is essential to the pursuit of genuine democracy (Denzin, 2009; Guilherme, 2006, p. 166). As a historic site of social critique and education, drama can invoke playful dissent in a safe space.

Playing with trouble can release participants from the confines of the everyday in order to identify the fallacies of the real world and, in the liminal space, create a new one. Frequent oscillation between the imagined and real world might invite participants to consider them in juxtaposition, lessening the authority of either world or instead inviting them to negotiate identity in the liminal middle space. Agitation can unveil reality, welcome creativity and demythologise certainty and aligns with Freire’s (2005) problem posing method of education. Informed by McLaren’s pedagogies of dissent, a critical process drama must not only battle with the status quo, it must actively seek to disrupt it (Moraes, 2003).
Hope

Utopia, for Freire, is a process of becoming driven by critical curiosity and radical hope toward a vision of a new way of being. (Webb, 2012)

Introduction

I embrace Giroux's (2002) concept of educated hope as dynamic, which acts not as a denial of reality, but in spite of it (2002). An experienced feeling, this concept of hope moves beyond the costuming of idealism and into the bones of individuals, sensory and profound. Process drama, as a form of social interaction, can engage this hope from within individuals, amongst groups and between the two. This dialectical understanding of hope acknowledges our capacity as educators to engage in praxis that is either hopeful or hopeless.

Narrowly identifying the concept of utopia as a precis blueprint for life has enabled the dominant hegemony to categorise them as entirely impossible (Levitas, 1990). This perspective justifies the dominance of the status quo and relegates utopia to the imagination (Levitas cited in Giroux, 2016). As a fictional interaction, drama resides in the imagination while remaining grounded in tangible personal and collective embodied experiences. In drama, the imagination becomes, as Appadurai (1996) contends “a form of negotiation between sites of agency (‘individuals’) and globally defined fields of possibility” (p. 31). The imagination can be both playful and critical, while mataxis enables a space in which both the real and imagined might co-exist to inform action with critical educated hope.

The capacity for hope relies upon connecting to sensory, imaginary, embodied, and playful knowledge that resides within the spirit. Honouring these elements might seize upon the essence of humanity to engage in a pedagogy of audacious hope (Leafgren 2008; O'Connor, 2015). As a product of necessity and an innovation against darkness, hope is paradoxically brought forth by injustice. Hope underpins the underlying motivations of any creative process, to illuminate, critique, or act in the pursuit of change. The following section explores the position of hope in the two dramas.
**Barriers and Opportunities**

*The Seal Wife* pre-text garnered criticism for its ending, in which the seal wife returned to the sea, with the subsequent workshop focus on the impact of her departure. Absent from much of the workshop, the seal wife cannot speak or counter her marginalisation as “other.” While the workshop considers alternative responses to her departure, her fate is decided and no space provided for a hopeful reimagining. By contrast, hope occurred differently in the MOTE. Located within the routine scenario of a company, the proposed moral dilemma of shark farming did not spur participants into radical action but maintained a pedestrian hope, focused upon winning the tender and upholding the company’s reputation.

Motivated by a resistance to the dominant model of the MOTE Company, hope manifested itself in the students’ acts of transgression. This hopeful opposition to the dominating narrative was enacted through the body and visibly challenged the structures of the company/classroom. Participants seized upon moments to play with hope and joy and disobeyed the implicit narrative, to transgress and reveal hope in action (Leafgren 2008). This chink in the armour, of ideology, exploited wherever possible.

**Possibilities**

Hope within process drama is essential but not magical, and the drama must remain accountable to the boundaries of its reality. Furnishing participants with magical solutions denies their agency and their opportunity to wrangle with complexity (Boal, 2002). Placed within the drama as expert, leader, or authority, participants may enjoy immediate agency but lack the motivation to work hopefully to gain that agency. As highlighted earlier, without substantive tension, participants are denied the opportunity to battle for their cause and generate personal hope. If, as Letivas (1990) argues, hope is being extradited from the real world into the imagination, then it cannot be easily accessed in the real world. As a result, drama which mirrors the real world will do so without hope. Drama that imitates the “real world” and invites participants to do “what scientists do” invites participants to take responsibility only for replication not transformation.
Drama pedagogy is more than acting it out and offers a hopeful space for the “possibility of what can be” (O’Grady & Smyth, 2017, p. 158).

