The **JOURNAL** for **DRAMA** in **EDUCATION**

Special Issue marking the 2019 Dublin Conference
"Who am I? Who can tell me who I am?"
An international conference exploring the importance of the social and political in young people's drama.

NATD
The National Association for the Teaching of Drama

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Palestine, Norway, Belgium, Holland, Australia, the Netherlands and the UK.
All members of NATD receive a copy as part of their membership.
The Editorial Committee welcomes contributions and letters for publication. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect editorial or NATD policy.

Notes for Intending Contributors to
The Journal for Drama in Education

The Journal for Drama in Education is published twice a year and contains a refereed section. All articles that have been refereed will be indicated underneath the title on the contents page and within the *Journal* where the article appears.

The Editorial Committee welcomes contributions on any aspect of drama and education, contributions which reflect on NATD policy, and more general contributions on education. The Committee will consider all contributions and will publish articles that, in its judgment, meet the needs of the membership of NATD at the time of publication.

It is preferred that contributions are submitted by email to the address on the inside front cover. The author's details should be submitted on a separate page and should include the personal details which the author would like to accompany the article. For articles that are to be refereed, a short abstract of the article should also be included. Authors should also include full address, telephone number and email.

The Harvard system of referencing is preferred for all articles and must be used for contributions that are to be refereed. Footnotes should use Arabic numerals (1,2,3 etc.). A bibliography of cited works should appear at the end of articles using Harvard conventions.

Bill Roper

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Editorial

This edition of the Journal has been a long time coming. Three years ago we planned an issue marking and celebrating the work of Drama pedagogue David Davis. In the intervening years we have tried to manage a hiatus not of our making, nor of Davis'.

And in those years there have been great changes. We are sure you will be all too familiar with them, and the havoc they have wreaked, not least in education. Teachers and those who work with the young have had to sustain challenges and demands far beyond what was once regarded as 'normal'.

What do we do when confronted by a bewildering, if not terrifying, series of shocks and crises? How do we navigate the landscape revealed to us by a world-wide pandemic, a war on our doorstep and a planet that grows increasingly hostile under the strain of the lifestyles practised by so many of us who live in the 'developed' countries?

Perhaps taking stock for a moment can help us orientate ourselves; taking time to step back from the ricocheting, often reactive behaviour some schools demand of their teachers. Pausing a moment to think, reflect, and ask ourselves how is it that we have got to where we are?

Which is something David Davis does rather well.

The first of the articles published in this issue is the keynote paper presented by David Davis to a conference held in his honour.[1] While Davis was at the heart of the conference, the aim was to enable a range of voices to discuss their own practices in drama and theatre education in relation to how they engage with the social/political in drama and theatre education. The Journal is (jointly) publishing some of those voices.

In the Abstract to the paper he offers us an analysis of the processes that work to create the world we now live in, and what lies behind them. Before the seismic upheavals of the last three years Davis argued that

> … the forces dominating the social and political at the present moment
> are the policies and practices springing from neoliberal approaches to
> economics. These in turn are dominant driving forces for climate change

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[1] On Saturday and Sunday, the 9th and 10th March 2019, Drama practitioners from around the world gathered at Trinity College, Dublin. All the contributors had worked with David Davis over many years and had been invited by Carmel O'Sullivan (Professor in Education in the School of Education) to deliver a paper to mark his eightieth birthday.

which threatens all our futures. Neoliberal ideology promotes the individual before the social. This ideology tends to dominate the outlook of young people.

It is not difficult to see that now, in 2022, the impact of the neoliberal agenda has drilled down deeper. The poor and the vulnerable are now even poorer and more vulnerable than they were in 2019. For example, at a recent NEU (National Education Union) conference, it was reported that in a class of 30 at least 8 children will be living below the poverty line. Yet, with no regard for the well-being of the young, the government remains focused on pushing all schools to become academies, an idea born from the 'free market' ideology of the Thatcher government. Of course, when they use the word 'free' we have to think what they mean by that. Kevin Courtney, the Joint General Secretary of the NEU pointed out[2] that, instead of looking, for example, at the mental health crisis amongst the young, in fact the government's Education White Paper[3] has, as its central obsession, structural reform. He asked why they would do this and followed the question with a warning; that they are giving themselves powers to become the direct chief executive for every school, whilst at the same time atomising schools and teachers. We are reminded of Mhairi Black's recent comment in Parliament - that this government is sleepwalking to fascism.[4]

Davis is unapologetically political in his analysis both of the social context and the impact this has on the individual child. He goes on to suggest that,

> …young people see themselves as in charge of their own lives and decision making. They think they are deciding who they want to be and what they want to do as they grow up. The personal dominates. All the time the young person is seemingly making up her or his own mind but all the time these forces are at work. This is the existential dilemma. Drama provides the opportunity to try to see more clearly the reality in which they are enmeshed.

He concludes with his grandson's question that formed the title of the Conference and the ensuing questions that it begs for us as educators and drama teachers:

> Who am I? If I am other, who are the others who live inside me and have become part of me? Do I want these uninvited visitors to stay? How can drama help young people ask themselves these same questions?

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[2] Also at that NEU conference
[3] The first education white paper since 2016; tabled in March 2022
[4] Mhairi Black, Scottish Nationalist Party Member of Parliament 23/5/22- her whole speech can be seen on Mhairi Black's incredible speech on Tory fascism - YouTube

For many years, Bill Roper worked closely with David Davis. He regularly contributed to the PGCE and MA courses at Birmingham Polytechnic, The University of Central England and Birmingham City University. He was also a friend of NATD and his keynotes at Conference were always provocative and challenging. This Issue includes two tributes to a very kind and gentle man with a massive intellect. He is very much missed.

Roper and Davis were close friends as well as colleagues. Although he was unable to attend the Dublin Conference, he was invited by Davis to critique his keynote. His response is typically insightful and presents a challenge to the reader. This is not an easy read but rewards close attention and several re-reads. In conjunction with Davis' open and honest response and Kostantinus Amoiropulous' development of his thinking, this is an excellent introduction into the work of Lacan[5] and his potential application to our work. In Davis' words:

> Rather than attempt to paraphrase any more of Bill's critique and elaboration of my keynote I leave those rich pickings to future readers. I found all his contributions extremely enlightening and will be for the rest of my life grateful to Bill for so gently but firmly pursuing his line of argument. His paper should be key reading for all those entering education and especially for drama teachers.

Countering the Insistence of Neoliberal Consciousness and Mentality - Materialist Approaches to the Intensive Practices of Speaking and Acting: Lacanian Analysis and Drama in Education is a tribute to the man in his own words and a provocation to us to dig deeper and in new directions. Roper concludes his piece with these very positive thoughts:

> However we are in an era of the ego, of images, of leaders and others who try to engage us in the imaginary, divide us from others, ………but all is not yet lost. The human is an animal who by virtue of being possessed by language, can have the purpose of seeking to preserve itself as a species and the planet on which it emerged. (Lacan in Vanheule, 2016:7)

In *Approaching the real: Attempts in early years classrooms* Konstantinos Amoiropoulos offers us his paper from the Dublin Conference. He has also written a Foreword *An interrupted discussion with Bill Roper* in which he teases out the key Lacanian concepts that Roper is exploring in his work before sharing with us Roper's response to his paper.

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[5] Jacques Lacan developed a theoretical system that explains the mind, behaviour and culture through a structuralist and post-structuralist extension of classical psychoanalysis. In Lacanian theory, three 'orders' structure human subjectivity – the imaginary the symbolic and the real.

It is a rich and generous gift from both men.

In the introduction to his Dublin paper, Amoiropoulos shares feedback from a parent of one of the children he taught:

> You teachers think that life is a fairy tale with a happy ending. But you know nothing of real life. In this world, you have to be the winner, or else you will be the victim. I want to prepare my kid to live in it – to fight for itself, even if this means kicking and punching. This is what the world *is* like. (A parent's feedback)

He proceeds to analyse the language in terms of the formation of self in relation to story, culture and ideology, linking it to both a Lacanian analysis and the thinking of Edward Bond. He argues through the imagined example of an early years lesson based on the fable of The Hare and the Tortoise that the danger of exploring the story uncritically is to share a worldview that:

> …reflects the unconscious ideological assumptions of participants *and* of teachers as determined by our own contemporary dominant ideology.

We offer this powerful Issue as a challenge to us all; to reach for an understanding of the impact of neoliberalism on our lives and the challenges it presents to our teaching.

Chair's Report: 'Hello. Can you hear me?'

by

Liam Harris

Just as many of you will have experienced over the last few weeks and months, I recently saw my UVIth head into their final A Level Drama exam. They are an exceptional group of young people who have had to confront more than their fair share of troubles and traumas during my time with them. They joined the school when I joined the school and coincidentally will be leaving at the same time I will be leaving. In many ways I have developed a very special bond with them – I have certainly 'grown up' as a teacher alongside them and they have presented me with some of my greatest professional challenges.

One boy, Dejan[1], was in the first lesson I ever taught at the school. Dejan is markedly dyslexic, has a reading age significantly lower than his chronological age and used to be so conscious of this that he feared showing his teachers written work in case they thought badly of him. He was not a strong performer, could easily disappear into a crowd and preferred the logical, sequential nature of Maths and Science. I have distinct memories of Dejan from those early Drama lessons, as he told me, with great pride, that he was Croatian and that his Baba and Deda[2] had lived through the war we were exploring dramatically. He was an otherwise shy boy in a Friday period 6 class who were coming straight from PE (you can imagine the productivity!). Yet amidst the chaos he stood out as having an innate and instinctive desire to use drama to make sense of this thing he could not understand. He interrogated soldiers, stepped into the shoes of politicians and, most poignantly, when looking at the world's inaction towards the Bosnian War, asked the question: 'Why isn't anyone listening to the people living there? Can't we find a way to get their voices heard?' A brilliant question and one which fuelled our work for the rest of term.

Fast forward to his A Level years, Dejan decided to study Maths, Further Maths, Business and Drama. Eyebrows were raised by the school who questioned why on earth he would choose to study Drama. Dejan seemed confused about this attitude as to him studying Drama was as logical as studying Maths.

Dejan went on to produce one of the most memorable moments of my teaching career. I sat with immense pride watching his A Level Devised performance, where he had transformed an interview he had conducted with one of his peers into a verbatim performance that explored the experiences of young people within war zones. It was an

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[1] NB Dejan's name has been changed to protect his identity.

[2] Croatian for 'Grandmother' and 'Grandfather'.

exceptionally powerful piece of theatre that has had a profound impact on our school community – at least two members of the audience have cited the experience as a key influence in them offering their homes to Ukrainian refugees. Dejan named the performance 'Hello. Can You Hear Me?' It turns out that while he hadn't found an answer to the question he first pondered in our lesson all those years ago, he had never stopped asking it.

Dejan is one of the most creative, sensitive, thoughtful and empathetic young men I have ever had the privilege to teach. He is also one of the most intelligent, having regularly interrogated the politic of the world around him through his creative work. And yet, as I watched him enter the exam hall, he was crippled with anxiety about expressing himself in the written form. After the exam he looked traumatised, disenchanted and was left feeling worthless.

I have learnt so much from Dejan, not least that we must continue to wrestle with questions that do not have the easiest of answers. Reflecting upon Dejan's experience, seeing one of the most creative and thoughtful individuals chewed up and churned out by a broken education system, I've found myself asking: *who is listening to the people in education and how can we get their voices heard?*

The outgoing NEC have preoccupied themselves with these questions over the last year, largely focussing our attention on developing the 7 principles of a child centred assessment system[3]. It is for our newly elected NEC to pick up this work and develop it to ensure meaningful change occurs within our education system.

My thanks to all those who attended the recent AGM where, as a membership, we elected the following officers to run the Association as an NEC:

- *Liam Harris – Chair*
- *Ellen Green – Secretary (Vice-Chair)*
- *Theo Bryer – Treasurer*
- *Matthew Milburn – Committee Member*
- *Sorrel Oates – Committee Member*
- *Margaret Branscombe, Maggie Hulson and Guy Williams – The Journal Committee*

The following motions were also passed, unanimously:

Motion 1: Social Media Sub Committee

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[3] These can be found on our website: www.natd.co.uk

The Association calls upon the incoming NEC to create a social media sub-group. The work of the group will be, in the first place to:

- *Develop strategies to promote the aims of the Association as embedded in The Policy Document;*
- *Promote the content that is held within The Journal for Drama in Education;*
- *Explore and, if appropriate, use social media specialists to help develop a strategy for the Association.*

Motion 2: Three Step Workshop Programme

The Association calls upon the incoming NEC to develop a three-step programme focussed on the teaching of set text and pretexts.

To this end, the NEC of NATD will organise a series of workshops focused on A-level and GCSE set texts and KS3 pre-texts or stimuli/stories.

The workshops are to be promoted to practising teachers and lead to face-to-face workshops during a school afternoon.

Participants will be charged a reasonable rate to cover the costs of the Association in running the events.

The work is to be co-constructed with the teachers.

All events are to be organised on a regional basis.

Motion 3: Collaboration With Practitioners who seek to advance a child centred, humanising education

Preamble: This Association believes that we are living through a moment when Drama, politics and the world are in crisis. The old ways of working are being challenged, previous practices are splintering and people are searching for new ways of working.

Motion: The incoming NEC of NATD is committed to cooperation whilst holding to the principles as laid out in the policy document. It will strive to bring together those practitioners who seek to advance child-centred, humanising education. Where possible, the NEC will plan events and develop

practices that build bridges and work towards collaboration on common ground with other Associations and individuals.

Work has already begun on each of the motions above, with Sorrel Oates and Matthew Milburn taking the lead in planning regional events and Ellen Green taking the lead on the Social Media subcommittee. I look forward to sharing more with you in the coming months.

Meanwhile, I continue to represent the NATD as a member of the Drama and Theatre Education Alliance (DTEA). Most recently, the DTEA has begun planning for their #SeizeTheDay event which coincides with World Theatre Day. Should members wish to become more involved in the event, please see the DTEA website[4] for more information.

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one for the NATD and we go into it with a strong sense of who we are and what we stand for. The Association is currently in a position of strength and there is a growing determination within schools and beyond to argue for change. Our young people deserve better. Extraordinary people like Dejan deserve much better. And, for the first time in my 10 years on the NEC, I feel as though we are genuinely in a position to enable voices like Dejan's to be heard.

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[4] https://www.dtealliance.co.uk

(Author's note: this is the version for publication of a keynote given in 2019. In the three years since that conference the situations described have become much, much worse. I believe that the basic trajectory of my argument is still valid.)

Who Am I? Who Can Tell Me Who I Am?
by David Davis
Emeritus Professor, formerly of Birmingham City University, UK

Abstract
An account of the author's key life-time concerns in the field of drama in education. It argues the central role of drama for young people is to help them to locate themselves in the particular social/political/historical context in which they find themselves. In this location drama is a means to help young people develop their own value system. It argues that the forces dominating the social and political at the present moment are the policies and practices springing from neoliberal approaches to economics. These in turn are dominant driving forces for climate change which threatens all our futures. Neoliberal ideology promotes the individual before the social. This ideology tends to dominate the outlook of young people. The paper traces the influences that helped shape the author's own form of drama teaching. Key influences are identified from Heathcote, Bolton, Bond from the drama world and Bakhtin's work on the role of language in shaping the self.

Keywords
Drama in education; social/political contexts; climate change; neoliberalism; *metaxis*; Bolton; Heathcote; Bakhtin; Bond.

I have been invited to set out my approach to drama in education. This will, necessarily, be political. As Bruner states: 'However much it may be claimed to the contrary, education is always political…' (Bruner, 1996, p. 25).

Key for me is the importance of context in drama, the socio-historical/cultural/political life situation in which young people find themselves. In that context there are forces which push and pull the young person as they develop into adulthood. Forces which push and pull all of us. Do I really want to take this road or that one in life; this job with more money or that job with more prestige; or any job just to feed my family; to leave my homeland and become a refugee; or to find any way to have money to buy a better smart phone? But these forces are usually unrecognised. Instead young people see themselves as in charge of their own lives and decision making. They think they are deciding who they want to be and what they want to do as they grow up. The personal dominates. All the time the young person is seemingly making up her or his own mind but all the time these forces are at work. This is the existential dilemma. Drama provides the opportunity to try to see more clearly the reality in which they are enmeshed. This is for me the central

aim of drama in education: the chance for young people to try to locate themselves and decide who they want to become. This is in fact the ongoing struggle for all of us. Underlying all these decisions is what value system do we want to own? What does it mean to strive to be fully human?

The young people we work with will all have different immediate social/political environments affecting them in different parts of the world. We will all have our own understanding of that social/political environment. None of us will have the whole picture. That is the importance of a conference such as the one these papers spring from. We can share different points of view. That is the necessary dialogic process.

I want to start by elaborating two dimensions of the social/political affecting all the young people we work with no matter where they live in the world: climate change and the underlying economic forces driving climate change. These dimensions in fact affect all of us equally. It may seem a very strange way to start - setting out my approach to drama teaching by dealing with climate change and economics - but there is nothing more important for any of us than these two areas. You will be familiar with what I am going to say but I want to spell it out in some detail anyway. Rather, we think we are familiar with it but I would suggest most of us are in denial – or we would be out on the streets demonstrating every day.

Climate change is an area of growing concern for young people. They often have much greater clarity of the issues involved than the adults. They are going to be even more forcibly affected in the future than I am for example. Here I want to underline that I am not advocating political action with a capital P. I am arguing that drama teachers need to be fully immersed in the dilemmas of trying to be human in the world today: to be political in that sense. It is the playwright part of the drama teacher. Humans invented drama to try to understand more clearly who we are and where we are. It is that awareness that drives the playwright in the drama teacher. We need to be able to see the themes interconnecting in apparently ordinary situations. Perhaps the drama involves a teenage girl preparing for a school photo. The parents want her to do the family proud. It has cost hard-earned money to buy the school uniform. The school wants the photos to show off how well organised the school is: how uniform it is. Better discipline means harder work by the pupils. Better results mean teachers' jobs are safer. The school will be in line with government targets. But the girl wants to look special. Maybe she wants to wear some make-up forbidden by the school. Or to have her hair standing up in spikes or just to have her school tie not quite tied up. How do these pressures clash with growing personal needs? Where do those personal drives come from? Is it the world of big pharmaceuticals influencing her: the world of consumerism? Is she really striving to be an individual? Yes and no. In any ordinary event can be found the connections to the cultural general and the dilemmas of the personal in the social/political. In each particular event, the

playwright in the drama teacher is seeking those forces the student needs to unravel to find out where she is. And then to become who she wants to be.

Now I am taking an enormous short-cut here. I am leaving aside, for the sake of brevity, all the complex philosophical and psychological questions. What is a self? Can we ever know who is the I who is speaking? What theory of knowing are we claiming? What is truth? You will have your own answers to these questions. I am taking as my common ground that we and the students are involved in a dialogic process. There are a multitude of voices entering us all the time. We are immersed in a polyphonic social world. These different discourses can be merged to allow a monologic discourse to dominate. This is the danger of ideologies. The drama situation can slow time down to open up that situation, to re-engage with these varied voices. It turns drama into a dialogic process.

The Social Context
So, to the over-riding social context for us all: climate change. I want to be as direct as I can.

There is no such thing as global warming. There is global heating (Watts, 2018). The last five years were the hottest on record. 'Global warming has heated the oceans by the equivalent of one atomic explosion per second for the last century and a half …in recent years the equivalent of between 3 and 6 atom bombs per second…and global marine populations have halved since 1970' (Carrington, 2019 a). More than half the carbon released into the atmosphere has been emitted in just the last 25 years (Wallace-Wells, 2019).

Drought, heatwaves, wildfires, hurricanes and flooding are increasing in severity and frequency. The cryosphere (where water is frozen into ice or snow) is melting, sub-sea permafrost in the Arctic is thawing. It could release trapped methane gas causing several times the total amount of CO_2 humans have ever emitted to be released into the atmosphere. Even if we stopped all greenhouse gas emissions it would take 25,000 years for most of what is currently in the atmosphere to be absorbed into the oceans. We have had 17 of the 18 hottest years recorded since 2001. Countless glaciers, rivers, lakes, forests and species are already vanishing at a rate never seen before and all this from only $1^{\circ C}$ increase above a pre-industrial base line. Some scientists are predicting a rise of 10°C by 2100 if there is no halt to global heating, and some argue that the rise so far has caused unstoppable melting of Antarctica and Greenland (Jamail, 2019).

The Arctic sea ice is being lost at a total rate of more than 10,000 tons a second. Russia, Norway, NATO, the UK and the US are all moving into the area to prepare to take economic advantage of the total ice melt that is coming (Watts, 2019a).

