

Swimming in Air
(creative writing component)

**The role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and
performance viewpoint in *Peter Pan* (1904), *The Emperor's
New Clothes* (1934) and *The Small Poppies* (1989)**
(dissertation component)

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**This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of The University of Western Australia**

School of Social and Cultural Studies

2012

Abstract

The creative component and the thesis study is centred on a creative writing project titled *Swimming in Air*, which was developed while investigating the role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904), Charlotte Chorpenning's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1934) and David Holman's *The Small Poppies* (1989). The three plays were chosen due to the playwrights' textual devices associated with: a world-within-a-world scene structure, the literary object, imaginary objects and the imaginary companion. Certain scriptwriting and "possible" performance devices used in the three plays served to influence the writing and creative development of *Swimming in Air* in order to challenge the reader and future audience member to envisage the "invisible" onto the stage.

The creative component: *Swimming in Air*

Swimming in Air has been written for young people aged seven and over, which would either be produced as an "in theatre" and/or "in school" theatre production for a medium to large audience as well as with multimedia/technological and puppetry/visual requirements. I therefore envisage the reader, the future director and performers of the play will utilise their imagination when reading and/or presenting this work for young people. While writing this play, I have also kept in mind that first, the creative component is a playtext that is to be read, and second that the play has the potential to be performed. The script consists of twelve condensed scenes with multiple themes embedded throughout, which explore morality and the importance of the role of the imaginary character in young people's lives. When produced, the play would run for approximately fifty minutes to one hour of stage time.

The thesis component

In the first chapter of the thesis component, I have taken the stance that the term "Children's Theatre" can at times refer to an "all inclusive" overarching term that covers other child-centred theatre forms for and with children. One reason for using Children's Theatre as an "all inclusive" term that covers a diverse range of live entertainments for young people in this study is due to the problem of age limit when defining Children's Theatre or Theatre for Young Audiences and/or separating

education from entertainment when discussing Theatre-in-Education or Creative Dramatics. The first chapter explores this idea in more detail, and is to be read as a stand-a-lone section that investigates the evolving definitions associated with Children's Theatre rather than an argument for developing a comprehensive term for Children's Theatre; which takes into consideration theatrical activities for and with young people prior to the 1900s. Additionally, I contextualise Children's Theatre as an evolving movement and art form, and discuss its development in Australia as a separate theatrical genre to adult theatre from the late 1920s, which has been influenced by international trends with distinct variations and outcomes.

In chapter two, three and four, I focus on the role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in three mainstream, Western and English written children's plays, which have originated from America, Britain and Australia. The core reason for the selection of the three plays is due to each play having had an important influence on the Theatre for Young Audiences movement locally and internationally as well as each play incorporating specific imaginative devices in order to create the "invisible" onto the stage. I also justify some of the main reasons why I have implemented similar imaginary devices in *Swimming in Air*, linking the exegesis to the creative component. Additionally, each chapter presents a brief synopsis of the plays, an introduction to the work and life of the authors and initial production details.

In the last chapter, I summarise the respective imaginary devices and scriptwriting techniques I have been influenced by in order to develop *Swimming in Air* such as juxtaposing the uncanny alongside the normal, creating a non-gendered specific character as a literary object, developing imaginative invisible objects that challenge the performer and audience member to visualise the "impossible", and creating a play that centres on the imaginary character as an extension of the self. Lastly, I briefly elaborate on the difficulties of sustaining a rich Theatre for Young Audiences movement in Australia before concluding with potential areas for future research.

The thesis is my own composition, all sources have been acknowledged and my contribution is clearly identified in the thesis. The thesis has not previously been accepted for any other degree in this or another institution; and the thesis has been substantially accomplished during enrolment in the degree at The University of Western Australia.

Signed: _____ (Rachael Hains-Wesson)

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Associate Professor Stephen Chinna for his ongoing guidance and support throughout the challenging process of writing this academic thesis and creative project. I would also like to thank Professor Van Ikin and John Preston as well as the initial founding members of Odd Socks Theatre Company in Melbourne, Australia for their valuable support. The Odd Socks Theatre Company members initially began the journey of specialising in Children's Theatre with me and thus, my decision to later pursue academic research in Children's Theatre. Furthermore, I owe a special thank you to Dr. Joan Pope (PhD) for her valuable insight regarding the first chapter of this thesis, for her kindness in reading the final product and allowing me to view early editions of *Lowdown* and various *Education in the Arts* brochures that were produced by the *Australia Council*. I would also like to thank Professor Manon van de Water for her valuable mentorship while completing research at The University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2010. Additionally, I would like to thank the Convocation at The University of Western Australia for assisting me in further evaluating my research in Children's Theatre at The University of Wisconsin-Madison (USA) with a Convocation Travel Award in 2010. Finally and on a more personal note, I would like to thank my husband, Trevour and my sons, Boston and Hudson for their patience and understanding throughout the writing of this thesis and creative component. Without their support the writing of *Swimming in Air* and the thesis component would not otherwise have been made possible.