In the imagination, learners can build on previous experiences in open and unpredictable ways (Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011) and as Greene (2007b) suggests it offers the “capacity to invent new realities, perhaps new worlds” (p. 1). As a holistic, individual and social art form welded to human experience, drama might provide a welcome enactment for the imagination (Norris, 2000; Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011). Imagination facilitates criticality by decentring participants, offering alternate paths and building a bridge between the possible and impossible (Freire, 2007). The bordered imagination available in process drama contributes to its criticality, by establishing bounded dialogic space that invokes creative responses. I suggest, however, that the two case studies suffered from a bordered imaginary space. The finality of The Seal Wife pre-text prevented participants from engaging in hopeful imaginings, while the school environment and objectives domesticated potential imaginings within the MOTE. The seal wife departed before the drama began, while the MOTE’s curriculum elements demanded a utilitarian rather than utopian focus.

**Conclusion**

Critical process drama must be sustained by hope that erupts in resistance (Freire & Freire, 2014); it is the impetus for the dance and fuels participants when their feet are tired and their muscles sore. Without hope, inequalities will remain and, in its absence, fatalism tempts us to reconcile ourselves to reality and perform the same old steps (Freire, 2005). I contend that audacious hope requires both the spark and the space. The spark is the tension, which instigates a hopeful response, whilst the space is the imagination that operates beyond the physical, institutional and ideological bounds of reality. The imaginary space as a site for hope supplies the expansive space for remaking the world, whilst the pre-text, tensions and framework of the specific drama provide the conditions for fostering critical hope. Hope needs a purpose, context and vision (Harvey, 2000), that stirs individuals to care, debate, battle and spark the revolution.
Conclusion

This discussion has identified several elements to consider when engaging in a process drama motivated by and infused with critical pedagogy. These elements are significant to the choreography of a critical process drama because they invite a reflective, flexible renewed engagement with the world. As a playful dance, a critical process drama does not attempt to realise an agenda beyond that of exploration and wonder. Akin to Brazilian dance form, capoeira, critical process drama is activism, art or both. The final chapter reflects upon the thesis and this analogy for a critical process drama as a dance through which to embody imagined futures.
Chapter 9: Reflections on the Dance Floor

Introduction–The Serendipity of Sea Life or the metaphor that swims?

Focused upon seals and sharks, the shared connection of the sea ensured that immediate resonances occurred between the two dramas, if not ideologically, then thematically. Unexpectedly, however, the two pre-texts selected by both dramas each provided an allegory for the debates and critiques raised by the research on dramas themselves. Cast out for failing to conform, challenging the patriarchy and attempting to take ownership of her own voice and body, Helen Fletcher’s story echoes the seal wife. Fletcher’s public critique of O’Neill’s workshop and her efforts to advocate for a feminist consideration of its themes caused a substantial controversy at the time. Shortly thereafter, Fletcher stopped writing and working as an academic and instead began working with students in pastoral care. Fletcher’s analysis, which critiques the marginalisation of women by the dominant paradigm, is as a feminist critique by an emerging female academic, arguably similarly marginalised.

An ironic resonance also exists within the MOTE work and its commission of convincing a Dumb Gulper Shark, through simulated reality, that it is swimming in the ocean. Poignantly, perhaps the MOTE experience replays and replicates dominant assumptions and imitates the real world. Designed to provide a scenario in which young people are empowered to direct their own learning, the MOTE does this and yet it does not. MOTE rhetoric champions the voices of students, whilst in practise, it inevitably because of school constraints falls short of such aspirations and perhaps, unwittingly, provides a simulation comparable to that of the shark tank.

In this final chapter, I outline how enacting a critical process drama might occur. I consider its implications for educational policy, research, and practice and offer tangible suggestions connected to recent literature. Finally, I extend upon the potential of the dance-fighting form, Capoeira, as a metaphor for a potential critical process drama and my own final hopes for development of truly critical
Reflection on the choreography

This thesis explored the potential for an interplay between the experiential drama form, process drama and the educational philosophy of critical pedagogy. The discourses surrounding these pedagogies indicate numerous similarities in their philosophies, which honour the rights of students and invite the imagining of a hopeful future. Informed by the relevant literature, I began this thesis by defining the underlying principles of both pedagogies and interrogated if, and how, these principles operated within two distinct case studies. This invited me to consider the typically affirming rhetoric of process drama through the lens of critical pedagogy, to reveal spaces of both exclusionary and emancipatory praxis.

I employed qualitative arts-based research methods and reflected upon two distinct case studies, in relation with one another. Through rewriting in role, I purposefully considered the debates and questions emanating from the two case studies in dialogue with one another. I suggest that by reflectively and purposefully incorporating several key elements, process drama might offer a site for the enactment of critical pedagogy. These aspects—aesthetic, action, agency, ambiguity, agitation and hope—are significant to working in a drama to circumvent dominant ideology and create a collaborative, transformative space for both students and teachers. It reaffirmed that process drama is a complex skilled practice, which requires the deliberate facilitation of an exploratory space by a reflective practitioner.