The latest news from Greenland is that its vast ice sheet, 2 miles thick, separate from its glaciers, has increased its melt rate four-fold since 2003. That is as well as its glaciers melting. The climate change agreement of Paris in 2015 agreed to holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C. Many fear that Donald Trump's withdrawal of the US from this agreement and the election of Bolsonaro in Brazil, both signal increasing emissions rather than cutting back. The fear is that at the present rate of inaction the world is on course for a 3°C rise. Such a rise would submerge cites such as Shanghai, Osaka, and Miami along with parts of Rio de Janeiro and Alexandria. Countries such as Bangladesh will be badly flooded. This would force hundreds of thousands of refugees to move to higher ground (Editorial, 2019). And Southern Spain would, for example, become part of the Sahara (Watts, 2018). The latest Met Office report claims that 1.5°C could, in fact, be reached in four years' time (Homewood, 2018).

In the three and a half years since the Paris agreement to limit carbon emissions financial institutions have invested more than $478 bn, that is 478 thousand million dollars, in the world's top 120 coal plants (Carrington, 2018).

And then there is plastic pollution.

Fig. 1 Manilla Bay in the Philippines

A million plastic bottles are bought around the world every minute and the number will jump another 20% by 2021. This is creating an environmental crisis some campaigners predict will be as serious as climate change. There are five gyres in the world's oceans: areas where the currents circulate and now keep plastic debris floating there. The largest of these is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, three times the size of France at 1.6 million

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square kilometres. The amount of plastic produced in a year is roughly the same as the entire weight of humanity. Scientists at Ghent University recently calculated that people who regularly eat seafood ingest about 11,000 tiny pieces of plastic a year. Plastic is found in two thirds of UK caught fish. Plastic is in our drinking water and in human immune systems. It is not yet known the amount of damage it is doing (Laville and Taylor, 2017). The latest research shows it is now in the air around the planet, raining down from highest peak in Pyrenees to The Galapagos Islands to Shanghai. On average there were 365 plastic particles per square metre (Carrington, 2019 b).

We are now in the sixth mass extinction of species since life began on the planet. And we are losing species at a faster rate than during any of the previous five mass extinctions. That includes the extinction that saw dinosaurs disappear from earth along with three quarters of plant and animal species (Vaughan, 2015). 'The biomass of wild animals has fallen by 82%, natural ecosystems have lost half their area and a million species are at risk of extinction…' (Watts, 2019c). We are set to become the first species to record our own extinction. In the words of the opening lines of David Wallace-Wells new book 'It's worse, much worse, than you think' (Wallace-Wells, 2019).

After I had written the above, The Institute for Public Policy Research, a UK progressive thinktank, published a report which underlined all the points I have just been making. Its title is *This is a crisis: Facing up to the age of environmental breakdown* (Laybourn-Langton, *et al,* 2019) It is worth quoting the opening lines.

> Mainstream political and policy debates have failed to recognise that human impacts on the environment have reached a critical stage, potentially eroding the conditions upon which socioeconomic stability is possible.

Human-induced environmental change is occurring at an unprecedented scale and pace and the window of opportunity to avoid catastrophic outcomes in societies around the world is rapidly closing. These outcomes include economic instability, large-scale involuntary migration, conflict, famine and the potential collapse of social and economic systems. The historical disregard of environmental considerations in most areas of policy has been a catastrophic mistake.

As George Monbiot points out, during this summer of 2019 wildfires have raged across the Arctic in Siberia and Alaska, setting fire to peat that was set down millennia ago, releasing as much carbon into the atmosphere as Austria does in a year. Daily ice loss in Greenland is 50 years ahead of schedule. Scientists report that thawing permafrost in the Canadian High Arctic now exceeds the depths of melting projected for 2090. Against this backdrop the oil and gas industry intend to spend $4.9tn over the next ten years exploring and developing new reserves and every year governments subsidise fossil fuels to the tune of $5tn. The US spends ten times more on these subsidies than on its federal

education budget (Monbiot, 2019). And the Amazon rainforest which produces 20% of the world's oxygen burns and burns.
It is later, much later, than you think.

This is the environment today which the social world has made. It is possible to try to separate the social from the environment. Consumerism works at that every day. The drama I am pursuing insists that the social world in which our young people exist is intimately connected to environmental, economic and political concerns. Drama needs to help young people locate themselves in this milieu.

Is this all doom and gloom? Well, certainly, there is plenty of gloom but doom? Not necessarily.

Greta Thunberg, an autistic 15 years-old schoolgirl, decided that enough lack of action from her Swedish government was enough. She went on school strike every Friday and sat outside the Swedish Parliament. She has continued this every Friday and she says she will do so until the Parliament calls a climate emergency. This simple action has sparked a world-wide movement of school strikes. Now more than a thousand school strikes and demonstrations in over 70 countries take place every month. (It is impossible to be accurate as the numbers are increasing all the time).

Fig. 2. Greta Thunberg, 16-year-old autistic school-girl, who, when 15, started sitting outside the Swedish Parliament.

Greta Thunberg went to speak at the World Economic Forum, in Switzerland. She travelled 32 hours by train. The rich flew there and parked their 1,200 private planes.

I am not being idealistic here. Young people cannot change the world by demonstrating nor on their own. They need the support of adults to change the whole political power structure. Their protests will come and go in strength but something fundamental will have changed in them as they mature into the voting population. Their radicalisation will not just disappear.

In 2018 this young person spoke to the UN Climate Change Conference in Poland. I think it is remarkable how many key things Greta Thunberg managed to gather in that one short contribution: the need for the whole system to change; how climate change is caused by the pursuit of wealth; how the poor pay for the rich; the importance of equity; how politicians have done nothing; how it is up to the people to act.

On equity: 2 billion of us are overweight; 2 billion of us are undernourished or starving. Just twenty-six of the world's wealthiest people, who could fit into a single small bus, now own as much as half the planet's population. And the wealth of that billionaire class swells by $2.5 billion a day (Chakraborty, 2019). It is obscene. Why do we allow it?

I want to be as transparent as I can be about where I am coming from. I am a socialist. I am against exploitation of human by human. I am for the nurturing and sharing of the world's resources for the benefit of all. I am against building walls. I am for an economy that produces for human need, not for profit. I am, therefore, clearly biased against capitalism. So, this is a biased argument; just in case that wasn't clear so far!

The Economic Context – Driving the Political Context
I want to take up Thunberg's assertion that climate change is caused by the present dominant economic system: the pursuit of wealth by a tiny few for a tiny few, achieved by exploiting people and nature solely for the benefit of that tiny few.

The story of how the world has become so skewed to favour the rich is, in Euro-Atlantic countries, the story of the growth of neoliberalism. In the 1930s, the then American president, Roosevelt, brought in a whole range of government measures to try to end the Great Depression. He provided support for farmers, the unemployed, youth and the elderly. The New Deal included new constraints and safeguards on the banking industry and efforts to re-inflate the economy after prices had fallen sharply. These were designed to bring a strong measure of control to the broken capitalist economy and put people back to work. Hayek, an Austrian-British academic, saw in these government measures the threat of socialism. He first tried to organise against this threat in the late 1930s, but

this was interrupted by the Second World War. During the War he wrote *The Road to Serfdom* (Hayek, 1944). The serfdom which the author warns of comes about when a government interferes with the economy to help the unemployed or the sick. The individual should be allowed to sink or swim. What he means is that the big business entrepreneur should be free from taxation and regulation: free to exploit people and make profit with complete disregard for environment and health. (That is my take of course).

In 1947 he founded the Mont Pelerin Society: a Society of very rich people drawn to the ideas of freeing capitalism from any form of state control. It still exists and meets annually, drawing in academics, politicians and business interests. You can apply to attend their next annual conference if you can afford it.

Over the years these think tanks and their disciples have spread their economic and political policies which have generally become known as neoliberalism: free market economics. Milton Friedman (Friedman, 2002), at the University of Chicago, who was greatly influenced by Hayek, sent out many young economists trained in this approach. Notable among these were the Chicago Boys who spread out in Latin America and became prominent figures in transforming the economies of those countries. They were particularly influential in Pinochet's fascist Chile. In the 1970s Friedman was also an economic adviser to US president Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher in the UK.

After Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan took power, the rest of the package soon followed: massive tax cuts for the rich, the crushing of trade unions, deregulation, privatisation, outsourcing and competition in public services. Through the IMF, the World Bank, the Maastricht treaty and the World Trade Organisation, neoliberal policies were imposed – often without democratic consent – on much of the world. Most remarkable was its adoption among parties that once belonged to the left: Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the UK, for example. It has been described as the idea that swallowed the world (Metcalf, 2017).

George Buchanan was also a highly influential figure who based himself at the George Mason University in the US: again, sending out many neoliberal graduates ready to run the thinktanks (see Meadowcroft, 2011). Both Friedman and Buchanan were members of the Mont Pelerin Society: Buchanan a past chairman. Although not organised in one world-wide organisation these ideas spread and have become dominant in Euro-Atlantic economies. A huge number of these neoliberal thinktanks have proliferated in the UK and in the US. Enormous amounts of money are poured into them by the very rich in order to lobby politicians to further their business interests. Trump is an example of a business person who got tired of paying lobbying firms and decided that big business can run the country directly (Klein, 2018). Excellent analyses of how neoliberalism operates in the US, in particular, can be found in MacLean (2017) and Mayer (2016).

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In the United States, as a result of the disastrous Citizens United Supreme Court decision, billionaires and large corporations can now spend an unlimited amount of money to influence the political process. Among the biggest winners of Citizens United are Charles and David Koch, (pronounced coke), owners of the second largest privately-run business in America: Koch Industries. Among other things, the Koch brothers own oil refineries in Texas, Alaska, and Minnesota and control some 4,000 miles of pipeline. Their personal wealth is in the region of $50 billion each: each has the equivalent wealth of fifty thousand millionaires. Impossible to imagine isn't it? Yet, night and day, they want more and more, working through the Charles Koch Foundation. In the last presidential election, where they started opposing Trump but ended supporting him, they had a larger political machine than the whole of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

In 1980 one of the Koch brothers stood for political office. He got nowhere which is why all their energies subsequently went into lobbying. I have put all 26 of their manifestos aims in an Appendix. I have gathered just three of them here to give a sense of neoliberal policies in practice.

- We oppose any compulsory insurance or tax-supported plan to provide health services, including those which finance abortion services.
- We oppose all government welfare, relief projects, and 'aid to the poor' programs. All these government programs are privacy-invading, paternalistic, demeaning, and inefficient. The proper source of help for such persons is the voluntary efforts of private groups and individuals.
- We support the abolition of the **Environmental Protection Agency**.

A very clear example of neoliberalism at work came after the illegal war in Iraq. Paul Bremer was put in charge of re-structuring the country. He declared that Iraq was 'open for business' and set out 100 orders to put that into practice. These ordered the selling-off of several hundred state-run enterprises permitting foreign firms to buy them up and take the profits out of the country. Iraqi banks were opened to foreign ownership making Iraq a playground of world finance and investment. At the same time the orders restricted labour organisation and outlawed strikes. Corporation tax on these businesses was lowered to 15%. Many of these orders are in violation of the Geneva Convention, so an interim government was quickly appointed by the United States to enact them. And, just to make sure they would last, one of Bremer's orders declared that no Iraqi government would have the power to change them.

Let's take a closer look at just one of the 100 orders: Bremer Order 81. This order includes a prohibition against the 're-use of crop seeds of protected varieties' (Brown, 2015, p 143). For 8,000 years Iraqi farmers had successfully grown wheat in the fertile crescent. Iraq was, after all, one of the cradles of civilisation. Farmers had, over

millennia, saved seeds for re-planting, cross-pollinating them to increase the yield until there are now over 200,000 known varieties of wheat in the world. In the twentieth century Iraqi farmers started storing seed in a central seed bank in Abu Ghraib. This was totally destroyed in the invasion of Iraq. Wheat production dropped dramatically, and farmers could not sustain the population for the first time in centuries. But help was at hand. Suddenly thousands of tons of wheat seed were flown in and available free or at low cost. It was genetically modified seed from Monsanto. The Bremer order 81 bound them to buying from Monsanto along with the fertilisers they had to use with them. Organic, low-cost, ecologically sustainable wheat production in Iraq was finished (*Ibid,* pp144-145).

Neoliberalism has had extraordinary success in invading every aspect of our lives. Schools in the UK have business managers – even primary schools. Parents are encouraged to *invest* in their children. Academy chains of schools have been set up by the UK government. They are outside local government control. They are a transparent route to privatising education. The heads of these schools are called CEOs, Chief Executive Officers. Their salaries can reach £400,000 a year: paid for by the taxpayer. This is three time higher than the prime minister's salary. Hospitals as well as schools compete against each other. Competition is the name of the game. Consumerism dominates all. Everything is marketised. Dating agencies advertise their sites as offering a good return for your investment and one encourages you to outsource your love life (*Ibid,* p230). We have become market actors. Outsource your love life? I dread to think what that means!

In the UK, the fifth richest country in the world, four and a half million children live in poverty. There are over 2,000 food banks giving out desperately needed food to families in dire need. Terminally ill patients are being found fit to work weeks, and sometimes days, before they die. This is a direct result of neoliberal austerity policies. This has brought its own form of resistance in UK schools. Lorna Jackson, a London headteacher, had never expected to see two pupils at her primary school sleeping behind rubbish bins at the station with their parents. She explains: 'Mum, dad and the two little children were all sleeping on a mattress they'd found. The family had been evicted, were homeless, and the children had very little to eat. …I realised that my role had changed. Unless I addressed our children's wellbeing, their education was not going to have an impact at all' (Ferguson, 2018). There are some 320,000 homeless people in the UK.

Jackson turned to the education charity School-Home Support, SHS for short. Using money from her pupil premium budget, she installed one of their practitioners in the school full time. Schools with these practitioners can access the charity's welfare fund, which buys items for struggling families such as food, washing machines and school uniforms. The charity can also support families in navigating the benefits systems and

court orders. Jackson has helped more than 100 families at her school this way. This picture is repeated all over the UK. Teachers in many other schools reported buying children school dinners, school shoes, socks, underwear and, for teenage girls, sanitary products as the girls were not attending school during their periods. The list goes on and on (Tickle, 2018). It is shocking that this is taking place in one of the world's richest countries. These are but a tiny few of the voluntary fightbacks all over the world. Resistance is world-wide and takes a multitude of forms. Charity, of course, is not the long-term solution to the destruction of a caring society. Charity just keeps us all where we are.

To sum up so far, neoliberalism puts the individual before the community. It encourages the individual to compete and force his or her way to the top. It doesn't matter who you push out of the way. That person should be stronger. Having to fight your way to the top will make all of us more successful. It is the age of the selfie and the counting of how many likes we get on Facebook, or Instagram or WhatsApp or whatever. Everything is seen from an individual's point of view. This has become a major part of the personal shaped and influenced by the social/political. This is what I understand Metcalf to mean in the earlier quote about neoliberalism as the idea that swallowed the world. This ideology permeates down to the young. It infects personal values and attitudes. In the UK, years of economic austerity, as a result of neoliberal economics, has led to some alienated youth riven by unemployment and low paid jobs, the closing down of youth support services, the lack of any future prospects, trying to find an identity through gangs plagued by knife crime. Or looking to make easy money by carrying drugs for organised crime gangs across county lines, as it has become known. They are faced with these models on TV every day. They see leaders of industry making millions each year. What is the point of a dead-end job if there is easy money to be made in this way? This is one aspect of the personal in the social. One only has to look at other role models for the young. For example, the most powerful world leader, Trump, can lie, make foul sexist comments, bully, be a blatant racist without apparent reprimand. It becomes a potential free-for-all for the young. There will be those who are shocked and seek a different value system and those who are freed to vent their own frustrations in the same way.

These powerful elites, only interested in making money, have warped the notion of truth. The scepticism towards grand narratives that started with postmodernism and poststructuralism in the 1960s has been highjacked by the populist right so that relativism is in the ascendant. We now have personal truths. We live in era of post-truth (Kakutani, 2018).

What seems to be happening currently is that those masses of people left behind and pushed down by the elite tiny minority are being scooped up by right-wing populists who are also just interested in their own wealth and power. Trump in the United States,

Bolsonaro in Brazil, Erdogan in Turkey, Orban in Hungary, Putin in Russia, Xi Yingping in China are all moving back to national self-interest and the list grows.

Young people face a potential environmental disaster fuelled by the race to the top of a cut-throat few immensely rich people. These few use their enormous wealth to buy politicians to pursue their neoliberal economic policies. Their utter moral bankruptcy is shown clearly in the plans big business is making to profit from climate change. They have invented robot bees to pollinate the plants when the insects have been killed off by overuse of pesticides. Honda is looking at how they can develop generators to produce power when infrastructure crumbles. Big pharmaceutical companies are preparing for expanded markets to prepare for water borne diseases in flood areas. Apple is looking at hand cranks to charge your mobile phones if disaster strikes. Another business anticipates a big increase in the sale of ceiling fans if temperatures increase over time (Mahdawi, 2019). It is madness.

I have tried to show how neoliberal economics has enabled huge businesses to use the natural world as their playground in order to amass enormous personal wealth. That beautiful natural world belongs to all of us. They have turned it into a potential disaster zone. I am not trying to impose my vision on anyone. What I am saying as clearly as I can is that the drama teacher, acting as co-playwright with young people in dramas they are creating together, needs to work to understand the greater picture in which young people are seeking themselves. I am proposing that climate change fuelled by neoliberal economic and political policies is the major international context in which young people are asking the question: 'Who am I?'.

This is just part of the context in which young people find themselves. I haven't mentioned millions starving or undernourished; the 25 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18; nor wars and the threat of wars. Young people wherever they are in the world have nuclear weapons pointed at them: from the UK; France; USA; Israel; China; India; Pakistan; Russia and North Korea. There are believed to be about 16,300 nuclear weapons in the world. If this is the overall context, what sort of drama is most useful to help young people locate themselves and work out where they stand? I thought that eventually I ought to say something about drama.

What Sort of Drama is Needed?

I want to make it clear I'm not advocating political plays with a big P: plays that take a single issue such as pollution. This sort of drama has its place and its great uses. I've always been more interested in stories that capture the interest of the students and motivate them. Bolton called this 'play for class'. It was the teacher's role to help the students find the social in that material. This was 'play for teacher'. Little Red Riding

Hood might become a play about when to give and when to take responsibility; when to leave the world of the child with no real responsibilities and join the adult world full of responsibilities. Shakespeare was political to the core but dealt with the huge political/social issues of his day through gripping stories. Plays such as Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, are all dealing with Shakespeare's (and our) contemporary politics through personal stories. As were the great Greek playwrights with Antigone, Medea and so on. The plays live on because they contain problems we are still dealing with. The play the drama teacher chooses might be a version of Cinderella for example. Get rid of the fairy godmother and then what can Cinderella do? She is living in a dysfunctional household. How can she jump out of it? Who can she become in that situation? What can the servants do or her sisters or her father? All are probably deeply unhappy people deep down. It is a microcosm of any young person's world today They are born into circumstances not of their making. They, like you, cannot jump out of those circumstances. How can they locate themselves? What can they do about it? That could be a deeply political version of Cinderella for today's world. None of us can jump out of the world we have been born into.

Another example. Last year I worked with a local youth theatre to devise a play which would be performed as a structured improvisation. It turned out to be about the changing nature of the family spread over three generations. In the first scene a 17 years-old young man and his older sister are sorting out their grandparents' belongings after they have died. The brother handles tools that his grandad used to help him build a go-kart. All the fond memories come flooding back. His older sister has left home and is an independent businesswoman supplying props to film and TV companies: buying cheap and selling dear. She is encouraging him to sell them all; he cannot bear to part with them. The sister, to escape an alcoholic father had, of necessity, sought her independence unencumbered by marriage or a family. She was 'free' of the sorts of responsibilities her parents had had. This is the idealised neoliberal life: a society made up of individuals, each looking after him or her self. The play had neoliberalism at its centre, but the word never came up in the play as performed. However, the young people were experiencing it and as devisers of their play they could discuss it and explore it as well as experience it. They were exploring different aspects of the social in the personal and the personal in the social.

The drama teacher is always dealing with young people in specific times and places. There are no general rules that I know of for finding the drama that will give young people the opportunity to search for who they want to be. The only rule of thumb I have had, following the examples of the early Heathcote and Bolton, is to start with areas that the students are highly motivated to make a play about. These will be the areas that are influencing the personal the most at any particular time, in any particular place. Even if the drama is built to find a connection with themes in a play or novel, for example, then

the *personal* angle of connection to the theme or themes is key. How they are interwoven into the social/political is then to be explored.

A Drama Teacher's Journey
I started teaching drama in 1958. I had no idea what I was doing. I just asked students to pretend to be someone else in role. In the 1960s I discovered Stanislavski. My students had to suffer hours of emotional memory training, splitting the play into units and finding objectives and super-objectives and so on. I came to see this was focusing too strongly on the psychological and this was, after all, the revolutionary late 1960s and politics was in the air. It was time to turn to Brecht. But then in 1969 I went on Gavin Bolton's postgraduate course and he and Dorothy Heathcote became my teachers. (For those of you not from the drama in education world, Heathcote and Bolton have been the two leaders in the field internationally). In 1976 Bolton wrote:
In teaching drama in schools my long-term aims are:
1. To help the student understand himself and the world he lives in
2. To help the student know how and when (and when not) to adapt to the world he lives in
3. To help the student gain understanding of and satisfaction from the medium of drama
   (Bolton, 1976)

Please excuse how dated the gendered language is. However, to put the content of the drama first was in itself revolutionary. Drama had been about learning to act. And here were two people, Bolton and Heathcote, saying content and how students can learn about themselves and themselves in society through that content must be central.