SWIMMING IN AIR

A Theatre for Young Audiences script about a child's imaginary friend which is a visual theatrical experience that requires a director and its cast to transcreate the writer's meaning for the stage.

Characters

THE CHILD

An imaginative person

THE FATHER

A logical person

THE MOTHER

A perfect person

ROGER/KANGAROO

The imaginary self/friend/enemy

Can be a combination of a projected self/image and/or a performer

THE OTHERS and THE FLOWERS

A Chorus

Can be a voice-over, puppets and/or performers

FACT CONTROLLER

A voice-over of a stern manager

Prologue

Location: night time

A gigantic see-through white ball is in the middle of the stage – the ball bounces and moves around as if it can dance. Slowly, inside the ball a foetus can be seen. The foetus grows and changes and sometimes it can be seen having a party; enjoying snacks and drinking from a red striped straw. The foetus is happy. There are sounds of gurgles and laughter.

The foetus is getting too big inside the ball – there are sounds of sticks rubbing, chalk scratching on a blackboard, paper tearing and bones clashing and soon, the foetus peels away its circle of confinement, breaking free.

[The ball and foetus can be created by the use of puppetry and/or projected image/s].

1

Location: a factory

There is a line of unborn (not yet birthed) children on chairs, and their heads are hanging down [the line of unborn children can be created by the use of puppetry and/or projected images or live actors]. Above each unborn child is a deflated gigantic see-through white ball [it is the same white ball that was seen in the Prologue].

[Note to the director: The “chorus” is a group of not-yet-born human entities and therefore they are “all knowing”. The embryos can be represented (but not limited to) projected image/s, puppetry or by actors.]

The unborn children are positioned on a moving mechanical conveyer belt similar to spare parts moving along in a factory. The conveyer belt begins to move and one of the unborn children’s heads slowly moves upwards, peering out into the audience.

This unborn child is different and begins playing a “counting” tune on a red striped recorder.

THE CHILD: Sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three, sixty-four (*pause*) sixty-six...

THE OTHERS: Reject.

THE CHILD: Sixty-six (*pause*) sixty-seven, sixty-eight (*pause*) eighty...

THE OTHERS: Reject.

THE CHILD tries to communicate emotionally by playing on the recorder and singing to THE OTHERS.

THE OTHERS: An imaginative little so and so...imaginative so AND so little imaginative little so and so...

THE CHILD hides the recorder and places its hands together, forming them into a shape of a bird that flies. A screeching siren can be heard (it sounds like a crow) and there are red flashing lights. The siren also begins to sound like birds screeching; up and down, loud and soft. THE CHILD slowly hangs its head in shame.

THE OTHERS: An imaginative little so and so imaginative so and so little little imaginative little so AND so. [*Then, in a sing-song voice*] One, two, three, four, FIVE, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve...

THE CHILD: I'm dreaming of birds swimming in air.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

THE CHILD: I'm fantasizing that I'm on the back of a huge soaring bird. I'm in the sky, holding feathers in my fingers.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

THE CHILD: I'm imagining, we're all swimming in air. We're on gigantic birds and eating ice cream.

Loud whirling sirens are heard again and it sounds like the siren is now saying REJECT as well, and there are more flashing red lights. Everyone except THE CHILD jerks and shakes as they move along the conveyer belt. THE CHILD gets off the conveyer belt and slowly turns around to face the audience.

[Note to the director: The first appearance of ROGER can be represented by a projected image onto the small of THE CHILD's back as a strange being. ROGER could also be represented by the use of puppetry and/or projected image/s.]

ROGER: I'm you and you're me.

THE CHILD: You can't live here [*circling and trying to point to ROGER*]. No one can live here.

ROGER: Friends forever. You and I. Never alone.

THE CHILD: Were you inside my egg when I was born? Do you know how I was born? Can you tell me? What is your name?

ROGER: Roger.

THE OTHERS: The imaginary so and so wants to know to know the imaginary so and so tell tell him Roger Roger tell him.

THE CHILD: I want to know.