This thesis challenges many of the claims for transformation and agency proffered by process drama advocates. I found that many of its accepted customs and conventions—students in role, problem-based inquiries and collective responsibility—still adhered to the dominant ideology of education. This research questions process drama's capacity to facilitate student agency (Aitken, 2009), provoke equitable teacher–student relationships (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995), explore universal concepts (Bolton, 1984) and transform (Neelands, 2004). Student agency and social transformation remained conditional upon the
parameters approved by the governing authority, and the habitual requirement for answers ensured that the mythology of certainty prevailed.

Similarly, while the immediate paradox of engaging in critical praxis within public institutions governed by the status quo seems insurmountable, this research suggests otherwise. Critical theorists may welcome the opportunity presented by working in process drama to play, act and reflect practically in the imagination and beyond these institutions. This playfulness counters the pessimistic view of critical pedagogy in a postmodern era (Ellsworth, 1989; Lather, 1991) and opens spaces for a reflective, dialogic pedagogy, despite the contemporary McDonaldisation of education as a consumer good (Giroux, 2016; Shor, 1992).

Compelled by a growing awareness that academic knowledge is bounded by language and form steeped in dominant Eurocentric ideologies, I reconsidered both the content and form of the thesis. My initial attempts to apply traditional academic methods revealed their inability to communicate and create data that rendered the complexity of the negotiated, pedagogical drama space. Exploring the research through a variety of arts-informed research methods ensured that I interrogated the research question not only in the praxis of the two studies but within the research itself.

Advocating for the arts as a site for social critique, I sought to create an artistic thesis, which honours my belief that critical research must recognise and create new forms of knowledge to counter ideological oppression. Drama as an enactment of critical pedagogy may provide a language for understanding and exploring ideology and oppression that outwits the dominant ideology.
Tackling the tricky bits: New moves in familiar dances

When I initially began this research, I sensed that despite my enthusiasm and appreciation of the understandings generated in drama, something was amiss. To re-engage with questions that still disturb, I have discussed established practitioners, excavated long-forgotten controversies and put myself professionally at risk. However, that is the risk of asking difficult questions and lies at the heart of critical praxis. As evidenced in the previous chapters, significant literature already exists that contributes and informs process drama practice. This thesis, however, deliberately asks the questions that lurk in the dark corners and no doubt plague us as teachers, well after the drama has ended. I hope that through engaging in complex narratives that recognise and invite the problematic concepts buried within our own practice, we can work with greater clarity and consciousness. It has been a journey to interrogate traditional and recognisable drama forms, through a critical lens, and a desire to renew, reimagine and reconceptualise our practice.

The findings contrast with the optimistic rhetoric of drama education, to transform and shine an uncomfortable light upon the often-hallowed practice of arts educators. Drama is often dismissed as a superfluous curriculum subject while simultaneously credited with significant social impact. The research wrangles with its inherent complexity and the potential for seemingly benevolent drama to indoctrinate and replicate. Practitioners cannot claim its effectiveness and then deny their own role in producing that effect. This research provokes greater scrutiny of drama praxis by practitioners themselves and invites the further development of a robust theoretical framework.

This research suggests a critical approach is essential to drama practice seeking transformation. Grounded in a reflective and critical paradigm, this critical framework would uphold drama praxis without compromising its fidelity to embodied knowledge, educated hope and glorious ambiguity.
Taking to the stage

A critical form of process drama as described in the previous chapter requires the consideration of six aspects when working, designing and engaging in drama informed by and aspiring to a critical framework. These aspects—hope, aesthetic, agency, agitation, action and ambiguity—reverberate off one another, maintaining a flexibility that correlates with both critical pedagogy and the improvisational nature of process drama. In addition to the creation of these six framing aspects, this research has implications for the educating of the 21st century learner and drama’s potential role, it calls for a reimagining of critical praxis and its position within education, and finally it invites policy makers and facilitators to recognise alternative ways of knowing. The next section briefly expands on these potential opportunities and establishes the relevance of Capoeira as a metaphor for the hopeful dance.

Implications

Informed by critical pedagogy, this research contends that drama may counter the dominant paradigm of predictable outcomes and linear thinking. For educators seeking to validate and fund their practice, the lack of guaranteed outcomes from a process drama presents a problem. This unpredictability may interest policy makers keen to develop their population’s 21st century skills of flexibility (Bellanca, 2010). Unified by an imaginary context, participants explore the messiness of human interactions through investigation, play and negotiation. This research contributes to the literature on drama as a vehicle for critical playfulness (Cahill, 2012; Prentki, 2018), the body as a valid site of knowing (Barbour, 2011) and significance of the liminal space (McLaren, 1988). It invites collaboration with critical performative pedagogy (MeKeehan, 2002; Pineau, 2002), posits drama as an alternative language of critique and possibility (Giroux, 2013) and suggests a framework for developing a critical process drama (Freebody & Goodwin, 2018; O’Connor & Anderson, 2015).
Invocations