I could see that both Heathcote and Bolton had the personal in the social, and by implication, the social in the personal, but not really the political. However, I became obsessed with the living through process drama they were both promoting. I did not follow Heathcote as she began to favour distancing but stayed with Bolton and his 'living through' approach. He introduced into DIE the word *metaxis*. *Metaxis* (or *metaxu*) is the word used by Plato to describe the condition of 'in-betweenness': the place of spirits between the human and gods, belonging to both and making the world an inter-connected whole. The term was introduced into drama education by Boal. I describe the difference in his use of the term and Bolton's in *Imagining the Real*.

> In Boal, *metaxis* is 'the state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different, *autonomous* worlds …The oppressed must *forget the real world* which was the origin of the image and play with the image itself in its artistic embodiment' (Boal, 1995: 43–4, emphasis added). In Bolton the meaning is quite different, 'the power … of the experience stem[s] from fully recognising that one is in two social contexts *at the*

same time (Bolton, 1992: 11, emphasis added). It is this power of 'being' in two worlds at the same time that underlies the sort of drama I go on to describe and I shall be using *metaxis* in the way Bolton describes it rather than the way Boal defines it. (Davis, 2014, p.52)

Bolton describes it as being in two social contexts at the same time: 'a dialectic between the actual and fictitious' (Bolton, 2010, p 127). In my own work I extended the concept and came to see *metaxis* as the student in role being themselves and the role at the same time and that role being in two social contexts: of the drama and contemporary society. 'Being' in role here is the key word. The immediacy of the living through experience as *metaxis* led me to criticise Brecht. More and more I came to understand that Brecht was leaving the audience fundamentally in the same place when they left the theatre as when they took their seats. They could comfortably criticise the world in the play they had seen but it would not have challenged their own value system. It was Lear from his high castle walls looking out over the world but not experiencing the hurly burly of life below. I want to digress here and use Shakespeare's *King Lear* to illustrate my argument about the key importance of living through drama.

Let me start with the title of this conference. *Who am I? Who can tell me who I am?* It was my nine-year-old autistic grandson who asked, 'Who am I?'. His teaching assistant told his mother that he had been wandering around the classroom in a daze asking himself: 'Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing? What can I see? Where are my eyes?'. Would that we all asked ourselves those profound questions every day. It reminded me of Shakespeare's King Lear saying, 'Who is it can tell me who I am?'' and later he asks, 'Where are his eyes?'. I want to try to use the journey made by King Lear in the play as a rough sort of analogy to the type of drama involvement that I have pursued in my drama teaching.

One of the many themes in the play is how we tend to see what we want to see through the lens of our own self-interest. King Lear, at 80, decides it is time to retire. He will divide his kingdom between his three daughters according to how much they love him. The more they express their love for him, the more they will receive. The two elder daughters profess boundless love for him but the youngest says she will only love him as a daughter should. She can't give him all her love and have none for a future husband. A furious Lear curses her in the most ferocious terms and banishes her. He divides his kingdom between his other two daughters and gives them all his power. They quickly turn on him and first one then the other strip him of his followers, his dignity, his very understanding of himself. As a king he had come to see himself as all powerful. He had become, as Bruner argues, his own narrative about himself (Bruner, 1987). He had come to believe he was powerful as a person. But he was only powerful as a king.

Lear begins a journey of self-discovery through the play. After each layer of his self-knowledge is shredded by his ruthless daughters, he searches for himself. 'Doth any here know me?'…Who is it can tell me who I am?' (Act 1:4). When he is finally left with just himself, all his trappings of kingship taken away, his knights, his servants, he begins to glimpse something else. 'You see me here, you gods, a poor old man …O fool, I shall go mad!' (Act 2:4). And he goes out into a driving storm with just a loyal follower and his Fool.

He begins his descent into madness or rather into a mental breakdown where he is searching for himself; unable to understand how it is possible to be where he is; sorry for himself. 'I am a man more sinned against than sinning' (Act 3:2). His two followers try to urge him into a little hut. Lear starts to look outwards for the first time rather than just inwards. He sees for the first time how his people have to live.

> 'Poor naked wretches, …How shall your houseless heads…defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en Too little care of this!
> …Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel' (Act 3:4).

He tears off his clothes. He is no longer looking at the world from the warmth and security of his castle but for the first time he is in actual physical contact with how his subjects live. He descends into a complete breakdown. At the end of the play he is for a short while re-united with his youngest daughter Cordelia. He begins to glimpse himself as just a human being. He kneels before her to say, 'I am a very foolish fond old man' (Act 4:7). It is a remarkable change from the raging king at the start of the play. And just before he dies, with a dead Cordelia in his arms, feeling the end near, he asks one of the servants 'Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir' (Act 5:3). What an extraordinary change in him: from tyrant at the start of the play, to someone who will humbly ask and say 'thank you, sir' to a servant. A journey to some sort of self-knowledge has taken place.

I want to take a number of key points from this example. It is a very rough analogy of some key dimensions of the drama I have been pursuing. Lear would never have even begun the journey to some sort of self-awareness if he had stayed in his castle. From the high walls someone may have pointed out to him the poverty below and he may have felt he ought to do something – maybe hand food out at Xmas. This would be like someone pretending to be in role or as in Brecht, alienating or distancing oneself, thinking that way one can see more clearly. Rather than looking out on the world, he had to be shocked into awareness and go naked into a storm to begin to re-make himself. He had to experience it directly. It was visceral for him, emotional, affective, immediate. It stripped him of his supposed identity so he could more clearly find out who he was. These are some of the dimensions that living through drama can bring with an internal engagement with role. There can be real emotion at play. Not raw emotion which is too close to the personal but nevertheless there can be a feeling of anger, shame, despair and

so on. Emotion can be felt when we cry at the death of someone in a film. It is filtered by our knowledge it is not real. A real death might leave us torn apart for days. That sort of raw emotion would be far too powerful but the filtered emotion in drama can still be real. With *metaxis* the person in role would feel it as the person and as the role. The decisions and actions made in role would also resonate with the actual value system of the student. It would have the added impact of feeling as well as thinking: feeling thoughtfully. For example, the student playing Little Red Riding Hood pushes her mother to tell her if she is really going to be in danger or not. She might get a *real* sense of her mother prevaricating. Her mother has to get to work. She does not have time to go to grandma's. She needs her daughter to be grown up and go for her. She tells her daughter she *will* be safe. Parents do manipulate us. They are not to be trusted. Played from inside the role both can actually get a real sense of the life pressures that interfere and damage the relationship they would ideally want between mother and child. So 'living through' drama became a key part of my drama teaching.

In an aside here I want to pay tribute to Gavin Bolton who is now in his 90s. Bolton ploughed his own furrow in drama teaching. He diverged from Heathcote, from Neelands, from Brecht, and pursued his search for 'being' in role as a new art form. In that sense he is and has been my teacher for the last 50 years. All the key elements of living through drama were invented by Heathcote and in this sense, she was the trail blazer and innovator. Nevertheless, the way Bolton developed and fought for process drama as an art form leads me to regard him as the most important teacher of this form of drama, to date, in the drama in education world.

I want to turn now to two other key influences on my drama teaching. Rather than try to cover the ground that is in *Imagining the Real* (Davis, 2014) I just want to try to focus on a few key areas that underpin the book. It is an attempt to approach a new form of living through process drama.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, having turned from Brecht and tried to introduce my own form of the political in drama, I came across Mikhail Bakhtin (Bakhtin, 2014,1981). His work had been re-discovered after a lifetime being hidden in the Gorky Institute archives. In the 1960s some students had come across his work on Dostoevsky and recognised how original it was. He was amazingly still alive after surviving the Russian Revolution, imprisonment, exile and the 2nd WW. Before he died in 1975 his work had been translated and become known world-wide. I have found Holquist (2002) the most useful introduction to Bakhtin.

I want to try to sketch some key dimensions of Bakhtin's work that appealed to me and which I incorporated into my thinking. I am not any sort of expert on Bakhtin (nor on anything else come to that) but I am just sharing what stood out for me as useful. Bakhtin

was consumed with a search for a self and the role language plays in that process. Wherever we are born we are subject to a cacophony of voices: all competing for our attention. He termed this polyphony. But not in a musical sense which might indicate tending to harmony. These different voices are all ideologically saturated, made up of different speech genres. He called this heteroglossia. A car thief can be a joy rider or a perpetrator of crimes against motor vehicles. These different voices tend to combine in order to make meaning and where this is taken over by a dominant voice, such as a political party, then you can have a monologue. This monologism, the language of dictators, needs constantly to be opened out again to create a dialogic process. The problem then is always how can I know if it is I who is talking or another. Bakhtin as an aphorism could be 'I is other'.

Bakhtin analysed Dostoevsky's novels in this way. He argued there is an absence of authorial voice which could introduce a monologic discourse. As a result of this absence, the characters speak for themselves and enter into each other's consciousness in a dialogic process. Dostoevsky was not interested in 'explaining' his characters but rather provoking them to ultimate revelations of themselves in extreme situations. The author stays out of it. This appealed to me as a role for the drama teacher: not to become the dominant, monologic voice but to ensure there were a number of competing voices creating a dialogic interaction. In this sense trying to co-create drama situations where the students would find out about themselves in role.

Another key area was Bakhtin's notion of the situatedness of language. Meaning was always site specific. A dictionary is, in this sense, the graveyard of language. Take the expression 'wow'. It means nothing specific until it is situated. A father, in a hospital, looking down on his new-born child might say; 'Wow!'. A person, in a doctor's surgery being told she has terminal cancer might also say; 'Wow'. Context and situatedness totally alter the possible meanings. I could see that context and creating the site of the drama were going to be important for the language and meaning. I used the notion of paper locations to help create the site but that is another story. Bond's theory of sites (Bond, 2000, p. 10) elaborated and developed all this which leads me on to the next important stage.

In the 1970s and 80s another influence began to emerge, the importance of which I did not at first recognise. I saw most of the first productions of several of Edward Bond's plays: *Lear, The Sea, The Fool, Summer* and so on and later *Saved*. I knew they were important but didn't know in what way. They disturbed me but I didn't know why. In the 1980s I came to know his work better. I could then reflect on my disturbances in a more productive way. Take his play *The Fool* as an example. *The Fool* is a play about the farm labourer poet John Clare. In one scene, in prison, Clare is visiting some friends who, along with a lot of other farm labourers have been arrested for rioting. They were

protesting against their land being taken over by the local lord. They have been sentenced to hang. The court decides there are too many to he hung so only five are chosen to hang and the rest to be imprisoned or deported. Hysterical laughter from nearby cells can be heard from those who have been spared. Clare is left with his closest friend who is one of those to hang. Clare starts laughing. It is different to the other laughter. It is genuine laughter and he can't stop. He covers himself with his friend's blanket to try to smother the sound. He rolls onto the floor still laughing only to be stopped when the gaoler pulls the blanket off. I couldn't make sense of it at the time. I very much doubt it had been directed in the way Bond's plays needed to be. Just before he starts laughing Clare has seen a fly going in and out between the prison bars and no one has climbed up and killed it even though they could have. What I came to understand was that Bond was opening a space for the audience to examine what was happening in a different way. The audience may well have thought that the farm labourers should have been allowed to protest. What was happening was unjust. Brecht may well have found a way to alienate or distance this event to force the audience to come to this sort of conclusion. But this wasn't challenging what Bond wanted to challenge: the very notion of prisons in the first place. Bond was not breaking the rhythm of the play but disturbing the audience in a different way. Clare's laughter opened a gap, a space for the imagination to set to work. What was this about? The fly could go in and out. The whole idea of prisons is unjust. You can't have justice of any sort in an unjust society. Bond was inviting the audience to imagine the real; not to look at the scene with their ideological glasses on. I'm not suggesting that Bond had a pre-determined outcome in mind. But I feel sure that he was opening a space here for the event to be examined with different eyes.

Take another example, this time from *Saved*. This was his second play but the first to bring him to wider attention. In the final scene, Len is working at mending a chair that has been broken in a quarrel between members of the dysfunctional family with whom he is lodging. The only words spoken are by Len who asks someone to fetch him his hammer. He is ignored. The other three members of the family do not make any contact with each other. The father fills in his football coupons (the 1960s equivalent of doing the lottery). The mother and daughter flick through the TV programme magazine. Len is given a whole series of very deliberate poses to make while trying to get the chair to stand without wobbling. There are some seven of these: standing, crouching, head down, stomach over the seat, head down on the seat and so on. He is ignored by the other three. I could not work out what was happening. Now *Saved* was written before Bond had begun to fully develop his form of theatre. I came to see this was an early form of making a gap where the audience could not look at what was happening with ideologised eyes. The imagination either would or would not be brought into play. When I first saw it, I thought it didn't make sense. And it didn't unless I could begin to search in a different way. Later I came across where Bond had written about these images. He had in mind the unfinished stone carvings by Michelangelo. A human form is slowly emerging from

the stone but not yet fully human. Here was the image of the human still struggling to emerge from Len despite all that had been levelled against him. A space had been created where the audience could examine closely what was actually going on.

In 1990 I asked him to be the patron of the International Centre for Studies in Drama in Education (of which I was co-founder and director) at the University of Central England (now Birmingham City University). He graciously accepted and fulfilled that role for the next ten years, giving a workshop to my students each year. Through Bond's workshops and his theoretical writings, I came to have some sense of the devices that were at work in his plays. It seemed to me there was a way to use them to develop living through process drama. I needed to find a way where the students in role could open a space and dislodge each other out of their usual way of seeing. The search for this new form is written up in *Imagining the Real*. I did not succeed. I asked Chris Cooper to critique my efforts and his chapter in the book offers a useful starting point for where it needs to go next.

To sum up: my search for form combined 'living through' drama, 'being' in role, metaxis and so on from Bolton and early Heathcote; dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia from Bakhtin; and immediacy of involvement with disruption of the 'known' and his many drama devices from Bond. The central purpose has always been to use 'living through' drama as an art form. That is to find layers of meaning in the content being co-created to try to fulfil the role that historically drama has always fulfilled: to enable humans to grapple with who we are and where we are; to discuss different value systems and find where we want to place ourselves.

I have tried to show how neoliberal economics has enabled huge businesses to use the natural world as their playground in order to amass enormous personal wealth. This has placed climate change as the central concern surrounding young people and all of us. It is in that context that drama needs to help young people locate themselves and forge their value systems. That beautiful natural world belongs to all of us. Neoliberal economics and the drive to exploit greater and greater profits has turned the world into a potential disaster zone. That competitive race to the top has permeated our culture in Euro-Atlantic countries at least. This is the social/political context in which young people are trying to create themselves and their value systems. Figure 3 shows an example of the forces now dominating the personal and seeking to influence adults and young people. Sun, sea, sand and fashion. Real waves, real sand, life-guards at the ready - all in the middle of Paris. Never mind climate change: let's have a fashion parade! Consumerism dominates all.

Fig. 3. Lagerfeld's Spring 2019 collection shown in Paris, 2018

I am not trying to impose my vision on anyone. What I am saying as clearly as I can is that the drama teacher, acting as co-playwright with young people, needs to work to understand the greater picture in which young people are seeking themselves. Young people need to be able to make themselves not be made to order. None of us can jump out of this world. We have 11 years left before unstoppable decline sets in. In the words of the President of Ireland, while speaking recently to a biodiversity conference in Ireland.:

> Around the world, the library of life that has evolved over billions of years – our biodiversity – is being destroyed, poisoned, polluted, invaded, fragmented, plundered, drained and burned at a rate not seen in human history. If we were coalminers we'd be up to our waists in dead canaries. (Watts, 2019 b).

Canaries are birds that miners used to carry. If they died it meant there was deadly gas and the miners should leave immediately. A very useful reminder.

So, the question remains. Who am I? If I am other, who are the others who live inside me and have become part of me? Do I want these uninvited visitors to stay? How can drama help young people ask themselves these same questions?

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Appendix

The Koch brothers' campaign for president in 1980 included the following manifesto aims (US spelling). They embody in an extremely clear way the social values of neoliberalism and how they are intended to impact on the personal.

- "We urge **the repeal of federal campaign finance laws**, and the immediate abolition of the despotic Federal Election Commission."
- "We favor the abolition of **Medicare and Medicaid** programs."
- "We oppose any compulsory insurance or tax-supported plan to provide health services, including those which finance abortion services."
- "We also favor the deregulation of the medical insurance industry."
- "We favor the repeal of the fraudulent, virtually bankrupt, and increasingly oppressive **Social Security** system. Pending that repeal, participation in Social Security should be made voluntary."
- "We propose the abolition of the governmental **Postal Service**. The present system, in addition to being inefficient, encourages governmental surveillance of private correspondence. Pending abolition, we call for an end to the monopoly system and for allowing free competition in all aspects of postal service."
- "We oppose all personal and corporate income taxation, including capital gains taxes."
- "We support the eventual repeal of all taxation."
- "As an interim measure, all criminal and civil sanctions against tax evasion should be terminated immediately."
- "We support repeal of all law which impede the ability of any person to find employment, such as **minimum wage** laws."
- "We advocate the complete separation of education and State. Government schools lead to the indoctrination of children and interfere with the free choice of individuals. Government ownership, operation, regulation, and subsidy of schools and colleges should be ended."
- "We condemn compulsory education laws … and we call for the immediate repeal of such laws."
- "We support the repeal of all taxes on the income or property of private schools, whether profit or non-profit."
- "We support the abolition of the **Environmental Protection Agency**."
- "We support abolition of the **Department of Energy**."
- "We call for the dissolution of all government agencies concerned with transportation, including the **Department of Transportation**."

- "We demand the return of America's railroad system to private ownership. We call for the privatization of the public roads and national highway system."
- "We specifically oppose laws requiring an individual to buy or use so-called "self-protection" equipment such as safety belts, air bags, or crash helmets."
- "We advocate the abolition of the Federal Aviation Administration."
- "We advocate the abolition of the Food and Drug Administration."
- "We support an end to all subsidies for child-bearing built into our present laws, including all welfare plans and the provision of tax-supported services for children."
- "We oppose all government welfare, relief projects, and 'aid to the poor' programs. All these government programs are privacy-invading, paternalistic, demeaning, and inefficient. The proper source of help for such persons is the voluntary efforts of private groups and individuals."
- "We call for the privatization of the inland waterways, and of the distribution system that brings water to industry, agriculture and households."
- "We call for the repeal of the Occupational Safety and Health Act."
- "We call for the abolition of the Consumer Product Safety Commission."
- "We support the repeal of all state usury laws.

Countering the Insistence of Neoliberal Consciousness and Mentality
Materialist Approaches to the Intensive Practices of Speaking and Acting: Lacanian Analysis and Drama in Education

by Bill Roper (W. J. Roper)
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Abstract: The heart of this response to David's keynote is a framework for approaching living through drama and metaxis, and what is immanent to them, working within a set of social psychological categories derived from the work of Jacques Lacan, that can give a determination to the subjective purpose of that keynote: we are part natural and part denatured beings; signifiers in chains criss-cross us unevenly, consciousness and body plus the unconscious; our selves are split between these, though we increasingly deny that split (Jekyll) and are prey to jouissance, narcissism and toxic positivity; this can lead to a psychotic self without an unconscious (Hyde). Living through drama can, whilst shielding us from jouissance, mobilise the subjects and the signifiers of role and reality, of metaxis, particularly as knotted in situated emotion and conscious and unconscious meanings, through speech and action. Drama as art form has its own way with this active-side, where the signifiers of acts and emotions mobilise the split subject and reposition us in a non-determined, partly free relationship to our inadequate present symbolic co-ordinates and open paths of new signifiers and chains to a changing world.

Keywords: metaxis, signifier, imaginary, symbolic, jouissance, Lacan.

Personal context

David,

Some 41 years after we first met at Birmingham Polytechnic and became co-workers and friends, on writing a response to your keynote, I can't but reflect on the gratitude I owe to you for the challenges, events and experiences that you initiated and which have been so formative for me. There are countless instances I could recount, but if I can cut straight to the title of your keynote address and place it in the middle of the four fields – drama/theatre, education, politics and philosophy/psychology - that have been the area of our work together, I can immediately start to map what I owe to you starting from the enunciation: Who am I? Who can tell me who I am?

Though formally it was a small percentage of my teaching time, the thread of reading, writing, discussion and events in Drama in Education, was central to the course of my thinking about psychology. And, I feel as though it wasn't just in drama/theatre, education and politics that you were my guide, but also in psychology and philosophy:

Bruner, Vygotsky, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, met up with what I brought: Skinner, Neisser, Locke, Wittgenstein, Goffman.

So now, I want to say some more from the standpoint of what I first tried to contribute to the PGCE Drama in Education in the early 1980s: to bring psychology and more than a bit of philosophy to thinking about that project in teacher education that was to prove so successful. My inexperience and naivety at that point are what I recall, but very quickly we were into productive fields and projects, and the path of those, around the Who am I? and Drama, where we are both subject and object, leads me again to try to say a few words about bringing psychology to the field that you have been so important in helping to open up.