ROGER: One day, there was a Child waiting to be born. The Child had too many imaginary thoughts inside its head; like a huge angry wave tossing it up and down. One day, the Child had a secret friend. An imaginary and invisible friend who wanted to be real.

[ROGER *makes retching sounds with the action of coughing up a fur ball.*]

The siren sound starts again and then the sounds slowly fade away. There are sounds of birds' wings flapping hard.]

ROGER: The Child can't count; dreams about swimming in air.

THE OTHERS: Not enough numbers in the right order. (*They all make vomiting sounds and the same action as ROGER; they make sounds of coughing up fur balls*).

ROGER: The Child wants to know how it was born. The Child wants to know why I'm on its back. The Child can't count. The Child imagines.

THE OTHERS: Pick me no no me pick me me pick me no no – it's a reject Roger it's a reject Roger pick me.

ROGER: More than anything in the whole wide world The Child wants a mum and dad. More than anything in the whole wide world The Child wants to count. More than anything Roger wants to be real.

THE OTHERS: Secrets, The Child has too many secrets a secret The Child has.

Above each head a number appears and takes the place of the deflated white balls.

THE CHILD's number is different to THE OTHERS. It is the smallest amount. It is the number five.

ROGER: The Child's number is very little.

THE OTHERS: Little AND little so very little the number is little.

THE CHILD: Four?

THE OTHERS: Reject.

THE CHILD: Four is lucky?

THE OTHERS: Reject, five is the number reject tell him reject Roger five is the number five.

The siren sound starts again and then the sounds slowly fade out. There are sounds of birds' wings flapping hard.

ROGER: Only five bits of knowledge when all The Others have so much.

THE CHILD *turns and sits back down. ROGER is gone.*

THE CHILD: I want a bigger number.

THE OTHERS: More? The Child more The Child wants more wants wants bigger bigger numbers.

The conveyer belt moves again. THE CHILD hangs its head in shame.

2

Location: a selection shop

MOTHER *and* FATHER *enter*.

FATHER: (*Communicating into a long pipe that has a funnel at the mouth.*) Fact Controller? Come in. Are you there? Come in Fact Controller. [*To* MOTHER] I want a child with a very big head. Lots of brains. It needs to carry numerous numbers.

FACT CONTROLLER/VOICE OVER: A supportive environment fosters numerous aspects of intelligence numerous aspects.

[*THE OTHERS and THE CHILD are waiting behind MOTHER and FATHER. They are waiting to be selected. They shake and murmur in agreement.*]

MOTHER: (*Closing her eyes as the conveyer belt moves along. She tries to sense which one she will pick.*) Eeny Meeny Miney Mo – catch a baby by the toe. Do you think we're supportive enough? We should buy some more support.

FATHER: [*To* FACT CONTROLLER] Logic. Do you hear me? It's the only true value. [*To* MOTHER] They say, one sided communication never works – I beg to differ. [*Tapping the pipe to see if there are any kinks*]. Fact Controller?

MOTHER: It would only take a second to get some more support– it wouldn't cost much. Imagine the benefits. I'd be the perfect mother. I'd have the right amount of support.

FATHER: I've heard that love and that *thing* called self-esteem improves learning but I'm yet to see that. Fact Controller are you there? We want to make a selection.

MOTHER: I'm sensing something. Hang up – he's obviously out to lunch.

FATHER: Logic doesn't feel dear - it knows and it knows correctly.

THE OTHERS: Value value value knowing correctly the value.

MOTHER: They say, breast fed babies are smarter. They say, mothers should walk at least five kilometers per day along a river for tranquility. They say, you must not eat too much but have lots of nuts and water to keep the milk flowing. They say, if you get a blockage in your milk duct that you're doing something wrong.

FATHER: That's rude, disgusting, and insane and it isn't logical.

MOTHER: Breasts are very sensible dear. They're organic.

FATHER: Not with a baby at the end of them. Man should own all breasts not babies.

[Loud static sounds can be heard]

FACT CONTROLLER: Please make your way to the selection area. You will find a clip board. Make sure you can do all that it says. All specials are to go through the express lane and make sure your child has a price tag; we're very busy today and getting a price check is never easy. We take all bank cards except United Express - but no vouchers today; it's "non-voucher day" today.

[Loud static can be heard]

FACT CONTROLLER: Please make sure your child can be used within its expiry date; we take no refunds – make sure you select right; we can't guarantee "off" items. Happy shopping and we hope you enjoy your new purchase. Please read the fine print. It's on The Child's foot etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

MOTHER: *(She picks up the clip board and begins reading)* Do we have a safe home? Yes. Do we have a stimulating home? "Yes" dear? Yes. Can we spell? Can we count? Do we know what we're doing? Are we perfect?