This research confronts the power of dominant narratives in determining not only the engineers and content of accepted knowledge but also the framework that governs its communication and validation. It complements the contemporary theoretical shift in education towards the critical and creative economy. It advocates for an evolutionary critical praxis that resists easy platitudes or hero worship and challenges the accepted doctrine of adult, capitalist, logical worldviews with children centred, humanist and affective modes of knowledge. It supports schools as not only sites of social reproduction but also spaces of opportunity and acknowledges the role of teachers as responsive, reflective and agentic professionals. Finally, it comments on the established concept of drama education as either empowering, benign or worthy, and recognises its potential for explicit or unintentional harm.

Through critically exploring inquiry-based drama, this research challenges current enthusiasm for “critical literacy” and “inquiry” by confronting the reality of classroom power dynamics and the unrelenting hierarchy. It could offer critical pedagogy practitioners a way of exploring critical pedagogy with students that extends the work of culture circles or discussion activities (Wink, 2005) and allows them to “rethink the multiplicity of what and how dialogue looks like in the classroom” (Hao, 2011, p. 280).

Invitations

This research invites facilitators to acknowledge how a reliance upon words may exclude participants, obscure meaning, and invite them to consider alternative forms of discourse. As research that recognises the tacit knowing expressed through the body and in the arts, it may extend the thinking around assessment and validity to include embodied knowledge and extend beyond current academic discourse. It signals the importance of the fictional context in the direction and construction of the drama narrative and recommends that participants actively contribute to all aspects of its creation. This research may increase the visibility of drama education and its potential to facilitate citizenship education. It asserts a potentially new and exciting space for
educational drama to develop critical citizenship well beyond curriculum objectives. In addition, it asks for greater scrutiny of the practice of role-play and drama praxis in the service of other social or educational outcomes. It is not a thesis of smooth movements and easy answers; it seeks to invite others to a dance that is difficult, complicated and exhausting but also collaborative and hopeful like capoeira.

**Capoeira: A metaphor**

This final dance of the thesis is the fittingly controversial, rebellious, rigorous and Brazilian dance, capoeira. Initially regarded as “dangerous” and originating in the West African slave population of the 16th century, this misunderstood cultural art form encompasses music, dance, singing and martial arts. A vital form of cultural expression for the African slaves, it was repositioned as a dance form to avoid detection by the ruling powers. Practising and performing capoeira ensured that its participants remained physically and spiritually strong despite their circumstances and offered a visceral form of resistance. As a metaphor for the potential of a critical process drama, it has many resonances and a hopeful outlook. Sharing concepts of social justice, embodied resistance, holistic knowing, social interaction and spirited rebellion, capoeira is a symbol of hope and resistance that has survived and flourished. This research and its provocation for a hopeful critical process drama attempts like capoeira, to find new ways to move that honour its principles and develop its potential to invite everyone to dance.

**Last flourishes**

As a practitioner, I have attempted to infuse my praxis with the ideas generated by this thesis and engage in drama informed by critical pedagogy. This is challenging, and I continue to struggle with the multiple and sometimes competing responsibilities of my obligations to the University, students, discipline, pedagogy and my own philosophy of teaching. I hope to create and enact a critical process drama workshop framed by the six aspects and play with these theories more practically. I hope that this experience will enable the creation of an informed reflective and practical resource outlining the
opportunities and pitfalls of working in a critical process drama. Future research into the unintended, incidental or ephemeral impacts of critical process drama might advocate further for the significance of the unknown.

This research recognises the validity and essence of embodied knowledge and education that privilege doing over talking in Indigenous and non-Indigenous settings. As a result, I have infused my own practice with the body as a site for research and knowing. I continue to pursue and push the boundaries of accepted teaching practices to value the holistic and creative presence of the individual. I am keen to explore the synergies and opportunities between drama as research and critical performance. This final chapter reveals a dance that never ends but morphs into others, invites and farewells partners and shares common elements to dance diversely upon the stage. In answering the question, I pose to students—“why do I care?”–the answer I have is compelling, frustrating and returns to hope. Process drama offers something unique; it offers a space to imagine a new world and, more importantly, a space between worlds. We cannot dance forever in the imagination or plod along hopelessly in reality, as neither space is enough to tackle the complex fabric of a society that augments our reality. Those spaces are essential, and we need to recognise them, operate within them and travel between them, but it is in the transition that we can transform.

It is in the wobbly, unformed, uncertain, fuzzy potential space, the crack between the light and dark where we can dance and dance and dance.

I hope you dance
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