That combination of influences of forty years ago have seeded a path beyond those I had then, though still with your input in the intervening years, towards what I think of as an adequate materialistic social psychology. Adequate in the sense of meeting the unique situation of the human species, coming out of nature, both determined and free, but being in many ways more than natural; and that also, in particular, provided a social psychology that built upon and was adequate to the arts, theatre and drama in education. Surprisingly to the me of the 1980s the best source that I have found, surpassing Vygotsky in many ways, comes from the work of Jacques Lacan in psychoanalysis and those that have developed that work since his death in 1981 (Roper, 2007).

So I've been thinking about and writing bits of this response to your keynote for a fair while now, but putting it together and finding a path to give an outline hasn't been easy. The two titles above give an indication of the content I want to cover, but writing it as a paper wouldn't do justice to your spoken keynote, its level and scope, and the fact of our long-time relationship of friendship and engagement. I think we both know the other's areas of expertise and affinity and we can explore the detail of those if we want, but the need here on my side is to put it together in a coherent outline. In a Hegelian sense I don't aim to refute, but sublate your concept of drama; analysing that which is immanent in several moments of your account and hence negating it whilst preserving the content at a higher level. I'm not convinced that I'm correct in all of what I'm about to say, but I think it is a distinct alternative articulation, and a fuller discourse, to the one you offer of the place of self and process drama in neoliberal capitalism and that this has consequences for practice and research. The covid-19 pandemic may be a pause and an opportunity for change in that headlong advance of the neoliberal programme but the trajectory still seems to be on course for an oligarchy to suck further capital and wealth out of an increasingly impoverished majority and destroy the planet; so the need for change remains, if possible, even more urgently. So here goes.

I want to begin, by placing self and Drama in Education in a set of what could be called intensive practices of speaking and acting. From the indication above I want to include Lacanian psychoanalysis as a talking cure in this category. I think there are other practices in this category particularly within the arts but these are the two with which I am familiar and can begin. The precise definition isn't important at this stage, some of the themes to be introduced will allow that to be clearer, but we can surmise that from a social psychological standpoint we're looking at practices that have distinctive patterns of social interaction, within defined formal relationships and are aimed at the realisation of particular purposes. These intensive practices of speaking and acting also share a concern with the limits or boundaries that our bodies and ordinary life seem to generate: specifically they aim to go beyond those limits or boundaries through speaking and/or acting.

Immanence

In your address to a conference of practitioners of Drama in Education (Davis, 2022), you talk from the insiders' standpoint about living through, or process, drama and provide examples of how it might work and the changes it can bring about for the participants in the drama classroom. From an outsiders' standpoint the immense skill, know-how, sophistication and complexity of what goes on every day in the planning, delivery and evaluation of the work of drama in education, can seem to be being taken for granted by those on the inside. What features in the discussion and may differ between approaches appears to the fore against the unseen background of all that is tacitly assumed. I want to begin by returning to this content that is shared and try, as a social psychologist, to find some of the features, and use the examples that you give to bring out the complexity of the moments involved: we are in the realm of group-work, a teacher with a class or part of a class of children; and the moments are numerous: a child feels a particular emotion or sees things from a different perspective in the course of the drama involvement, or just as significantly, does not feel or see those particulars.

For the social psychologist, here we have something to be given a description in all its complexity: several people, co-present, working together, talking, acting, being themselves and then being in role, seeing, hearing, feeling, thinking. In introducing Lacan here I want to mainly examine the relationship of two of the three registers or orders as they are present in the drama class: the imaginary and the symbolic, not a great deal different from Bruner's (1974: ch.18) modes of knowing through image and symbol, but given a more incisive and far-reaching import by Lacan. But I also in due course want to place the third order, the real, in particular insofar as it has effects on the first two.

Derek Hook (2018:12) explains Lacan's imaginary as, 'the domain of inter-subjectivity that serves the ego...and functions to support the images that subjects use to substantiate

themselves' and, in contrast, the symbolic as, 'far more disturbing and unpredictable... It links the subject to a trans-subjective order of truth, it provides them with a set of socio-symbolic co-ordinates, and it ties them into a variety of roles and social contracts'. In practice the symbolic order is the order of signifiers, a somewhat broader term than just words, that Lacan takes from Saussure's (1983: 67, and particularly when talking about linguistic value,118) account of the sign, being the part that is a sound or a mark on paper, or symptom, and not the meaning part of the sign that is called the signified.

Hook, in explaining the two types of other in these two registers, quotes Lacan, 'there is the other as imaginary. It's here in the imaginary relation with the other that traditional...self-consciousness is instituted. There's also the Other who speaks from my place, apparently this Other who is within me. This is an Other of a totally different nature from my other, my counterpart' (Hook 2018:14). The other is in the imaginary, here and now, their face: my rival or what I misrecognise as me; the Other is in the symbolic, somewhere inside or outside: authority, witness, validator, regulator. A peer group member is often an other; a parent, a teacher or a dictionary, university, social media or government may be where we locate the supposed Other. The Other can also be purely abstract, without personification, then it becomes the equivalent of society.[i]

The implications of the trans-subjective symbolic order and this trans-subjective Other, at times called the Big Other, is pivotal both in Lacan's career and in the implications for all aspects of human psychology and social life. Lacan moved from phenomenology and existentialism towards structuralism in the late 1940s to the early 1950s. The symbolic order as Lacan conceives it changes the nature of psychology, in fact it goes beyond psychology to open up a radically changed set of horizons (Hook, 2018, Introduction and ch.6). The human opens on to a new world of possibilities and risks; now finding out about yourself, others and the world involves new dimensions of ambiguity and uncertainty: in the symbolic order, how do I know what the other's words mean?, what designs they have on me?, and how to deal with living in a bath of arbitrary and conventional signifiers? But on the positive side, thinking and acting collectively, and even perhaps as a species becomes a possibility.

David, this is the point that we've been at numerous times before and the difficulties begin. Lacan is so hard to understand and he makes it so difficult; because it is; effectively in asking us to think through the effects of the symbolic order he is asking us to metaphorically pick ourselves up by our own bootlaces.

Such a conceptual development changes the way we need to think about the drama class. You mention groups working with Little Red Riding Hood and this gives some excellent illustrations: role play where one person is giving dependent and fearful behaviour and gestures to the other who is giving caring and guiding ones in return, is the inter-

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subjective, working in the imaginary of the daughter-mother relationship; but if then there is the symbolic of, 'Mummy, I'm afraid the wolf will eat me', or, 'But Daddy says you'll be safe if you keep to the main path darling', the signifiers don't just add to, but overwrite and change the communication, relationship and situation, so that instead of the immediacy of the imaginary we now have the structure of the trans-subjective and with their chains of signifiers a wholly different expanded realm of dimensions opens up. An initial view that drama is dominated by the imaginary and inter-subjective is not right; it's not that the inter-subjective comes first and then the trans-subjective adds to it, the symbolic was there right from the start: 'the imaginary is built on the symbolic' (Hook 2018:130). Speaking sets in motion the creation of roles and dramatic context, the intersubjective is tested out within it, and this imaginary can be modified through symbolically based procedures. As participants and audience our identifications may begin in the imaginary, but even with emotional dimensions the symbolic is close at hand providing the structure of the drama, with roles, actions and its connectedness witnessed and vouched for by the supposed Big Other, who in turn can seem to both be outside and inside of the inter-subjectively orienting and speaking actors. The act of speaking and its relationship to the signifier, complicates matters, and opens up the third order, the real: when we speak there is the enunciated, as the particular signifiers themselves, their order, a statement, a performative, part of our cultural resources and the symbolic order, and at the same time there is the enunciation, as bodily, as voice, as part of our natural being and the real order. This real order will be encountered again when the question of gratification is raised, and Lacan introduces the idea of jouissance. However the symbolic is the level at which the unconscious operates, but interestingly the subject of the unconscious is linked to the voice, enunciation and the real rather than signifiers like 'I' in the symbolic (Lacan 2006: 677).

Broadly, in practice I'd think of the teacher, also as person and not just the role, needing to find a small cluster of the central signifiers of the Little Red Riding Hood drama that they want to do. Their attention, working with the class is then, in part, an even and suspended hearing, in the main, of these hollow signifiers in their associations, chains and structures, but also listening for the dimension of the real: vocal non-verbal hesitations, intonation, stresses and even looking for the non-vocal, non-verbal bungled actions (see Freud (1901), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*) and the like that accompany signifiers: together these will begin to mark the children's ways in to the drama, bits of their unconscious, the knowledge involved, the emotions and values, and provide an extending structure of signifiers and some indications of where it is marked by the real. The novel and surprising, and gaps and hesitations in signifiers are attended to more than their meaning.

What I want to do now is have a look at the implications of these immanent structures; and say some more about the third of Lacan's registers, the real, and work them into the

aspects of your keynote. Broadly, that is, under the headings of: consciousness, the self, naturalism, affect, the unconscious, the act, politics.

Consciousness

Lacan suggests that to be at the level of consciousness and self-consciousness is to be in the register of the imaginary, with the ego and inter-subjective communication and relationships with others; that philosophically we are in the existential or phenomenological. This is the level at which you propose:

> This is the existential dilemma. Drama provides the opportunity to try to
> see more clearly the reality in which they are enmeshed. This is for me
> the central aim of drama in education: the chance for young people to try
> to locate themselves and decide who they want to become. (Davis 2022)

Consciousness, and seeing in particular, are the default level in your keynote: for better or worse seeing is dominant, if learning occurs it is 'a coming to see', but there's a bit of a warning that, 'we tend to see what we want to see'. This predominance of consciousness is not adequate to our situation, it is beset by illusion, it leaves parts out, and if Lacan is right it is an ally of the ego and tied up with narcissism, toxic positivity and other features of our psychology under neoliberalism. Not unsurprisingly our apparent psychologies are tied to the immediacies of our lives as workers and consumers, and to some extent the prospect, as well as the reality of such, for children. As Verhaeghe (2012: 114) asks, 'how have 30-or-so-years of neo-liberal ideology affected our identity? And how has this system colonised the way we think, given that it goes against all our private and collective interests?' Though Freud wasn't the first to downplay the conscious, several times he returns to say the 'psychoanalytic view of the relation of the conscious ego to an overpowering unconscious...was the psychological blow to men's narcissism' that compared to the biological and cosmological blows delivered by the work of Darwin and Copernicus (Freud 1925: 272). Since then numerous strands of the life sciences and psychoanalysis now broadly converge on such a view centred around ideas of the unconscious, where psychoanalytic mechanisms of defence such as repression, disavowal and foreclosure are at work, and the more general nonconscious of cognitive science, where processes operate in the brain below the level of consciousness. So the teacher in our Riding Hood drama needs to be educationally sensitive to the signifier chains stretching towards less accessed regions of family, community and heritage.

To elucidate further, in the spirit of Norretranders' (1998) book *The User Illusion,* I want to go along with his description of the Silicon Valley computer scientists who from the 1970s talked about the user illusion as, 'the picture the user has of the machine', such that users had troubling views of their machines, and that the problem wasn't with 'whether this picture was accurate or complete... but with the creation of a myth that is coherent and appropriate – and is based on the user, not the computer' (ibid: 291).

These three stages are worth going through one by one, especially as Norretrander (1998) uses this computer example as the basis to assert 'that the user illusion is a good metaphor for consciousness. Our consciousness is our user illusion for ourselves and the world' (ibid: 292).

By implication he is stating:

Consciousness: is not accurate or complete;

is the creation of a myth that is coherent and appropriate;

is based on the user of the user (subject), not the user (object).

Norretrander (1998), in the case of consciousness, points out that this creates a profound problem, 'the user illusion operates with a user by the name of *I*... The *I* experiences that it is the *I* that acts... that senses... and that thinks. But it is the *Me* that does so. *I am my user illusion of myself...*the *Me* contains loads of bits the *I* is not interested in' (italics in the original, ibid: 292). The third statement is therefore difficult: are we using ourselves? Norretranders says the I has the illusion, but the me is the user. But he disqualifies the I from being the user of the user, who is me! (Ibid: 256). The I is just illusion, epiphenomenon without causal agency. So the user of the user is left empty, and going beyond Norretranders I'm tempted to use this impasse to imply: the user illusion of ourselves is an illusion amplified by an engineering of us by the neoliberal capitalism that uses us as producers and consumers. In effect this empty space can be opened up to other claims in drama; we can both hold our capture by the signifiers of the market in juxtaposition with signifiers of other social bonds, the symbolic ideals of family and community.

The Self

This concern with accounts of the self that focus on consciousness, the imaginary and the ego and leave out or diminish such things as the symbolic order and the biological, signals another aspect of this worry about your keynote: the predominance of experience, perception and contemplation *over* speaking and acting. I think the latter are there, but they are the taken for granted; the tacitly assumed; and this feels to me to be in need of correction, as we are both clear in our commitment to materialism, and the importance of active connections between subject and object have often been stressed and discussed by us with reference to Marx's *Theses on Feurbach*, in particular where he says,

the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as human sensuous activity, practice, not subjectively. (Marx 1968: 28)

In our Riding Hood drama, suspended attention may well lead us to note unexpected signifier links in the children's speaking and acting both in and out of role, that is in their activity, their sensuous practice in the make believe: these illogical, tangential, unexpected signifiers, but also any signifiers that are marked by the real, are our resource more than what the child may go on to say under the auspices of reflection. One of the refrains of Lacan's work was the distrust of understanding, closely associated with his proposals for the end of analysis – cases of analysands who understand very well but their symptoms persist are often cited. Bruce Fink, translator of Lacan's *Écrits,* in *Against Understanding,* discussing this, quotes Lacan as saying, 'What is at stake is not, in fact, a move to consciousness but rather to speech...and that speech must be heard by someone.' (Fink 2014: 6)

This is also concretely what we are listening and looking for in the links that connect the child's practice with aspects of the broader horizons of the historical and social context in which we live: the capitalist and global heating crises are immanent to education itself, and the role of activity and subjectivity are the crucial connectors, especially when your keynote comes to a serious point of impasse:

> It may seem a very strange way to start setting out my approach to drama teaching by dealing with climate change and economics but there is nothing more important for any of us than these two areas. You will be familiar with what I am going to say but I want to spell it out in some detail anyway. Rather, we think we are familiar with it but I would suggest most of us are in denial – or we would be out on the streets demonstrating every day. (Davis 2022)

What features of self, do we need to articulate to begin to understand ourselves with regard to this typical predicament, and how do we act to counter this resistance or shield ourselves from what causes it? Are we both familiar with it and in denial? If so, this may be close to the notion of the barred or split subject that Lacan (in part this is linked to the idea of signifiers being repressed from the conscious to the unconscious, and in part, the enunciated/enunciation split, see Hook 2016: 28-43 for a fuller discussion) was to develop and one of those mechanisms of defence: disavowal, which Freud also saw as the beginning of a psychosis (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973: 118). Or are we, not familiar with it, and is 'spelling it out' going to be enough? Obviously this is important in a world where money is used to spread misinformation and confusion. But if we're both familiar with it and in denial, is at least part of the problem within us and the structure of our selves, 'our mentality' (Harvey, 2012, 20 mins in), under neoliberal capitalism?

The notions of the trans-subjective and the symbolic order are a way of articulating the core of this connection between the subject, ourselves and the object, the capitalist and global heating crises. In developing this Lacan (2007) defined in formal terms a series of social bonds provided by certain discourses, like the Master-Slave discourse that he took

from Hegel and made the first of four social bonds that we act within in our social and educational lives (see Roper 2003). In the early 1970s Lacan added a fifth discourse or what in Lacan's formalisation is a corrupted social bond, the capitalist discourse, and this is his attempt to show the mediation of our current mentality by the trans-subjective structure of capitalism. We are all familiar with the constant nudges and notifications that bombard us through tweets, posts, emails to our phones and other gadgets; offers, things to be enjoyed, to like and share with our friends, not to miss out on, but to enhance our life and social media image. The detail of this discourse reveals at its core the inundation of the split subject by an element of the third register, the real, which Lacan (2007) names object-a, surplus satisfaction or surplus jouissance in Lacan's French. This is a direct parallel of Marx's (1976: ch.11) concept of surplus value in his analysis of capital and profit.

Vanheule (2016) gives an exemplary presentation of the detail of Lacan's capitalist discourse, using the butcher's wife's dream from Freud's (1900) *The Interpretation of Dreams* as an example, where her denial of her own gratification, by forbidding her husband to buy her the caviar that she craves, allows her to have the dream in the first place. The self-denial of gratification allows an unconscious complex of signifiers (the dream) which, in Freud's analysis, contains a wish or desire that relates to her asking in the dream what makes a woman attractive and about her husband's desire:

> Questions of this type can only be articulated to the extent that instant satisfaction is rejected...When everything is gratification of demands, something at the root of the social bond gets lost... The search associated with living with questions of existence ("who am I?" "what do you want from me?") is replaced by a search for solutions in dealing with corporeal tension, and for experiences of fulfillment. (Vanheule 2016: 8)

In the 2020s the transition of such processes into the domains of politics and global environment have occurred, but the same sort of logic of objects of gratification, and the way satisfaction is inimical to signification, applies, and is the predicament of most of us in our personal and public lives.

What model of the self and practices are adequate to placing and countering it? Certainly our selves are not independent of capitalism and global heating, and able to contemplate them objectively; instead our mentalities are part of the problem, and key aspects of the self are involved in that, in Norretranders' terms, are in parts of the Me that the conscious ego wants to know nothing about. So we could say the overemphasis on the conscious, the ego and the imaginary is also an effect of capitalism; we are narcissistic, preoccupied with images and in denial about any other parts of the self especially the unconscious. Like the story of Jekyll and Hyde: one, denying, and the other, not having, an unconscious, these are the poles of the crisis of ego-mania and psychosis occurring within us (see Bruno 2020: 38-43) alongside the crisis of the planet and its climate. One

effect of this is we neglect the negative: we like to entertain and post images of ourselves as happy and successful; anything unsightly, difficult, problematic or negative we leave out and ignore or deny; anything negative won't be the way to sell ourselves (see Colin Wright (2020) on what he calls Toxic Positivity, and John Naughton in *The Guardian* (5th Dec 2020) on how even online AI and algorithmic assessment of us is increasingly based on the positivity of our "textual sentiment and audio emotion".)

The inundation by gratification, the dominance of the conscious ego and the exclusion of the negative are all distortions of self. All of these are inimical to the signifier and the subject, the barred or split subject of the unconscious. Activity rather than contemplation is needed; protection from demands for gratification, ego and positivity, but the nub: only through the signifier, the subject of the unconscious and the symbolic order do logic, truth, art, science and values become possible. Another of the refrains of psychoanalysis is that even since Freud's day the father is diminished, is in decline. In Lacan's (2013) metaphorical account of the Oedipus in the symbolic order, it becomes the name or names of the father, and by implication the symbolic order itself that is in decline. With the rise of the ego and the ubiquity of targeted jouissance, of less religion and more advertising, the word has less effect in structuring our world. Education and drama are part of this; the Ich-ideal (translated as ego ideal) of Freud (1921: ch.XI) interpreted as the 'birth of possibility", and "I(A)", (read as the Ideal of the Other), the ultimate end of the main trajectory in the graph of desire in Lacan (2006: 684-5), is diminished and secondary, as we construct ourselves as a skill-set for the market, as workers and consumers in a society where it feels as though there is no alternative to capitalism. The effective deployment of Davis's values and Lacan's ideals as signifiers of the symbolic order makes possible a thread for the trans-subjective order of truth, and social bonds built thereon, which are vital for urgently needed projects of transformation, and hence the intensive practices of speaking and acting, like drama in education, which are their purposive means.

Naturalism
It is here, somewhere between the body and mind, unconscious and conscious, jouissance and signifier that, rather than the question of materialism versus idealism, it is I think the pivotal question of philosophical naturalism that needs to be faced. It is the point of divergence of pathways in science, philosophy and other endeavours, as it shapes the type of materialism that we are working towards.

As well as downright wrong responses, such as those that equate naturalism with reductive science: all is reducible to physics or genetics, and thus adopt anti-naturalism, there are also a lot of well-intentioned but confusing, inadequate and diverting answers around, such as the various neo-Spinozists extolling organicism and the One-All Wholeness of Nature (see Johnston, 2014: chs. 2-4). Or perhaps the problem can be more

broadly stated philosophically: between capitalism and nature, where does the human stand?; a natural or denatured being, or somewhere between?

To foreshorten a great deal of exposition and argument (see Johnston, 2019; Johnston and Malabou, 2013) the path that led us to encountering the inadequacy of consciousness, the role of trans-subjectivity, and of the problems of our neoliberal mentality, also points to the human as arising from nature, but unevenly denatured, in particular by the symbolic register, viz., the signifier. Lacan, from his 1955 re-reading of Freud, where the neurotic's symptom is regarded as a signifier addressed to an Other, 'the symptom is through and through, signification... truth taking shape' (Lacan 1988:320), to his 1966 *Responses to Students of Philosophy* where, 'the signifier is matter transcending itself in language' (Lacan 1990:112), points to the active self-denaturalising nature of the speaking being. Johnston's (2019) call is thus for an account of, 'the emergence of human subjects with their spontaneous and self-determining capacities' which refuses the naturalism or anti-naturalism forced-choice, in favour of, '"dialectical naturalism", namely, a materialism of a self-denaturalising nature that radically alters itself in and through its human offspring' (ibid: xx).