[To FATHER] Yes. Can we celebrate birthdays with gigantic plastic blow-up castles - can we buy a piano, violin, guitar and any musical instrument? The Child must learn to play by the age of four. Yes. Can we hire tutors to teach The Child to spell? Yes. The Child must count by the age of four. Yes. Can we pay huge amounts of money for school fees and uniforms, and most importantly can we compete aggressively with other parents when the conversation arises; which child is better?

FATHER makes a grimacing face and matching body language to suggest aggression. MOTHER ticks the boxes. MOTHER and FATHER sign the clip board and as soon as they have, they become highly nervous and agitated – they are about to give birth.

The conveyer belt moves in anticipation of the selection process.

FATHER: What about fingers and toes? It must have all its fingers and toes otherwise how will it count? How will it count if a finger or a toe is missing? Eyes, it must have eyes, to see the numbers - it must enjoy numbers. Brains, it must have lots of brains – no, not that one – look - its head’s too small – we need a child with a huge head so it can think about large, juicy numbers.

MOTHER: You’ll give yourself a heart attack – you’re not the one giving birth – What is your problem? You do this every time, saying “I know what to say, let me say it, don’t say a word, as soon as you open your mouth – it’ll come out all wrong, so don’t say anything, not a word.” Look at you – you’re a mess – sit down, relax – breathe - I’ll choose – (*pause*) I’m having palpitations – feel – see? Can you feel them? [**MOTHER** *points to* **THE CHILD**.]

FATHER: Five. That’s uneven - unlucky. It’s crooked – five should really be a letter it’s not good enough to be a number.

MOTHER: Lots of pain and palpitations – let me sit down – what’s wrong with you? Get out of the way – no, hold my hand. No, get out of my way - I’m the one doing this - not you.

THE OTHERS: One, two, three, four (*pause*).

THE CHILD: Six?

FATHER: Don’t pick that one. Five? It’s all crooked. Its head should be bigger – it won’t be able to squish all the numbers in.

MOTHER is curious and goes closer to inspect THE CHILD. THE CHILD plays the red striped recorder and their eyes meet and something wonderful exchanges between them. She starts to pant and rubs her back.

MOTHER: It’s started – five more cramps – five? I’m going to give birth – you – you’re the one I pick – let me see your eyes - blue like the ocean. I love the ocean. It’s perfect. Five is crooked but – potential. Yes, perfect potential - oooh - cramps dear! A challenge, yes, you’ll do – I know what I want and I always get it. I’m the perfect mother.

THE CHILD: I like swimming in air.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

[*Loud static can be heard*]

FACT CONTROLLER: Nice selection – comes at an affordable price – nice selection. A very special discount for the slightly smaller head (and it isn't off).

OTHERS: Reject.

THE FATHER: Stop getting so close. You know what happens when you get that close.

MOTHER gets closer and is panting and she is in obvious birthing discomfort which is getting more intense.

THE FATHER: Ask *it* – to add a one in front of the five? (THE CHILD *doesn't* respond. FATHER resorts to yelling at the FACT CONTROLLER). Fifteen! I want to add a one. How much more Fact Controller? Fifteen is much better. CAN YOU DO THAT? I won't tolerate less. I can pay extra you know. [To MOTHER] Stop getting so close. Why are you sniffing its hair?

FACT CONTROLLER: Nice selection – comes at an affordable price – nice selection.

THE CHILD: One, two, three, four (*pause*) ten?

THE OTHERS: Reject.

FATHER: She's picking a reject.

MOTHER: Potential dear, I can smell potential. We can teach it to be perfect.

FATHER: Oh no, not *darling* – not potential!

MOTHER: Do you like organic milk – I hope you like organic? It's perfect.

FATHER: It's not a cat you know. Look – dear, I know you want to be the “perfect” mother and everything – but The Child should be on solids by now and able to count and so I think...

THE CHILD: I have a secret.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

FATHER: This is useless.

MOTHER: What's the secret?

FACT CONTROLLER (*dialogue that is indented from now on is to be carried out by using either/or: repetition /interjection/echo*): Affordable selection.

FATHER: I want a refund.

MOTHER: Ssh! Our Child is saying its first words.

FACT CONTROLLER: No refunds – read the fine print.

FATHER: *[Looking for the fine print]* How many toes does it have?