We can say that this question of naturalism is all important for the intensive practices of speaking and acting, no more so than when affect, feeling and emotion are being dealt with.

Affect
Here the question of naturalism cannot be avoided: what are affects, feelings and emotions and how do they work? Numerous answers either reduce affect along with subjectivity to the bodily and claim it doesn't exist and/or eliminate it or cast it into the realm of epiphenomenon where it has no causal efficacy (for example, cognitive science and a computational view of emotion, see Deacon (2012: 525)). This is similar to the problem Norretranders faced. It's a strangely unconfirmable speculation but the intense practices of speaking and acting and their immediate antecedents were impossible, due to the nature of human selves until very recently in phylogenetic time. It is only with the co-development of trans-subjectivity and the human self, where affect that is more than natural, is caused by and reciprocally causes change, that these practices become possible. Perhaps only with Socratic dialectic and Athenian drama do we see their beginnings in human history (Burgoyne, 2007; Vernant, 1988; Dunker, 2011)? Hesitation, doubt, surprise and the role of the negative seem to enter the written record here, where lacks and absences become causes, also known as privative causes (see Johnston 2019: 188-190).

That understanding of the affective is central to your discussion and account of living through drama is clear. Shakespeare's King Lear provides the first of several examples that are drawn on:

> Rather than looking out on the world, he had to be shocked into awareness and go naked into a storm to begin to re-make himself. He had to experience it directly. It was visceral for him, emotional, affective, immediate. It stripped him of his supposed identity so he could more clearly find out who he was. (Davis 2022)

In a reading of this more on the active side, Lear, as always already a self of the symbolic order, had to find shelter in the storm; talk to his fellow refugees; respond to the others' kindness, violence, indifference; deal with much that was new, belittling and difficult: his subjectivity arose anew from these:

> These are some of the dimensions that living through drama can bring with an internal engagement with role. There can be real emotion at play. Not raw emotion which is too close to the personal but nevertheless there can be a feeling of anger, shame, despair and so on... With *metaxis* the person in role would feel it as the person and as the role. The decisions and actions made in role would also resonate with the actual value system of the student. It would have the added impact of feeling as well as thinking: feeling thoughtfully. (Davis 2022)

The signifier and the trans-subjective is absolutely vital here and in setting up and making drama within the art form: space, time, role, event, action and so on are negotiated through the medium of signifiers. This is the condition of possibility for metaxis; what others have called a dual consciousness or guest subjectivity, affect and experience, alongside a host subjectivity, in which the (different) signifiers of the situations of self and role create two realities. There is a parallelism of, a) the situations and events of the role and of real life and, b) the subjectivity and actions of the role and of real life, which allows a working to and fro, from self to role, both in terms of situations and events but also subjectivity, actions and affect. Lines can be drawn across to equivalent places from one to the other, and questions arise about patterns of situations, subjectivities and actions.

But the parallelism is only partial: one body and one unconscious/nonconscious underlies the dual situations, subjectivities and actions, within which consonances, differences and resonances may come to be located and open the possibility of 'feeling thoughtfully'. The affects, feelings, and emotions are composed in part by these signifiers combined with the body's reactions, energies and expressions, which may well issue in other signifiers, as a broader category than words. The apparatus of this feeling thoughtfully is the signifier; images and signifiers emerge or are found which lead to others in chains in the role play, in reflection, in discussing. The playwright in the teacher will find imaginarisations of key signifiers or will open images up to dialecticisation and

signifierisation (I associate these three terms with the translations of Lacan by, and the work of, Bruce Fink (especially Lacan: 1953, 2006), but the first two may well be more general) and work between and within the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic; the student will similarly follow chains of images and signifiers of their person somewhat more chaotically, touching areas of the unconscious/nonconscious and bringing that to role play, reflection and discussion and thus creating new content for the group and teacher to work with. But the register of the Real is there also, particularly in moments of hesitation, anxiety or impulse where actions, words and images don't come or they rush out unbidden and things could become overwhelming. Here we can look to the imaginarisation and signifierisation of the Real and in turn the Real-isation of the imaginary and the symbolic. Lacan's (1953) early paper is helpful here in using the terms for the concrete course of events of an analysis, and we can use to suggest the sort of structures of process and event that drama teachers might work on in a lesson. Later, Lacan went on to give a much more developed view of the Real, but that takes us beyond what can be covered here (see Vanheule, 2011: ch. 6).

Within this view, weaving between Lacan's registers, what are affects, feelings and emotions? In common with the contention that they are not 'ground-zero, rock-bottom experiences incapable of additional decomposition: they are not Gestalt-like, indissolubly unified mental states of an irreducible sort' (Johnston 2014: 172) we seem to have affect as the rich interweavings of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Some emotions, perhaps most, are open to change and being re-felt as situations are re-acted or redescribed, some are relatively constant. This speaks to the partial denaturalisation of archaic phylogenetic patterns of emotion in the human. In this, signifiers woven into and integral to emotion interconnect with the body, the personal history, the social heritage of the student but also with what Lacan calls the Big Other: the treasury of signifiers that we draw on in our participation in the social world.

The Unconscious
Some of the emotions built around signifiers will take us towards the unconscious and this may feel as though it transgresses into the world of therapy. But that would be only if the aim of the drama was therapeutic. In the previous quotation about metaxis from your keynote, safety, danger and trust were signifiers of that emotional neighbourhood, and were important for the educational aims of the drama. You continue,

> the student playing Little Red Riding Hood pushes her mother to tell her
> if she is really going to be in danger or not. She might get a *real* sense of
> her mother prevaricating. Her mother has to get to work. She does not
> have time to go to grandma's. She needs her daughter to be grown up and
> go for her. She tells her daughter she *will* be safe. Parents do manipulate
> us. They are not to be trusted. Played from inside the role both can
> actually get a real sense of the life pressures that interfere and damage the

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relationship they would ideally want between mother and child. So 'living through' drama became a key part of my drama. (Davis 2022)

Here, as well as safety, danger and trust, family relationship signifiers are nodal – mother, daughter, grandmother; personal affective charged chains of signifiers, images and the real will be drawn on by the students, trying to work what they feel and think about it. In trying to explain a Lacanian view of the Other, Vanheule (2011) states something very similar

> Lacan gives a quite specific interpretation ... defining it as 'the locus from which the question of his (the subject's) existence may arise' ... At the level of the unconscious each speaking subject ... is confronted with a basic question concerning its own identity as a subject. Who am I? is the question all humans are unconsciously confronted with, and for which no answer is readily available. More precisely this question relates to three issues: one's 'sex', one's contingency in being, and the relational signifiers of love and procreation. (p. 64)

The second (contingency of being – safety, danger and trust) and third (relational signifiers – mother, daughter and grandmother) of these categories of unconscious question, are what the drama material and work involve, and this is, as in analysis, from the locus of the Other, but here we are using it with the aim of exploring values.

Like analysis, the same set of resonances is being used; here, 'the decisions and actions made in role' bring to the fore, 'the actual value system of the student': so that, 'the central aim of drama in education: the chance for young people to try to locate themselves and decide who they want to become' (Davis 2022) can be worked on. In analysis the analysand's speech (Lacan 2006: 213-215) is used to bring to the fore ... what generally they are unable to express in words ... their symptoms. The drama teacher looks for values, the analyst for symptoms, both to be worked on. The arc that we could place going over both of these, is a common arc: the unconscious is politics. This we will work towards in the rest of this paper.

To try and recap: if the ego arises, as our user illusion, when the human uses itself in, for most, a life of selling its labour living in neoliberal capitalism, then the subject arises when the human accesses the expanded 'itself' or Me, through intensive practices, but certainly in one of the sheltered enclaves, like education can be, from neoliberal capitalism, to answer the questions of the Other. A far reaching point to note here is the implication that the Other is an enormous source of creativity in human affairs – for Lacan, the locus of the Other draws on the treasury of signifiers – and as Lacan says 'linguistics began with Humboldt' (Lacan 1971: 17.2.71), one of whose claims, made in the 1830's is that language 'creates of its own accord' and allows human beings to break the 'quasi-mechanical advancement of human activity'. (Humboldt 1999: xii). Speech and thought are asserted to be 'from the locus of the Other', 'the unconscious is the

discourse of the Other', and we have a relationship of inner and outer that is a Möbius strip, a surface with one edge and one surface that can be traversed to the other side. This concept of the Other is paradoxical (see Hook 2018, ch. 1) but pivotal in Lacan's analysis[ii]. Inside and outside lose their bearings, extimacy, to use Lacan's (1992: 139) portmanteau word combining external and intimate; 'something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me, something...on the level of the unconscious' (ibid:71); this is what is being accessed in analysis and drama and the logic of the space involved is quite strange. Creatively in this space questions and demands are being made, and from those the subject arises:

> The subject is not defined as a reflective entity that asks questions, but as an entity that is created because of the fact that questions are articulated via the symptom. The question produces the subject and not the other way around. (Vanheule 2011: 64)

So, in this situation of metaxis, living through, the questions of the Other can also create the subject: in the role we find ourself, in ourself we find the role. The extimate Other's drama? But note this is not easy or reassuring, the unconscious is not pacifying like the ego:

> Far from creating a feeling of unity, these questions constitute the very reason the subject is divided. They are questions that can never be solved definitively. (Vanheule 2011: 64)

The Act

As a psychologist taking up a range of teaching in the Polytechnic in the early 1980s I had a stock of theory, experiment and application that I thought I could work into something useful for students on the courses I taught. You unsettled a lot of this for being idealist and returned many times to the need to begin from practice, the importance of practice leading theory, of practice being richer than theory. I struggled with this: an abiding visual memory I retain is seeing myself at the end of a 3 hour session in the drama room asking myself, was something that came up relevant to this theory and practice, thought and action, matter? In this composite visual memory I thought it was. Bruner and Vygotsky gave me some help, the myriad examples of the drama students gave glimpses, but never enough. That type of question goes right through to today, and even with Lacan to help I'm still unsure in what I want to add here about the act.

In broadly philosophical terms Freud and Lacan's psychoanalysis contain work that supposes that the subject is to some degree free, against the material and backdrop of the unconscious. Free association is the rule in analysis; the material of dreams, jokes, slips of tongue or pen and so on are taken up and spoken about and are there to be interpreted. To simplify, for Lacan (1977: 233) the analyst is the 'subject who is supposed to know' for the analysand, he is also the personified Other, the Other, who desires that the analysand talk and work, but doesn't know (and certainly doesn't use his knowledge to

tell the analysand); basically the analyst provides the setting and some interruptions and emphases of things the analysand says, and ends the session at key points. But it is the analysand who interprets, and constructs, and often comes back to interpret again, as further materials arise, and between sessions and sometimes in sessions there are instances of the act. There are different types of act but his general focus is on how the subject of the unconscious comes in to being:

> the subject only comes to birth through the relation of a signifier to another signifier and that this requires of them - I mean of these signifiers - the material. To perform an act, is to introduce this relation of signifiers through which the conjuncture is consecrated as significant, namely, as an opportunity to think. (Lacan 1967: 206)

We could spend time on elaborating this; it seems abstract and counter-intuitive. But rather than follow this path now, I will risk a suggestion like: the analyst curates from the analysand a set of signifiers: dreams, slips, jokes, ejaculations, free associations and things which have caught the analyst's ear and asks the analysand to talk some more about them, and ends the session at a point to be worked on. Acts can occur in and between sessions, they can be spoken and they can be performed, intersubjectively, in the imaginary that is built on the symbolic. I take it that they involve a first signifier, S1, that stands for the speaker or actor and a second signifier, S2, that stands for the knowledge and the object. In the movement from the first to the second signifier the subject emerges. But it's not enough to just do things, say things, Lacan says the act involves 'consecration'. Perhaps this involves ideas of owning the act, assuming a symbolic mandate, and something external, the Big Other, hearing, recognising, validating or even being confronted, sidelined, by the act and the material. And thereby perhaps, a bit of freedom. There is much that Lacan did to develop these ideas in Seminar XIV and XV, concerning how the act is different from the phantasy and may constitute a new path for the subject (see Pluth 2007) and is of interest in this context[iii].

And to end the suggestion: is this so far away from the drama classroom at its best, from living through drama and metaxis? Just as the analyst is the personified Other in analysis, the drama teacher may well be the personified Other in the drama lesson, supposed to know. But this might be unhelpful to the class, they need to think beyond the teacher, and what the teacher aims for is to keep the work going, not provide the answers. But the drama teacher seems to have more flexibility, more roles, they can become another student in the class, or a teacher-in-role position: where they don't know and aren't expected to know the answer or how to do it, and get one of the class to be a personification of the Other. If they take this route, Lacan would have it that they are still up against the supposed Other, but now this Other is way beyond the persons in the classroom, it's the Other of Society, or Human Culture, with upper case letters. I think it's this scenario that is important and a lot of work along these lines could be done and constitute a practice in drama in education involving acts that are richer than theory, and

action richer than thought, because it uses unconscious material, especially in the context of our currently distorted selves.

Politics
In quick order in the Seminar of 10th May 1967 Lacan (1966-1967) discusses neurosis, masochism and the fact that the desire to be rejected involved having offered yourself in the first place; that is, the act; he goes on to define the act as above, names Marx as the discoverer of the symptom, and announces:

> the unconscious is politics. I mean that what binds men together, or what opposes them, is precisely to be justified by that whose logic we are trying for the moment to articulate ... (Lacan 1966-1967:205)

Namely, unconscious material, which is of the order of the social bond[iv].

In the Little Red Riding Hood work, unconscious material from our social heritage may well emerge in the role play, particularly values that come from parents, grandparents, contexts of our childhood, or, way beyond, in history, literature and the arts. In role we will be dealing with what we feel is right and wrong, good and bad, what is involved in being a mother, daughter, grandmother. You don't so much find your values just from the intersubjective events of the living through drama but also through the symbolic conditions that make the drama possible – signifiers: responsibility, caring, trust, courage, honesty ... the web of values that are there in our social heritage. And this allows us to probe these values, compare them, particularly with the values of the neoliberal workplace and marketplace, and find our place in these values and the things that bring us together and divide us ... politics. Unlike the images of the ego which are *constituted* and thus set, the signifiers of the unconscious subject are *constitutive*, they produce things: meanings and subjects; they are dynamic, changing the field around them back and forward in time. The last word of a sentence can change the meaning of what went before, and the first word change the meaning of all that comes after.

However we are in an era of the ego, of images, of leaders and others who try to engage us in the imaginary, divide us from others, corrode what might bind us together, eclipse truth and values and deregulate the Big Other; but all is not yet lost. The human is an animal who by virtue of being possessed by language, can have the purpose of seeking to preserve itself as a species and the planet on which it emerged. Along with many other initiatives, how do we, in Hegelian terms, get a subjective concept of living through drama that is adequate to this object, an object that contains the social bond of the capitalist discourse that 'run(s) as it were on wheels, it can't run better, but it actually runs too fast, it runs out, it runs out such that it burns itself out'? (Lacan in Vanheule, 2016: 7)

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[i] It is in these previous two paragraphs, respectively, that I conjecture the strengths and the limits of Lacan's work are to be found. The classified index to Lacan's *Écrits* begins with the symbolic order (Lacan 2006:853-854), the largest of the five parts, this divides into three: the supremacy of the signifier, the defiles of the signifier, the signifying chain. That his work begins with the signifier and that there can be a materialist social psychology based on the signifier are crucial. The Other, is much more marginal, entering under "intersubjective communication" and "analytic experience" in parts II and III (ibid: 855,856). Even here it is not a fundamental concept; more a creative ambiguity or place holder to allow other parts of the work to be developed. Compared to the concrete and material signifier, the Other is abstract and ideal, if not an unpardonable reification. The test of applying Lacan's work to the drama in education of your keynote, reveals it's strength as regards the signifier and it's limits as regards the Other.

[ii] It is here with the Other that a plethora of considerations and questions are raised with regard to Lacan's theorisations and their use to articulate drama in education. We could say here the most colossal crossroads in Lacan's work occurs. Elsewhere I have tried to explore Amoiropoulos's (2022) example and questions about the Tortoise and Hare fable and it's use in the early years drama classroom, to lay out and traverse these considerations and questions about the Other in seeking a Lacanian orientation (see Roper (2022b).

[iii] Again this needs to be explored much more fully and concerns the relationship with, and the nature of, the Other. Is the Other an authority we have been, or want to be, recognised by, if so for Lacan the phantasy is how we are recognised; or is the Other, as Lacan increasingly implies as the 1960's go on, lacking, barred or split. (Lacan's Graph of Desire incorporates these two possibilities (2006: 692))? The Other can't give the necessary response: there is no Other of the Other that would underwrite our relationship with it. There is no signifier that would answer our reply or act in response to the Other's question; it is in relationship to this barred Other that the act becomes important in the

view of Pluth (2007: ch.8). And it is this, the new signifier of the act, or the signifier marked by the strange, the surprising enunciation or bungled action, that I'm encouraging the drama teacher to be open to, and work from. Pluth says Lacan calls these signifiers that would "be like the real" (ibid: 157). They would be strange signifiers, but in drama built on them, or that returns to them, like Hamlet's hesitation and eventual act and resolution, we have, another way of Imagining the Real?

[iv] It is here that we meet the limits of Lacan's Other, and pick up Lacan's ideas of discourse and the social bond? Discourse has the merit of concretely being close to signifiers and signifying structure, and the notion of social bonds, allied to the four discourses plus the capitalist discourse, becomes important to Lacan through the period up to Paris of May 1968 and beyond, and it points the unconscious into politics, beyond practices where the analyst or teacher is the Other, and this parallels your keynote taking drama in education into the crises of capitalism and climate.

Response to Bill Roper
by David Davis

<u>Preliminary remarks</u>

Bill Roper's paper is in essence written to all drama teachers and, in fact, in its essential content, to all teachers. He embraces and endorses the attempts of drama teachers where they approach drama in education as a way of partially opening a door on the child's own self-consciousness. He endorses general aspects of my approach to drama teaching but then so usefully critiques its weaknesses and gaps from his Lacanian perspective and as a social psychologist. He sets out his whole argument for why we need to have a much more complex view of the psychology of the children we teach (and of ourselves of course). I am so grateful for his intervention here and attempt a response below. In attempting a response to Bill's paper I am lost, of course, in not being able to discuss it with him any more. I found his paper very dense on the first few readings and somehow thought I had all the time in the world to crack it open and discuss it with him. My responses and questions and his answers went to and fro between us as soon as I first read it. But my slowness in moving forward was totally inadequate given the speed at which his cancer accelerated and quickly led to his death. I live to regret it.

I am breaking the academic protocol here by calling him by his first name. His careful responses to my keynote over a period when he was suffering from cancer led up to his final version in this publication, finished only a few months before he died. In his response he goes in and out of addressing me personally as 'David' and then returns to his dense academic prose style. The overall effect is that it is written partly as a letter, so caringly written; taking into consideration our long friendship; writing alongside me even though critiquing my thinking; conscious that he is commenting in a publication arising from a conference celebrating my life's work; in places tender and then straightforward; it leads me at times to want to refer to him occasionally as Bill, jumping outside the academic style. I ask indulgence for this. And I fondly pay homage to his use of semi-colons and colons.

<u>Response</u>
My first response is a *mea culpa.* In my paper I take an easy way out and avoid doing all the hard work that Bill has done. This is apparent when I write:

> Now I am taking an enormous short-cut here. I am leaving aside, for the sake of brevity, all the complex philosophical and psychological questions. What is a self? Can we ever know who is the I who is speaking? What theory of knowing are we claiming? What is truth? You will have your own answers to these questions. (Davis, 2022)

And Bill Roper certainly had his own answers to these questions! In no way could I have approached the areas in his paper in the depth and range that he was able to.

Roper begins his critique with his statement:

> An initial view that drama is dominated by the imaginary and inter-subjective is not right; it's not that the inter-subjective comes first and then the trans-subjective adds to it, the symbolic was there right from the start: "the imaginary is built on the symbolic" (Hook 2018:130). (Roper, 2022)

My initial response when I read this was to agree but did not recognise his critique in what I had written. I use Bakhtin's 'voices' to describe the multitude of influences coming from the social, political and general cultural order into any individual. I wrote:

> Bakhtin was consumed with a search for a self and the role language plays in that process. Wherever we are born we are subject to a cacophony of voices: all competing for our attention. He termed this polyphony. But not in a musical sense which might indicate tending to harmony. These different voices are all ideologically saturated, made up of different speech genres. He called this heteroglossia. A car thief can be a joy rider or a perpetrator of crimes against motor vehicles. These different voices tend to combine in order to make meaning and where this is taken over by a dominant voice, such as a political party, then you can have a monologue. This monologism, the language of dictators, needs constantly to be opened out again to create a dialogic process. The problem then is always how can I know if it is I who is talking or another. Bakhtin as an aphorism could be 'I is other'. (Davis, 2022)

I thought I was clear that as social individuals soaking in a multitude of 'voices' meant that we were not isolated individuals in charge of our own destiny but that we could become so through the *metaxis* involvement in a carefully constructed drama process. But, following Roper's critique I can see I have fudged the issue.

I think the centre of his critique is focused on where I state:

> All the time the young person is seemingly making up her or his own mind but all the time these forces are at work. This is the existential dilemma. Drama provides the opportunity to try to see more clearly the reality in which they are enmeshed. This is for me the central aim of

drama in education: the chance for young people to try to locate themselves and decide who they want to become. (Davis, 2022)

Bill picks up on this and comments:

This predominance of consciousness is not adequate to our situation, it is beset by illusion, it leaves parts out, and if Lacan is right it is an ally of the ego and tied up with narcissism, toxic positivity and other features of our psychology under neoliberalism. (Roper, 2022)

To summarise, leading up to the section above I acknowledge the plethora of the symbolic (in a Lacanian sense) entering young people from the Big Other and all the Others and others but call it 'voices' following Bakhtin's terminology. But then I argue that this is 'the chance for young people to try to locate themselves and decide who they want to become'. I am arguing that the young person, through the drama experience, can come to recognise the tenants who have taken up residence in the ego, a sort of occupy movement, and can decide unilaterally which tenants to eject, which to embrace and which to encourage to bring in more like-minded friends. I think this is the step far too far for Bill. It hints at existentialism – of the possibility of the free individual making up his or her 'own' mind, implying a coherent ego or subject whereas this leaves out the complexity that Lacan finds in Freud's approach to this area. I now agree with Bill's critique here. I end up putting the children in what is really an existentialist position where the individuals can be in charge of their own identity and destination in life despite the fact that my argument leading up to this has denied it. In agreeing now with Bill's critique here I am still working at fully grasping it. Perhaps I should have re-worked Bakhtin as an aphorism into '*I* is *Other* 'as well as '*I* is *other'* and '*me* is *Other*'. And so on.

Roper, usefully, calls on Norretranders' (1998) book *The User Illusion* to argue that the *I* of consciousness is an illusion:

> 'the user illusion operates with a user by the name of *I*... The *I* experiences that it is the *I* that acts... that senses... and that thinks. But it is the *Me* that does so. *I am my user illusion of myself...*the *Me* contains loads of bits the *I* is not interested in' [italics in the original, p. 292].

Just as the user of the computer does not need to know of all the millions of bits of information inside the machine and the user seems to be in control but the machine is deciding so much, so the *I* is not conscious of all the bits of *Me* that exist inside my mind and my body.

Roper continues his concern with my focus on consciousness with a worry about not giving enough attention to the minutiae of practice. He states:

> This concern with accounts of the self that focus on consciousness, the imaginary and the ego and leave out or diminish such things as the symbolic order and the biological, signals another aspect of this worry about your keynote: the predominance of experience, perception and contemplation *over* speaking and acting. I think the latter are there, but they are the taken for granted; the tacitly assumed; and this feels to me to be in need of correction… (Roper, 2022)

I agree with this. In my teaching it is a priority for me to notice the practice of the participants; to notice all the small actions that might appear as the *metaxis* state begins to emerge and take over. I find it is possible at a glance to see those participants who are *in* (that is those who are engaging with the role internally in some sort of *metaxis* state) and those who are *out*, (that is still acting the role from outside without that internal engagement). It is this state of *being,* simultaneously inside the role and oneself at the same time that can lead to the unconscious of the role player being accessed in some way. Thinking of the person playing the mother in the Little Red Riding Hood example as an adult playing the role, and an actual parent, she might find herself getting *really* angry with the child in the role play who is prevaricating about going to grandma's and having a momentary sense of accessing unacknowledged regret at ever having had children herself. They are such hard work and have taken over so much of her own life. The caring is interfering with her 'freedom'; with the image of herself influenced by the toxic positivity of neoliberalism that she should be out having a 'good time'. The signs might be her smashing a plate when she is hurrying to wash up and finding herself saying to the child, 'Just look what you've made me do!'. Out of role she might find herself reflecting as to whether this was 'herself' or the role that was talking, feeling and acting or if it was both at the same time (metaxis). These are some of the masses of the *Me* that Norretranders argues are not available immediately to the *I.* Here we have the personal psychology. But we also have the situation where she can't go with her daughter because she has been called in to serve in the kitchen because the Baron has decided to give a last minute meal for his friends. She is a single parent. She needs the money and she daren't say no to the Baron. Here we have the social: the social psychology. We now have available to access the dominance of the social in the personal and how it affects all aspects of our lives. (If I am following Roper's critique accurately. Others will have to judge now.)

Bill continues to elaborate key dimensions involved in our work in drama teaching. I found it all extremely enlightening and he offers many routes for further exploration and elaboration. For example, regarding the affective dimension of the mother role playing

the Little Red Riding Hood scene above he suggests '…we seem to have affect as the rich interweaving of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real.' (Roper, 2022). This in itself seems such a rewarding area to pursue.

Rather than attempt to paraphrase any more of Bill's critique and elaboration of my keynote I leave those rich pickings to future readers. I found all his contributions extremely enlightening and will be for the rest of my life grateful to Bill for so gently but firmly pursuing his line of argument. His paper should be key reading for all those entering education and especially for drama teachers.

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An interrupted discussion with Bill Roper
by Konstantinos Amoiropoulos

What follows is an effort to respond to, and to present in outline, a discussion with Bill Roper initiated by an article of mine on early years drama, stories and ideology. It is also and more importantly an outline of the subsequent impact of Bill Roper's views on my own thinking. The discussion, regrettably, is now permanently interrupted. In that sense, I regard this present response as a tribute to Bill Roper and to the challenges he offered to my views.

A foreword to a discussion
Lacanians, among whose number Bill Roper counted himself, tend to distrust the imaginary mode of communication as a vehicle to stimulate changes and transformations in the individual.

The imaginary in Lacanian theory is deeply associated with the ego, and it is one of the three "orders" – together with the "symbolic" and the "real" – that structure human subjectivity. The Lacanian imaginary prioritises the visual, and could be defined as the totality of idealised images with which people consciously identify, and which, by means of such identifications, shape an apparently firm, articulatable and coherent self. These idealised images "buttress the ego" and "lend it apparent coherence and stability." (Hook 2018, p. 53). A particular kind of speech can also be considered as functioning within the imaginary order by supporting the false impression of a consistent ego. This kind of speech is what Lacanians refer to as "empty speech" (Hook, ibid).

If we aim at transformation and change in drama, argues Roper, we cannot base our drama practice on the imaginary order. Appealing to the imaginary order creates an insuperable obstacle because the aim of the ego-talk is a constant "implicit request for recognition" (Hook, p. 39), and an attendant preservation of pre-established meanings and understandings, rather than acceptance of the destabilising potential of change:

> …the imaginary focuses on understanding, which virtually always involves jumping to conclusions about things we do not yet fully understand, if we ever do… and it focuses on meaning, which virtually always involves predigested, prefabricated meanings that derive from our own view of the world… Understanding is, in most cases, the endeavour to reduce something to what we already know… (Fink 2014a, p. 11)

Bill Roper therefore argues that for the possibility of change to occur, we need primarily to consider another order of the subject's psychic economy, that of the symbolic, the second of the Lacanian triad of orders which impacts the structure of the individual. As Hook puts it, the "imaginary deadlock is unsurpassable without the intervention of the

symbolic" (Hook ibid, p.39).

> The symbolic could be defined as the sum total of:
> signifying elements, expressions and utterances within a given language
> and cultural milieu… akin to the amassed roles, rules and unwritten
> obligations that define a given societal situation (Hook ibid, p.16).

Language, primarily in the form of signifiers, is dominant in the symbolic, but other signifying systems are not excluded. The symbolic expresses the Big Other, a term indicating its existence above and beyond our intersubjective, imaginary, communications. The Big Other is thus external to the subject, but structures and determines subjectivity as a kind of "supra-agency", as a trans-subjective order of truth (Hook, ibid).

The ways the symbolic order functions on or in us are rather complex and would require lengthy discussion to clarify, but it may for now suffice to say that it is the symbolic, the Big Other, that structures the unconscious, which is far more significant than the ego in the ultimate constitution of the subject. The unconscious is structured by "the words enunciated by those around us"; as such it attaches the subject directly to the context in which it is constituted, and after initiation into the symbolic order: "There is no sharp distinction between an individual and his or her cultural milieu." (Fink 2014b, p.22). Consequently, it is counterproductive to maintain focus on the imaginary ego, the intersubjective mode of communication, if what is desired is to provoke a process of transformation; predominant consideration should be given to the profound status of the symbolic, the trans-subjective mode of communication, and to its dominant element, the signifier.

If Lacan's scheme is right, then these ideas should significantly impact the way we understand the constitution of the subject, and should therefore demand a different way of approaching the enabling of change through drama. And I believe that this is what lies at the heart of what Bill Roper is arguing for: the drama example I am constructing with the Hare and the Tortoise needs to be re-examined with regard to which of the two above registers the drama is mainly addressing. And, as is already clear, for Roper it is the symbolic that needs to be prioritised in our consideration.

When Roper proposes to "put questions of meaning arising from the story to one side and concentrate solely on the signifiers" (Roper, 2022), I see two chief points at issue. The first is a critical counsel to avoid straightforwardly interpreting the story – because, I assume, any procedure of conscious interpretation relies on and derives from the imaginary and would thereby become an obstacle to prospective change and transformation, participants' or mine. The second concerns a proposal to "playfully" explore the story by shifting signifiers, a "play" with clusters of signifiers that proceeds

by connecting them with others "both internally within the story and externally with other signifying structures within the culture." (Roper, ibid). This is the realm of the symbolic-unconscious axis that has (per Fink 1995, p.21) "little if anything whatsoever to do with meaning" as structured by the imaginary register.

Roper's critique is valuable and deeply appreciated. As to its first chief point, I did present in the paper that follows a specific analysis of the initial drama offering a particular possible meaning, which might seem like a prefabricated rational interpretation coming from my "imaginary". Further questions arise at this point however, requiring further research and exploration: should the imaginary, from both teachers and participants, be entirely excluded from the process? Hook (ibid), for example, argues that, although the "empty speech" stemming from the imaginary is insufficient for transforming views stemming fundamentally from the symbolic, it is, nevertheless, a "precondition for dialogue to occur at all" (p. 49). I understand – with some reservations as to the adequacy of that understanding – this statement as proposing to consider the imaginary as a starting point for a possible dialogue developing within the symbolic. In my view, Edward Bond and numerous other drama practitioners provide an interesting parallel in this direction by the argument that a story in a drama should work initially as a recognition point for the audience, which may identify the situation as familiar, known, or readable. In Bond's dramas, of course, the story leads to a crisis that cannot be explained or resolved by using the story or the audience's initial expectations or common stock of rational explanations. Could such a process lead to a surpassing of the imaginary, and thereby initiate another kind of "talk", that is, the Lacanian "full speech" (Hook ibid, p. 63) that stands on the opposite side of the empty one and relates to the symbolic?

The second point at issue in Roper's contribution, his proposal of playful exploration of the story, is even more difficult for me fully to grasp, especially in terms of practice. In my drama, I have chosen "winning of prize" as the leading signifier of the cluster of signifiers by means of which I have applied an interpretation of its meaning that fits (presumably) our current society. But Bill Roper seems to wonder at this. He is proposing, alternatively, a "play" beyond single or dominant interpretation; to play with other clusters of signifiers held together by other leading signifiers like "delivering a parcel" or "taking a message", and he suggests, as a possible focus for a drama: "Who would be good at it? get the job? what might happen?" etc. (Roper, ibid). This approach, according to Roper, produces "the condition of possibility" of dealing with issues regarding hidden ideological positions in the story of the Hare and the Tortoise and in its development into a structured drama. But what precisely would it mean to "play with clusters of signifiers"?

Signifiers for Lacanian theory do not carry meaning *per se*. They are not "naturally"

connected with a specific signified; consequently, their socially constructed "meaning" should not be taken for granted. The most crucial matter, in the revealing of a story's ideological positions, is not to conceal the signifiers' constructed nature, the fact of their arbitrariness. On the contrary, they need to be exposed as open to different or variant combination, through which the seemingly preordained "meaning" assigned to them socially may be challenged and thus transformed. In other words, we must be reminded in the investigation of ideology that the Big Other is missing the wholeness we are wont mistakenly to ascribe to it.

In fact, for Lacanians, the radical element in this theory lies in the assumption that both poles necessary for communication, the subject and the Big Other, each desires a fullness which is impossible to accomplish: *both of them constitutively lack a desired fullness*. This desire creates the impulse that drives the subject to identify with external images and socially-constructed signifiers. But if both poles constitutively lack their desired fullness – even though such fullness may be performed or assumed – then any assumption or signifier encoded in the symbolic is equally lacking in its arbitrariness. Stavrakakis (1999) puts this forcefully and eloquently:

> When…Lacan argues that the individual and the collective are one and the same level, what he means is that what is true at the one level is also true at the other, and this truth can only be the lack marking both domains, the constitutive impossibility proving both domains to be no more than mirages. (p.41)

Obviously, the above statement relates to the political if seen as a process of unveiling the lack in the Big Other which is habitually forgotten or concealed and may relate to an endeavour of unveiling ideological positions in a story. In its political dimension, the point is, for Stavrakakis, "to have a non-totalisable relation to the Other" by identifying with "the lack in the Other and not with the Other *per se*" (Stavrakakis ibid, p.139). In that sense, the driver of change is located not in the ego psychology of an individual but in the external Big Other which is by definition mirrored within the subject. This would seem to be the ground for Lacanians', and in particular Roper's call for closer attention to signifiers.

There are naturally already multiple potential topics for research, especially in relation to early years' drama, where language and the Big Other are not yet fully or are minimally developed. Likewise, questions on the role of a drama teacher as seen from a Lacanian perspective seem crucial for practice, including the re-examination of various drama conventions. But the area seems very promising and intriguing, and any useful contribution would be deeply appreciated.

For Bill Roper.

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Approaching the real: Attempts in early years classrooms.

by Konstantinos Amoiropoulos

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Abstract: Frequently-used stories in early-years classrooms can present a variety of opportunities for approaching our modern reality through drama. Depending on a teacher's social awareness, these stories could be used for building a context where children can decide for themselves when to adapt to society and when not. But the very first step for developing this context is finding a relevant centre for our dramas. This presentation will explore these issues with reference to the early-years sector.

Introduction

> You teachers think that life is a fairy tale with a happy ending. But you know nothing of real life. In this world, you have to be the winner, or else you will be the victim. I want to prepare my kid to live in it – to fight for itself, even if this means kicking and punching. This is what the world *is* like. (A parent's feedback)

The above pithy account of our world came from a parent defending a child's persistently aggressive behaviour towards other children and adults. For the purposes of this article, I would like to highlight the above account as a value-laden story which not only purports to describe what the world is like, but suggests how we should live in it. Human beings have always used such value-laden stories in various forms, whether narratives, discourses, personal or official accounts, jokes, fairy tales, fables or fictional stories, to describe the world they live in and to justify how they live in it (Fisher, 1984; Hamby & Daniloski, 2019). These stories describe their personal or collective identity, their selves and future, their expectations, hopes, ideas, values, actions, behaviours and roles within their world (Griffin, 2009). These value-laden stories, with special attention to fictional stories often applied in drama for the early years, are the focus of my attention in this article. I want to explore how comparable value-laden stories could be used in drama practice for creating dramatic contexts for young children to explore those most fundamental questions of identity and belonging: "Who am I? Who can tell me who am I?". I have chosen to share this short but actual account as a point of departure for outlining, at first, some crucial elements of the nature and function of stories in general and their relation to our reality. Then I will continue by exploring their relation to ideologies and finally, I will explore an Aesop's fable, the Hare and Tortoise, under the light of the above with a possible structure of drama for approaching questions related to "Who am I? Who can tell me who am I?".

Stories and ideology

On the one hand, the stories we tell seem to be of extreme importance for the construction of the self. As Bruner (2002) suggests, the self, as it is not pre-structured or essential, is constructed and reconstructed through the stories we tell about who we are and why we are doing what we are doing (p.64). On the other hand, these stories, told either by individuals or institutions, are neither constructed nor received in a cultural vacuum. Whether we are aware of it or not, there is always a social and cultural background that determines to a greater or lesser extent how we generate and perceive narratives, as well as the meanings we extract or construct from them. Indeed, it can be said that their sum total constitutes the wider, all-encompassing story which we call culture and therefore infuses all levels of personal, social and cultural life. We are beings of culture and we need stories to describe and to understand who we are and how we should live.

A trickier situation arises, however, once these stories develop in such a way that they begin to structure the reality they would purport to describe, thereby determining how our reality is perceived: when they become what the playwright Edward Bond (2000) calls our invisible 'second skin', that is, our ideology. They become invisible in the sense that we learn to live by them and accept them as being as natural as our own skin. Edward Bond (2000) holds that:

> [The story] … appeared in language: coloured words, drove idioms, prescribed rational language and evoked poetry. The story was served on plates and eaten. It was worn. It was beaten into weapons. People lived and died for it. (p.3)

Fictional stories

Taking account of the relationship between narrative and ideology in shaping our interactions with the world, I'd like now to narrow our focus to fairy tales, fables or other forms of fictional stories which we so often use as a basis in drama for the early-years children. We should recognise that they, similarly, *are* products of a culture and that they *are* value-laden in the same way as other social factors are in constructing identities. As Zipes (2012) has argued for the case of fairy tales, they can be regarded as symbolic acts of interventions "in socialization in the public sphere" (p.11); as discourses "within a historically prescribed civilizing (sic) process" (p. 171). As such, they may be as deterministic in their influence and value-laden as the account given by the parent mentioned earlier. Within any particular social context, they may introduce a particular image of a society and may promote, deliberately or not, specific values, rules and attitudes, a specific mode of socialisation and construction of the self for children. Indeed, in the view of Stephens (1992), narratives wholly free of ideology are unthinkable (p. 8).

The ideas communicated by these fairy tales and fictional stories may not be so obvious at first glance, because they relate to, derive from and even constitute our own ideology, our second, invisible, skin. But the possibility of ideology's becoming invisible in a narrative confers on stories an extremely powerful way of reproducing and naturalising ideological formations in a reader's mind. As McCallum and Stephens (2011) argue in reference to children's books:

> Ideologies can thus function most powerfully in books which reproduce beliefs and assumptions of which authors and readers are largely unaware. Such texts render ideology invisible and hence invest implicit ideological positions with legitimacy by naturalizing them. In other words, a book which seems to a reader to be apparently ideology-free will be a book closely aligned to that reader's own unconscious assumptions, and the identification of such ideologies will often require sophisticated reading of the text's language and narrative discourse. (p. 360)

Awareness of this leaves us, teachers and practitioners of drama with some serious responsibilities. If we hope to create dramatic situations in our classrooms which encourage children to decide for themselves when to adopt or not to a society, we first need to identify the possible ideological positions concealed or latent within the story we draw on because they may thwart our purpose by validating or reinforcing particular forms of socialisation of children within our modern reality. Moreover, we need to decide how we are going to deal with these ideological positions in a drama.

… and in drama

Using a simple example, I would like to illustrate possible, latent ideological positions in a story, and their potential effects on children's socialisation when used uncritically in a drama. Imagine, let's say, a drama lesson based on one of the best known of Aesop's fables, *The Tortoise and the Hare*. This story is frequently used in early-years classrooms in Greece, where many teachers use it to pass on certain values to their students, values they consider beneficial for kids to espouse if they are to prosper in our contemporary world. The story of the fable itself is simple and short: In a forest, a hare mocked a tortoise for her slow walking and short legs. But the tortoise does not hide in shame. She responded by challenging the hare to a race. The hare accepts and, since he is much faster, naturally he soon leaves tortoise far behind. So confident was the hare and so certain of victory, he decided to take a nap on the side of the road during the race. The tortoise didn't give up, however, but steadily made her way to the finish line while the hare was fast asleep. Shortly after, the hare awakes, and he realises that the tortoise, although slow walking and short-legged, has managed to defeat him and win the race.

It is a reasonable enough position to assume that the fable offers a fertile ground for teaching morals and values to children. For example, if a drama lesson is framed from

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the point of view of the tortoise, to teach that if we are persistent enough, we may prosper in life even if the situation is not in our favour. If it is framed from the point of view of the hare, to teach, perhaps, that if you are overconfident, you risk underestimating a competitor and being defeated in life even if you are more gifted than your opponent. I have seen and read elsewhere about the story being used for a variety of different educational purposes. A teacher may use it in exploring the topic of bullying with kids, for example, exploring how a victim could confront a bully or how it feels to be bullied. On other occasions, a teacher may use the story to explore different abilities, and the varying physical appearances or needs of different individuals. Other selections may include otherness, inclusiveness, respect for others and their needs and so on.

In practice, if a hypothetical drama lesson is structured from the point of view of the tortoise, children may be positioned in the role of other animals of the forest, and shadow her struggle throughout the lesson. Questions in such a drama may include: did the tortoise do the right thing in challenging the hare? What does she think and how does she feel when the hare is mocking her, or before the race? The drama could continue with children in role encouraging the tortoise by advising her or cheering on her in winning. At the end of the drama, they may collectively create a "sculpture" of the winner, and proceed to a discussion about the tortoise's persistence that led to her victory. Although this is an invented case for structuring the drama, I have shaped its basic steps from various dramas developed on this story which I have attended or read in the past.

While I don't have anything against exploring these values and attitudes with students in early-years settings, I distrust the possible didactic form a lesson may take when based on such fables with, most likely, moralising objectives. But still, my main issue is not merely with the possible didactic form of the lesson itself but with what is made visible and, more importantly, invisible in this drama in relation to the greater image and ideas of the world our kids are growing in. In fact, there are some crucial questions to consider along these lines. Is this story, socially speaking, an unbiased one? Does the story present an ideology-free situation? If not, how is the drama lesson dealing with the issue of its hidden ideological positions? I contend that if participants would, simply, have to stand by the tortoise and accept the race as a given, then, I could claim that this imagined drama abandons the story as it is with no suspicion or doubt towards its possible hidden values. The 'race', if located within our modern cultural setting, should not be regarded as ideologically innocent but, quite the opposite, it gains meaning/value from participants' experience of their current cultural environment which itself is ideologically structured. In other words, the participants could identify and interpret, rather unconsciously, the situation in the drama with the one that they understand and recognise as their own. The theory of the reader-text relationship can be usefully applied for the drama-participants relationship, especially when a story is left untouched or not interrogated as in my made-up drama, in order to clarify the point:

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> … the relationship between a subject's activities as a reader and a work
> of fiction which is the object of reading both replicates (sic) other forms
> of subject/sociality interactions and constructs a specular, or mirroring,
> form of those interactions (Stephens,1992, p. 47).

But, the fictional drama did nothing to disclose the assumed values which are taken for granted and does not create the possibility of helping reveal these interactions but rather leaves them concealed and, their implications on us and the participants, unexplored. Thus, the condition of the race is left untouched, it is taken for granted, without ever focusing on why and if it is necessary or what is its meaning. Why there must be a race in the first place? And, maybe, what does it mean to accept or provoke a race in our current cultural environment?

Using this example of the Hare and the Tortoise, I would like to examine how it can be changed in the sections below.

The need for contextualising stories
First of all, I will try to offer a kind of a historical approach to the specific lesson. But then again, I am not implying that Aesop had something similar in mind when he was forming the original fable even if he/she was not a real person and these fables were simply products of a collective culture. I mean 'historical' in the sense that I will hope to contextualise the lesson for our epoch by identifying possible meaningful connections between it and a "reading" of the fable. Davis (2014) continually draws attention to the value of contextualising a drama and its events, considering such dramatic contexts vital to understanding the real nature of our world and "how it shapes and influences each one of us" (p. 59). One of his most inspiring queries, which he has "stubbornly" maintained over the years and to which my own teaching in part pays tribute, is exactly the drive to contextualise stories in such a way that their ideologies are made manifest, along with the implications of these ideologies for participants' lives. I suggest that, if adequately contextualised, this drama lesson on the hare and the tortoise may be seen to validate, intentionally or not, assumed ideological values about how we should live in our world. Specifically, it can be seen to reproduce some of those entrenched cultural values which could be regarded as constituting (in Bond's phrase) our contemporary invisible skin.

Althusser's (2008, 2014) description of how ideology induces the submission of individuals may offer us an interesting direction for scrutinising the drama lesson with the hare and the tortoise. In Althusser's (2008) theorising of the process of submission to ideology, an important step is called interpellation of the subject. Interpellation of the subject is a process similar to when something or someone hails an individual, as when, to take the simplest example, you are walking on a street and hear someone calling with a direct phrase like: "Hey! You!". In such a scenario, any of us would most probably turn

around, believing we are the object of the call. Whenever you are being hailed, for Althusser you are immediately interpellated, which means that by simply responding to the call you are in some way acknowledging the power of the caller over you, and submitting to an imposed (even if momentary) identity as the called-upon person who will respond. In being hailed by an ideology, you immediately assume the particular identity which ideology imposes on you. The individual is interpellated or "formed", as a particular subject, with a particular identity, rules and values (pp. 44-51), in other words with a particular ideology.

In my view, in this imagined drama, the tortoise, and together with her the participants in the lesson, are placed in a position very similar to that of an interpellated subject. The hare hails/mocks the tortoise because of her short legs and slowness. She is not only hailed by the hare but she accepts the particular rules of judgement that the hare imposes as given and true, and decides to play fully the role of an interpellated subject. But in doing so she accepts a given identity by a worldview which *is not* the one of Aesop's milieu and *does not*, merely, value speed over slowness, or long legs over short ones or even persistence over overconfidence. The worldview that hails the tortoise in the particular drama nowadays in our classrooms, and to which she responds, reflects *our own* contemporary worldview, or, put more clearly, reflects the unconscious ideological assumptions of participants *and* of teachers as determined by our own contemporary dominant ideology.

Cooperation versus competition
So, what is the modern worldview that hails us and our students and structures our responses and values within this drama? What are the "subject/sociality" interactions that would be mirrored in it? Most significantly, how does this drama orient young children in relation to our modern societies and their leading ideologies? What view of the world are children, explicitly or implicitly, being asked to take?

Turning attention to our modern reality, we can see that this lesson may, even if indirectly, reflect the growing dominance of neoliberal capitalism, under which central components of liberal democratic states are inverted, or transformed into their opposites, for the sake of financialisation and lead to a profoundly different way of understanding the world and the self (Foucault, 2008; Harvey, 2005; Gill, 2008). The specific liberal component relevant to our case is the dimension of inclusion, which in the neoliberal order is inverted to competition (Brown, 2015, p. 45) since in our neoliberal reality, "Inequality and competition unto death replaces equality and commitment to protect life" (ibid, p. 77).

The naturalisation of racing does not encapsulate the whole of our reality, but it is certainly *true of our reality*. Under the growing cultural influence of neoliberal realism,

which promotes "a certain model of individualism" (Fisher, 2018, p. 541), solidarity and empathy are in danger of extinction. Wendy Brown (2015), in her book *Undoing the Demos*, explains that in our contemporary reality, all domains of human activity are structured and evaluated as markets, and individuals are "presumed to be market actors", comparable to "little capitals (…) competing with (…) each other" (p. 38). Although this model of existence declares the "self-directed individual" as its basis and purpose, we are not, in fact, free to choose our lives and our values at will (ibid, p. 194). Individuals become quite the opposite of what the phrase "self-directed individual" would seem to suggest. Our given task is to conceive and comprehend all of our endeavours as market-related, and the control we have consists merely in having a means to increase our market value and our rating or ranking (ibid, p. 39). The modern subject is considered as a supposedly "self-governed" subject (Dean, 2010), an autonomous individual (Bourdieu, 1998), but constructed as human capital for itself, for a firm or for a state, which is at "persistent risk of failure, redundancy and abandonment (…) regardless of how savvy and responsible it is", and becomes under these conditions an instrumentalised, dispensable element of the whole (Brown, 2017, p. 40). Brown (2017) while drawing on Foucauldian analysis and materialist Marxist critique, highlights the economisation of everything: politics, the workplace, the legal system, culture and education.

The parallel neoliberal infection in education is identified, among others, in Giroux (2008) as a form of commodification of education and in Chomsky's critique of the growing tendency for assessment of teachers and children, especially via standardised tests through which a ranking is produced:

> So, you are giving some kind of a rank, but it's a rank that's mostly meaningless. And the very ranking itself is harmful. It's turning us into individuals who devote our lives to achieving a rank. Not into doing things that are valuable and important. (cited in Taylor, 2015)

I believe that these values and rules which support competition and ranking are reflected in the account of my pupil's parent in the beginning of this article: "In this world, you have to be the winner, or else you will be the victim" (parent feedback). But I do not think that this is an exceptional perspective, rather it is faithful to our cultural context; it is a view which emerges quite naturally from our everyday involvement with our neoliberal reality, a reality, we must remind ourselves, which also structures and conditions our children's experience. It is evident in the extended hidden curriculum and the overt predisposition in education policies, in schools, in communities and in broader cultural contexts, for students, no matter how young, to prove their value and seek their self-worth in competing and ranking. The great problem is that these values and rules are perceived, not only by children but by their parents and other influential figures, as givens, as reflecting a 'natural' state of things, rather than understood as constructs. The consequence is that they become entrenched and remain unchallenged in our collective

(un)consciousness. Although we can describe eloquently what the world is like, we too often lack the capacity for deep understanding of its real impact on our daily lives, or to imagine viable alternatives. Certainly, we understand that things are indeed bad, but at the same time we continue to accept and assume that the only action we can take is to privatise our responses. In this way, we rule out any question of social, systemic causation and we develop a sense and position of what Mark Fisher (2009) has called "reflexive impotence" towards our own predicament (p. 21).

Making ideologies visible through drama?

Returning now to the made-up drama lesson with the hare and the tortoise, I suggest that what our worldview asks from the tortoise, predominantly, is to respond to the hare's boasting by *proving* that she is worthy to be included or respected, or even to exist, within a community. And she conforms: she responds by adapting herself to a competitor. When the tortoise accepts these rules and suggests a race, she has already submitted to an ideology and worldview that normalises competition. Hence the most important, but generally unperceived, idea in this drama is precisely the one which would endorse the contemporary ideology which naturalises competition, establishing the idea in children's imaginations that competition is the natural means to value the self and human beings in general. Thereby encouraging children to shape their ambitions and self in conformity with this ideology. Children, in the role of other animals who are positioned as tortoise's supporters, could get caught with her in the same trap. They are at risk of being interpellated, through the tortoise in the drama, by being made to accept unquestionably the competition, without ever managing to challenge or even become aware of the assumed values imposed on them by the situation. I am afraid that this is the definition of a defeat, not of a victory.

But the tortoise's and children's defeat does not suggest that the hare is the winner either. He is already an interpellated subject, one who trumpets the values of this particular ideology. It is the normalisation of the race that exercises power over both. In this race, the real champion *is the race*, which stands unchallenged on the finish point from the very first moment the race was declared.

I am thus afraid that my made-up drama lesson not only misses the opportunity to bring into focus our modern predicaments, but it contributes, intentionally or not, to strengthening the naturalisation of these ideologically-structured values or rules in participants' imaginations, abetting the process of making these ideologies invisible and legitimate. The accountability becomes clearer when we take into consideration Haste's (1987) conclusions on the process of children's construction of a variety of rules, where the very first step consists in accepting a socially-constructed rule as a given and where "the justification of the rule" itself is based on "arbitrary appeals to authority" (p. 168). In our case, we, teachers, may stand for that authority which, albeit unconsciously,

legitimises these rules for them even in the simple presentation of a situation in a story as a given.

There is a serious question, now, about what drama can do for children *and* for teachers within our modern neoliberal predicament. Frankly, I don't think that drama can change the world immediately. But we can, through drama, create with our participants situations where the implications of what our reality imposes on us and demands from us could be seen and felt again, with a critical and imaginative sight. David Davis (2014) again offers an articulate take on the purpose of drama in our modern world, proposing that:

> Art in this epoque must be focused on enabling the audience, spectator, reader, participant to glimpse the 'real' self-situation: the way in which every daily event is shaped in some way by these large social forces. It needs to open a space where we are faced with the 'actual' (…) and where our actions can be shaped by choices where fundamental questions of value can be fought out. (p. 22)

The question remains as to how we might create dramatic situations which facilitate this glimpse of the real self-situation. How might the fable of the tortoise and the hare be turned into such a dramatic space?

A possible way forward?

I would like now to explore some of the ideas which I have come to consider particularly useful for our endeavour. One of these ideas comes from the playwright Edward Bond, whose special approach to theatre became a focus of process drama primarily through David Davis' (2005 and 2014) contextualised dramatic approach.

Bond (2000) argues that drama occupies many sites. Site A, in this schema, refers to social sites, like the city, the era and culture, which an audience find familiar and recognise as their own. What is of particular interest in Bond's account is that Site A, our reality in a specific place, should be conveyed to an audience through Site B, which, somewhat simplified, could be understood as the specific fictional context and characters of a theatre play. In process drama terms, Site B can be understood as a drama's fictional context, which needs always to reflect Site A, the participants' specific reality which they recognise as their own. There are two more sites in Bond's account, Site C and Site D. The former refers to the dramatic devices through which Sites A and B are conveyed to an audience, and the latter to the audience's imagination (p. 10). We could partially describe this model by saying that drama functions as a channel of communication among these four sites.

But, the even more interesting point in Bond's elaboration of this set of sites is that he

explains and intentionally incorporates all of them in his plays as locations of 'contradictions and conflicts' (Bond, 2011, p. xx) which define individuals and societies. That is, he seeks to capture in a play how the conflicts and contradictions in Site A (the social) impact Site B (the situation and the characters of the play) and, in turn, Site D (the imagination of the audience). This process takes place throughout the whole of a play, rather than being restricted to setting the dramatic context in the opening (Amoiropoulos, 2013, p. 298). For example, Site A should not be regarded simply as a kind of a one-off building of the fictional context, which teachers may confine at the first steps of a drama lesson, but it must be present throughout the drama in order for the actions, gestures, objects, and words in a drama to be explored against our "real" context, our Site A. The aim is for the audiences/participants to "see" themselves within the truth of their situation and explore its implications for them. These contradictions and conflicts could be related to what David Davis described above as the "real self-situation" and the "actual", which in our case means what is really happening in our lives, the whole gamut of predicaments, paradoxes and impasses we face within our particular social and cultural context. Both Bond and Davis, and director Chris Cooper in his directing of Big Brum TIE programs (Amoiropoulos, 2013), saw these conflicts and contradictions as crucial in opening a gap of meaning within a story, a gap whereby reality could be approached with new ways; where the audience/participants could face their "real" self-situations, and where their "actions can be shaped by choices where fundamental questions of value can be fought out" (Davis, 2014, p.22).

I think that a careful selection of one or more of these conflicts, with an awareness of their implications for children, may offer significant help to a teacher in contextualising the drama and focusing on the social when planning or applying a drama lesson. This selective focus on specific conflicts and paradoxes may constitute the 'Centre' of a drama, a technical term in Bond's theory; the Centre of a drama contains the salient ontological questions to be felt and addressed in a play. It is a kind of crisis, a situation of confrontation with ideology (Amoiropoulos, 2013, p. 129) that should be pivotal to, and continually apparent in various forms and situations in a relevant drama. The Centre, thus conceived, could help teachers maintain awareness of and attention to possible ideological positions assumed in a story, inform how they are dealt with in the drama itself, and, ultimately, influence the creation of dramatic situations where children could face and work through these conflicts themselves.

With these references in mind, I will now attempt to explore some possibilities for approaching our specific fable in a different way. I am not assuming that these possibilities are the right ones. I am attempting to open and to further a discussion, rather than imposing a formula.

I would like specifically now to explore how Site B, the fictional context of a drama

lesson based on the hare and the tortoise, may be structured in such a way as to reflect and convey our Site A, which children recognise as their own reality. Maybe we would need to focus more on values and rules which are regarded as givens in this forest where the tortoise and the hare agreed to compete with each other. We might need to formulate some relevant questions, ones we consider appropriate for a group of children; such questions might include the following: How does this forest function? What is the purpose and the value of racing in there? Is it a forest where only the fastest animals manage to reside? Or is it a community where any animal has to have special survival skills to cope with a threatening environment? Why and how are these given values of the forest arrived at? How have the animals of the forest come to adopt them? How do these animals see their world? And what is at stake in having or not having a race? What does it mean to win or be defeated in this specific forest? And, finally, how do these selections relate to our world and our experience of it? Our world promotes and submits to a rather a weird situation, if you think about it. How is it possible for a community to be sustained as a community via competition?

I need to make clear that I am not suggesting that these are the only possible questions. Moreover, I am not suggesting that they are addressed to kids in the way and in the words I have just used. I am suggesting that these or similar questions can help a teacher to narrow her focus, choosing one of them to work on as the Centre of a drama, something which children can experience in a dramatic form rather than address theoretically.

Below there are some possible directions to work with, in practice, but I wouldn't suggest them as a kind of a strict pre-structured plan to be applied. I personally would have preferred a much more open direction heavily reliant on children's interests, choices, and proposals. But I am offering the ideas below as a kind of an example of possibilities and as an attempt to illustrate the theory presented above.

So, in practice, we might read the story to the point when the tortoise challenges the hare to a race, and ask participants to take on the role of the organisers of the forthcoming race. This role may position them, initially, on the side of the society's rules and values and may accommodate their own assumed values and growing urge for competing. Before they assume their roles, we might introduce relevant material like, for example, an article from a newspaper, the "news of the forest", where the tortoise's challenge to the hare is presented with bold letters. Or an invitation for watching the race between the two. We may, then, imagine the layout or environment of the forest by creating a map or a model or even transform the room into the forest. We might try to detect some special features of this forest. Perhaps there is a specific route which organised races routinely follow, or a training site where animals work out. Or a podium with the number 1 step placed somewhere high enough to be seen from every corner of the forest, or/and a ritual song or dance of the winners or the losers. We could, possibly, even create the award

that this forest bestows on winners as well as organise the award ceremony to follow, or set out the rules that need to be followed in a race. We could even invent a list of the previous winners and losers of past competitions. And then we could locate on our map where these animals are now. Where are their houses, and how did their victory or defeat impact their lives? Do they live among other animals of the forest or do they occupy special areas reserved for winners or losers? How does this forest community remember them?

We may, then, choose to focus our drama on the felt experience and the implications of the race for the central characters. We perhaps could follow the preparation of the two contestants, and try to understand what is really at stake in winning within this special forest. Why are these two animals doing what they are doing? What are their expectations and investments? Maybe we need to explore why the hare and the tortoise see their life like this. Why did the hare mock the tortoise? What did he invest in this action? From where or how did he learn this? What does he believe about the present condition of the forest? What about the tortoise's investment in the race? Why is she inviting the hare to a race? Where did she see that response before and adopt it in this situation? And how she connects to the forest?

We may, then, need to create a kind of crisis situation in our drama: a crisis that could bring kids closer to the Centre of the drama, where conflicts and contradictions of the site impact the characters of the story. Where a specific ideology might be, somehow, felt by children's/participants' imaginations.

Here is a possible choice: the hare has taken the award, hidden in his nest-hole and refused to give it back to the organisers, even though he has been defeated. Perhaps the hare is refusing to hand over the award because he is feeling that a part of himself has been torn away. Maybe he cannot value himself without the award and the status it confers. The organisers/participants would have to deal with this situation, since the award ceremony is about to begin, and all the cheering animals of the forest are growing restless because of the delay. The ceremony is in danger, and with it the whole structure of the forest's ideals. Perhaps the organisers would need to understand more about how the hare came to this situation in order to deal with the problem. A teacher in role as the hare may even ask questions resembling the central questions of interest: Who am I going to be without this award? Am I going to have a place in the forest without it? What can this place be? Did I disappoint you all? Am I not worthy to live around you…? Who decides that? And so on…

I see these questions as relating to David Davis' "real". Not simply to reality, but to the felt implications of reality on us. These questions may conclude in the minds of the participants a process which connects the situation of the drama with their own actual

situation. As organisers of the race in this forest, they may face a gap of meaning which the stories and values of the forest may not be able to seal. They may, then, be induced to reflect imaginatively within the situation on these values and stories. 'Why am I trying to convince the hare to hand in the award? Do I agree with that? What is a race? Why I am accepting it?' and so forth.

This process is based on metaxis, that is, living imaginatively and rationally in two contexts, the fictional and the real, at the same time. It is probably one of the most interesting areas to explore and concepts to employ in drama; it is an idea established and passionately expounded in the work of David Davis (2014, p. 52), and it is very different from simply distancing oneself from a situation or adopting a critical point of view towards it from the outside. Metaxis is the state of being simultaneously in two stages. In and out of role, where participants are enabled to act and monitor their actions at the same time:

> In role I stole some money, which I would not do in real life – or would
> I? Why did I take that action in role? There needs to be an impulse to
> critical self-reflection from within that process. It is the self-reflection
> from within that process. It is the self-spectating from within the dual role
> (…) (Davis, ibid, p. 52)

There could be many other possibilities and developments here. The important element is to choose dramatic events that will bring the situation to a crisis point that opens up a space where we are faced with the 'actual' (…) and where our actions can be shaped by choices where fundamental questions of value can be fought out (Davis, 2014, p. 22).

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Response to Kostas Amoiropoulos
by Bill Roper

Signifier Clusters

Preamble

The wager is that the human species coming out of evolution, is distinctive in that it is a speaking being and has lived in speaking communities for many tens of thousands of years. This means that it is not a purely natural being; language, Vygotsky realised, is more than a tool, it changes the nature of the user. We are more than natural, we denature ourselves and change our co-ordinates through the signifier in all its intricacies and ambiguities. Everett (2008) was corrected by Kohoi when learning the Piraha language:

> "You are my bAgiAi," I said, smiling. "No!", he responded laughing."
> (p.185) The two high tone A's is the word for enemy, bagiAi, with just
> one high tone is the word for friend. Kohoi had to whistle it before Daniel
> got it.

Spoken signifiers can be very difficult, let alone the translated signifiers of friend and enemy. Lacan (1961-1962, 29.11.61) contended that his dog would speak at times of high emotion, but didn't have to use language to work out who he (Lacan) was, she did that through smell and never made a mistake. But not for humans, we usually have to use language, and many problems ensue: who is the caller and what do their words mean, "I've won a prize"?

Though the sign has a longer history including Plato's *Cratylus* and Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, the signifier has been a concept of study for over two thousand years, Chrysippus in the third century BC distinguishing signifier from signified. For now we'll leave the nature and reach of the signifier to one side, but note that the wager extends to claim that at the core of science, art and morality is the signifier. Newton, Maxwell, and Einstein's equations come down to a small number of well-honed signifiers expressed as little letters that change the world. Musical notes, poems, dance steps, oil applied to canvas are signifiers. Goodness, justice, equality also. Therein is human endeavour and history.

One comment about psychology: like religion and philosophy beforehand, it is prone to construct lots of fantastic realities, things that human beings do made into objects of investigation and of special knowledge: understanding, imagination and intelligence. A concrete psychology doesn't need those, it starts from the human and the signifier, both concrete and material: enough for a materialistic psychology?

Drama

Amoiropoulos (2022) in looking at early years drama and the stories that are utilised and linking it to Davis' keynote with its highlighting of the question, Who am I?, says,

> …my main issue is not merely with the possible didactic form of the lesson itself but with what is made visible and, more importantly, invisible in this drama in relation to the greater image and ideas of the world our kids are growing in... Does the story present an ideology-free situation? If not, how is the drama lesson dealing with the issue of its hidden ideological positions? (p.6)

The story in question is The Hare and the Tortoise and what I would want to look at is the signifiers that might be central and at play in various drama lessons based on interpretations of it. In particular in terms of the children's enactment of the situation of the story that the drama might involve. 'Racing' is the first one that caught my eye, and through the rather abstract idea of competition, immediately implied "winning/losing' as another signifier at appropriate level for the children; 'surprise' and 'speed of movement' of the hare and tortoise, at this moment seem to be two more it might be feasible for the children to work on and to act? Depending on the group and their familiarity with drama, there might be a lot to work on here, without further signifiers particular to the tortoise's and the hare's role: why might the hare take a break and how would they both feel at the surprise outcome? Could a small cluster of signifiers give the logic of the structure of the conventional story/drama of the Tortoise and Hare?

But how could we change it, in the light of the ideological questions that are being raised, what would the signifiers be in such an interpretation? Perhaps remove "racing" and having "delivering a parcel", "taking a message"; who would be good at it?, get the job?, what might happen? Can we see our way through to another cluster of signifiers that would be the logic of an alternative version of the story?

Can we learn from playwrights and theatre examples, and what signifier clusters are there enacted there? (Examples from Shakespeare, Bond and Euripides suggest themselves.)

Signifiers

> …the clusters of signifiers... what drama teachers (and playwrights)...do when they use a story and try to find ways to approach it in a way that may reveal the logic of its structure, which is the logic of culture and ideology that produces or uses it in a specific context (?). (Kostas Amoiropoulos 2.3.21 Unpublished response to Bill Roper)

This takes the hypothesis of a cluster of signifiers underlying the story and forming the core of the artistic and other means of the drama teacher's and playwright's purposes, in a very interesting and complex direction. But before taking this any further I want to try

and join the discussion that your response opens up by saying more about signifiers. First I think to say in preliminary thoughts about a changed story above, I was playing with the signifiers I think are involved and might be altered in the Hare and Tortoise story and drama without any aspiration to knowledge regarding drama teaching realities and practicalities. Is a change to the conventional story needed to counteract its ideological force? As distinct from my earlier answer, now, I think I agree with you that, at least initially, that is not the path to follow. My interest is in seeing if focusing on the role of signifiers in the conventional story can bring out what might be immanent in such drama and its effects. And I feel honoured to be able to share that with you.

However that question, asked from the position of drama teaching, of the signifier clusters involved in a story, is much more than a matter of the content of the signifiers involved, it is the nature of the signifier in itself and the forms and structures that the assemblies of signifiers of versions of the story enter into: both internally within the story and externally with other signifying structures within the culture, in the moment and over time. Very importantly, approached from a Lacanian angle, this requires us to put the questions of meaning arising from the story to one side and concentrate solely on the signifiers. The Saussurian (Saussure 1915/1983: 67) representation of the sign, with the concept or signified above, united with the sound pattern or signifier below, in an enveloped oval, is not what Lacan took us to be dealing with. In listening to the analysand, the analyst was to attend to the signifiers, their proximity to other signifiers, their enunciation, where lapses and gaps occurred; in fact everything but their meaning. The project here is to do the same with the story and the drama and to provide an analysis that is counter to one that seeks to provide a basis for understanding and a support for our imaginary, ego and consciousness (Roper above p. 42), where,

> Through the vice of comprehension, which was well known and denounced by Lacan, we seek to accede to the conscious content that we attribute to discourse instead of limiting ourselves to simply reading the discourse in its unconscious presence. In other words, we cease to read what a discourse says textually –its signifiers as such– and focus on what we imagine that it means or wishes to express. (Pavon-Cuellar, 2013)

The signifier should be looked at in its relationship and connections with, and particularly its differences from, other signifiers. Saussure stresses with regard to linguistic value,

> *In the language itself, there are only differences.* Even more important than that is the fact that, although in general a difference presupposes positive terms between which the difference holds, in a language there are only differences, *and no positive terms.* (italics in the original, Saussure 1915/1983: 118)

Signifiers in a story are held there, in tension with myriad other signifiers that differ from

themselves in the surrounding cultural field:

> Always and everywhere one finds this same complex equilibrium of terms holding one another in mutual juxtaposition. In other words, *the language itself is a form, not a substance.* (italics in the original: 118)

Signifier clusters need to be approached, in terms of their form or structure rather than their content, from finding the external signifiers with which they are in tension, which are in the unconscious of the story in the culture outside the story as such. In this way the goal posited by Amoiropoulos can be opened up or to put it differently, this is the condition of possibility for that goal.

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Remembering Bill Roper
by David Davis

I first met Bill at Birmingham Polytechnic in about 1978. My first imagined memory of him would be of Bill sitting in our staffroom studying closely a copy of The Racing Paper and on the table in front of him Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein's first treatise on philosophy, along with a copy of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein's posthumously published treatise on philosophy which completely revised his previous approach. Bill was not really a gambler but loved to try to work out the relationship between what he could find out about the horse, jockey, trainer, previous races and so on in great detail and then put perhaps a £1 on a horse just to see how near to correct he was. But he *was* into philosophy.

We had the luxury of a Philosophy Society in those days and one of our subjects was Wittgenstein. I remember Bill arriving with both volumes under his arm and the rather awed response by the philosophy of education lecturers present when they saw him open the two volumes, fully annotated, with highlightings throughout, in order to make a point backed up by quotes. I guarantee he was the only person in the room who had read both books. I suspect the others, including myself, had not even read the whole of one of them.

We became colleagues and quickly became friends – close friends for life. We lived near each other and would sometimes go for a pint in the evening together and talk and talk and share arguments, listen to each other, change our minds, go back to our reading and so on. We shared our ups and downs, our theory and the practicalities of our lives from brewing our own beer and fermenting home-made wine to the problems with our relationships.

As Bill puts it in his latest article written as a response to my Dublin keynote 'I feel as though it wasn't just in drama/theatre, education and politics [that we met up] but also in psychology and philosophy: Bruner, Vygotsky, Hegel, Marx, Lenin, met up with what I brought: Skinner, Neisser, Locke, Wittgenstein, Goffman'. As the years passed he moved so much further ahead with his studies of Lacan. He left me far behind and I never was able to catch up. Literally up until a few weeks before he died he was still feeding me with new thinking on philosophy, social and personal psychology and many other areas. I was constantly testing his patience by my poor ability to assimilate even the most elementary dimensions of Lacanian theory. He was remarkably widely read with such a deep knowledge of psychology, philosophy, politics, music, art, and culture in general: a quiet man who did not show off his knowledge.

Back in the 70s I asked Bill to contribute to my PGCE drama course and to work on learning and teaching theories. We worked well together. We were both active in the

union branch and in the early 1980s I came into dispute with my line manager. My Head of Department was trying to get me to work on other courses apart from my drama courses which would have meant working over my agreed hours. I took it to my union and they supported me. Bill backed me up entirely throughout the dispute. We were moving to full scale union action on the matter when the Head of Faculty and my Head of Postgraduate Studies decided to back off. They realised at the last moment they would lose the case. On the evening before the dispute meeting one phoned me and the other phoned Bill to try to persuade us to drop the matter. We didn't have a chance to confer but independently we both refused. The next day we won the union case. We were the only two in the Faculty to refuse the £1000 buy off money from senior management to ditch our Silver Book conditions of service. We stayed on them to the end. It was that sort of solidarity, close thinking and trust that cemented our friendship.

I remember he was swimming regularly at the time he met his long-time partner Jayne. She was also a regular swimmer. She told me recently that she was trying to lose half a stone to get her Weight Watchers badge. Bill was swimming to try to settle himself after his divorce. Jayne was engaged at the time but that did not stop a romance blossoming. One day Bill said to me 'I think I'm in love'. They got together and Jayne became the mother of his two fine sons. He was very proud of them but also worried a lot about them. We shared it all.

Bill was remarkably patient. I never knew him lose his temper although he must have at some time or other. I never had an angry word from him even though I tested his patience on many an occasion.

Bill taught at Birmingham City University (formerly Birmingham Polytechnic and then the University of Central England) from 1978 to 2013 as a Social Psychologist mainly within the School of Sociology. He worked with me on the PGCE, and M.A., Drama in Education courses and with doctoral students. He was committed to teaching and developing psychology within interdisciplinary contexts and to find a social psychology that both built upon and was adequate to the arts, theatre and drama in education. He published some 14 papers in that field. He presented some 14 keynotes and papers at different conferences both in this country and in China, France, South Africa and Canada: all quietly, almost unnoticed by his University. A most modest man.

In his last months, when he was suffering from his cancers, we were in almost daily contact. Despite his illness he wrote an amazing response to my Dublin keynote which I promised I would get published somehow. His loyalty to Jayne in her time of illness has been a lesson to me in steadfastness: another gift.

At the latest hour of his illness Bill arranged for us to speak on the phone to say goodbye

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to each other and both expressed our love and admiration for the other: typical Bill - clear thinking to arrange it in time. I was in denial. He was totally clear where things stood. He died in the early hours of the 28th July 2021. We've lost a remarkable man. We'll miss him. I'll miss him.

Bill Roper

by Kostas Amoiropoulos

I don't know if what I'm doing makes any sense but this is how social media will offer a way to publicly manage your thoughts and feelings by filling the void of a non-existent ″ god ″....

On Wednesday 11th August a man I greatly appreciated left. A quiet man. A very quiet man who had a very quiet death...

But with an extremely dynamic pen and deep knowledge. Which would never give you the impression that he promotes himself or has personal motivation for anything. From those who don't make noise and so stay in obscurity... beyond his writings that unfortunately remain mostly among his acquaintances and friends.

But he was searching till the end. And he always offered his knowledge to those who asked him to. Since I met him, in 1996, he struggled to the end to find answers to who we are, why we think, what we have to do with the world, how we can change our perceptions and our world, get rid of problematic ideologies... and we always asked him to help us understand... and he always accepted... without any return..... UNTIL THE END...

I'm probably lucky enough to be one of those he talked to and have one of his last, if not the last, texts commenting on an article of mine where he mentions Lacan, of course. He was a deeply Lacanian psychologist... but I never caught up, though, to tell him how much he influenced me in my thinking and especially in relation to the way I work with drama. Maybe because, many times, we get the impression that the people we value will never die...

I owe him a piece of what I do at work and the way I think. And I'm so sorry he didn't know he had an impact on me. I'm so sorry.

Bon voyage dear friend Bill Roper. I will miss you...

Biographies

Konstantinos Amoiropoulos is currently working as an associate professor of drama in Oslomet University. He worked in the past as an early-years teacher in Greece and as the artistic director of the non-profit company 'Diadromes (routes) in Drama and Educational Praxis', in Athens, Greece. He studied Drama in Education with Prof David Davies (PhD in BCU and MA in UCE, Birmingham, UK). He also has degrees in Theatre Directing (PGDip, Royal Holloway University of London), BA in Early Years Education, BA in Primary Education (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece) and a BA in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies (Roehampton University, London). He provides workshops and seminars on drama for adults and children in Greece and teacher education facilitation workshops in many parts of the world. He also works periodically as a director for Theatre in Education programmes.

David Davis retired in the year 2000 as Emeritus Professor of Drama in Education from Birmingham City University (formerly University of Central England) where he was the co-founder of and Director of the International Centre for Studies in Drama in Education and course leader for MA, MPhil and PhD studies in Drama in Education. He taught for 15 years as a drama teacher in secondary schools. Since his retirement he has taught many courses in Ireland, Greece, Turkey, Hungary, The Czech Republic, Bosnia Hercegovina, Norway, Serbia, USA, Malta and China and taught extensively in Palestine. He has been awarded two lifetime achievement awards: The International 'Grozdanin Kikot' prize for the contribution to the development of drama education for the year 2000 and in 2012 by CAGDAS (Turkish Contemporary Drama Association) for the contribution to creative drama in Turkey. In 2001 he was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Turkish Drama in Education Association for 'Services to Turkish Drama in Education' and in 2001 Honorary Life Membership of the National Association for the Teaching of Drama 'For services to UK drama teaching and work internationally'. His recent publications include:

> 2009 Editor and a 30,000-word introduction and notes to Student Edition of *Saved* by Edward Bond, London: Methuen; 2010 *Gavin Bolton – The Selected Writings* (Ed.), Trentham Books; 2011 *Geoff Gillham: Six Plays for TIE and Youth Theatre*, (Ed.) Trentham Books; 2014 *Imagining the Real: Towards a New Theory of Drama in Education*, Trentham Books at IOE Press (Translated into Arabic, Turkish and Chinese)

Bill Roper worked at Birmingham City University from 1978 to 2013 as a Social Psychologist mainly within the School of Sociology. He worked with David Davis on the PGCE, and M.A., Drama in Education courses and Doctoral programme, was committed to teaching and developing psychology within interdisciplinary contexts and to find a social psychology that both built upon and was adequate to the arts, theatre and

drama in education, publishing some 12 papers in that field. He died in July 2021. This was his last paper; the final version finished in May 2021.

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The following back-copies are available at £3.00 each. (Earlier back-copies are also available. Details of these can be found on the NATD website natd.co.uk). Please make cheques payable to NATD specifying the Issue you require e.g. Vol 36, Issue 1. Please write to: Guy Williams at guy.williams@natd.eu or

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Volume 35, Issue 2. Autumn 2021

Includes: *Man in a mess: person in a paradox, person in a paradigm, person with a problem, person in a pandemic…:* Sorrel Oates; *Shaving heads: Informing our total existence:* Guy Williams; *'Why can't every teacher use Mantle of the Expert?:'* Renee Downey; *The Conventions of Dramatic Action: A Guide:* Tim Taylor Illustrated by Jim Kavanagh; *Signalling Across Space and Time: Conventions of Dramatic Action and the Teacher's Interpretation:* Maggie Hulson; *Rolling Role - a perspective:* Claire Armstrong-Mills; *The Commissioners:* Lisa Hinton; *The Dorothy Heathcote Archive:* David Allen, Sandra Hesten and Stig A. Eriksson; *A précis of: Contexts for Active Learning: Four models to forge links between schooling and society:* Dorothy Heathcote Précis Guy Williams.

Volume 36, Issue 1. Winter 2021

Includes*: 'A Great Gathering': The Dorothy Heathcote Now Conference,* David Allen; *Dorothy Heathcote: Teacher power and student choices,* Cecily O'Neill; *What sort of society do we want? Introducing: Humanising education with dramatic inquiry: In dialogue with Dorothy Heathcote's transformative pedagogy,* Brian Edmiston and Iona Towler-Evans; *My Work and Dorothy,* Vaishali Chakravarty; *Dorothy Heathcote (DH), the archive and me: What sticks out?*, Sandra Hesten; *The Alchemical Model of Leadership: From Classroom to Boardroom*, Bogusia Matusiak-Varley, Eleni Kanira and Sarah Mills; *An overview of articles written by Dorothy Heathcote and published by The Journal for Drama in Education,* Curated by Maggie Hulson.

The Mary Simpson Fund

For nearly 20 years, members of NATD who require financial assistance to attend our events have been supported by the Mary Simpson Fund. Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton were close friends of Mary. Gavin outlines the history of the woman in whose name so many teachers have been able to attend our Conferences and Regional events.

Mary Simpson nee Robson 1907-92

Having begun her career as a primary school teacher in 1924, Mary Robson was appointed to the newly set up Emergency Training College in 1946, (becoming a two-year training establishment after three years and then, in 1961 amalgamating with Neville's Cross College, Durham) under the auspices of the University of Durham. It was based at Wynyard Hall, property of Lord Londonderry whose estate is on the edge of Teesside. From the start, a feature of the college was the insistence by the Principal that it should revive the pre-war tradition of the Londonderry family of promoting the Arts by arranging concerts and play performances for the local community. This is how Mary, an artist, actress, theatre director and much-loved trainer of teachers established her reputation in the Northeast. Her early productions included 'Tobias and the Angel' and 'Peer Gynt'. One of her students at that time recalls that 'She nurtured everyone and brought out the best in them. She was kind, gentle and unassuming with a twinkle in her eye and a wonderful sense of humour.'

Such was her reputation that Professor Brian Stanley, Director of Durham University Institute of Education, in 1950 offered her the post of working with experienced Drama teachers (there was no other such post in the UK) but she turned this down because she wanted to continue to work in Art as well as Drama. Her non-acceptance of such an invitation is not without its significance in the history of UK Drama Education, for Dorothy Heathcote would not have been appointed and her whole career and influence on the world's drama teaching would have been much less influential had she accepted it. And my career too would have been seriously affected, for it was Mary Robson who introduced Dorothy and me to each other when I was appointed Durham Drama Adviser in 1961. She invited us both to tea (a popular way of entertaining guests all those many years ago!) and because I replaced Dorothy at Durham University two years later when she moved on to Newcastle, we were able to share our work for the next 30 years!

In 1969, Mary retired and in 1978 she married her cousin, John Alfred Simpson (popularly known as Alf Simpson), also an artist. She died in 1992.

Mary bequeathed a sum of money to continue the nurturing of students and young Drama teachers. In 1992, Dorothy Heathcote and Tony Grady recommended to the NATD committee of that year, that using this money a fund could be set up to enable all members to attend Conference. That fund still exists in Mary's name and continues to ensure that all who wish to can attend our events. We are always looking for ways to top up the fund and at each conference there will be an event or activity that encourages you to contribute. Please give generously. In addition, you may like to consider paying your membership fees by standing order and adding a small monthly amount that will go directly into the fund. Please contact the Treasurer for further details and a standing order form.

If you would like to receive support from the Mary Simpson Fund, please write to the Chair of the Association indicating your reasons for needing support and the proportion of the Conference fee that you would like to receive.

The Tony Grady International Fund

Tony Grady was twice Chair of the national executive of NATD. He was an outstanding leader, always careful to develop the theory and practice of drama and theatre in education, always with the needs of the young firmly at the heart of all endeavour. Tony was also on the editorial committee of *The Journal* of NATD for seven years, again providing a focus and leadership that was second to none. Underpinning all of Tony's work was a great humanity born of which was his leadership of 'NATD to think and work as internationalists'[1]. He was a founder of the International Association for Drama and Theatre and Education, and led developmental work in Bosnia, Serbia and Kosova, always working to bring international delegates to NATD conferences.

In 2003 Tony died, much mourned and missed, not only for his insight and guidance, but also because he was a good mate to so many of us. When the arrangements for his funeral were being discussed his partner, Angela asked that, instead of flowers, money should be donated to NATD to create a fund for bringing international delegates to NATD conferences. In this way, through the Tony Grady fund, NATD seeks to continue, both in conviction and in action, an internationalist practice.

We are always looking for ways to top up the fund. At each conference there will be an event or activity that encourages you to contribute. Please give generously. In addition, you may like to consider paying your membership fees by standing order and adding a small monthly amount that will go directly into the fund. Please contact the Treasurer for further details and a standing order form.

If you are a practitioner from outside the UK and would like to receive support from the Tony Grady Fund or you know of someone who would benefit from it, please write to the Chair of the Association indicating your reasons for needing support and the proportion of the Conference fee that you would like to receive.

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1 Margaret Higgins 18th December 2003 – letter to NATD