THE CHILD: I can swim in air.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

FATHER: It's damaged – I won't take a cracked egg home – surely that's enough for a refund? Fact Controller it can't count? Are you there? Fact Controller!

MOTHER: Are you a bird? A miracle? A prophet? A message from above? Listen.

[THE CHILD plays the red striped recorder again and FATHER is placed into a slight trance by the sound.]

FATHER shakes his head and comes out of the trance from the music and quickly pushes the conveyer belt button. THE OTHERS and THE CHILD begin to move along the conveyer belt. THE CHILD is trying to play the recorder but is bounced about. THE CHILD is moving away from MOTHER, and FATHER is happy about that, but MOTHER quickly follows.

FACT CONTROLLER: Read the fine print – excellent selection.

THE CHILD: One, two, three, four *(pause)* five?

FATHER: Five is uneven.

MOTHER finally catches up to THE CHILD and she is exhausted.

THE CHILD's seat lifts so that THE CHILD disappears from view. Siren sounds are getting louder and there are more red flashing lights. The OTHERS are chorusing "Reject" and "Knowledge is more important than Imagination" and "pick me", and MOTHER quickly goes over to where THE CHILD was.

MOTHER: Can you hear me! Are you ok? You're coming fast - I can't stop you now.

THE CHILD: I'm stuck.

FATHER: If we leave now we'll make the selection program in the city.

MOTHER: Keep moving. Use your shoulders and slip on up to the top of the tunnel. Perfect.

She turns to the FATHER.

MOTHER: The Child – swimming inside me – feel – I can feel it. Its little fist is pushing out. Its feet are near my throat; nearly touching my face.

FATHER: It's a reject. You heard The Others. Five is no good. It's floating like an off egg.

MOTHER: Imagine what they'll say at the next mothers' meeting. We can teach it to be perfect. We'll be perfect. Perfect parents.

OTHERS: Reject.

FATHER: See.

MOTHER: A reject that becomes perfect.

FATHER: It can't even swim! It can't count – I won't have it!

THE OTHERS: Swim it can't it can't it can't swim.

FATHER: [To MOTHER] I can't teach it. I haven't got time. I'm writing a very important paper you know? It's got numbers and big letters and it's really hard to understand.

MOTHER bends over with sharp cramps.

FATHER: Everyone will laugh at us. We'll be failures. The Others said it can't swim, they said so. It can't count or do anything useful. [To the CHILD] Our home is not comfortable – yes, very uncomfortable.

[MOTHER *moans and a “popping” sound can be heard.*]

MOTHER: Too late. The Child is here.

FATHER *and* MOTHER *hear the recorder playing.* THE CHILD *enters with* ROGER *behind him.* ROGER *is dressed exactly like* THE CHILD, *but he is in red stripes.*

THE CHILD: It's my birthday today and I can swim. I can swim in air.

THE FATHER: Ridiculous.

THE OTHERS: Reject.

MOTHER: [*To* FATHER] You can pick the next one.

FATHER: [*To* THE CHILD] What do you mean you can swim in air? How do you know? How can you say such a thing? It's not logical. [*Stamping his feet*] I don't want it. It's not fair.

THE CHILD *touches the* MOTHER's *hand.*

MOTHER: The next mothers' group meeting is only a month away. Find time to make The Child perfect – it'll be perfect.

FATHER: I can't teach a reject.

THE CHILD: I don't need you to teach me.

FATHER: You're going to teach yourself are you?

THE CHILD: Roger will.

FATHER: Who's Roger? Look, you've got it all messed up in that small head of yours.

MOTHER: Who's Roger?

THE OTHERS: Roger Roger is the ridiculous
Roger Roger the ridiculous Roger Roger is
invisible Roger's not logical Roger is
imaginary imaginary Roger The Child's

imaginary friend Roger wants to be real real
ridiculous imaginary Roger.

3

Location: a dining room (ROGER is not present in this scene)

MOTHER, FATHER *and* THE CHILD *enter with plates, cutlery, cups and all things needed for a family meal. Three places are set up for a meal. FATHER sits at the head of the table and places a napkin inside his shirt collar and is ready for a hearty meal. MOTHER is running around making sure everything is ready and perfect. THE CHILD is perplexed because ROGER's seat is missing and therefore ROGER has no place at the table. THE CHILD races off stage and nearly crashes into MOTHER.*

FATHER: Is it ready yet?

[MOTHER *is re-entering and exiting all the way through this section of the scene. She is very busy.*]

MOTHER: [*To* THE CHILD] What's wrong with you?

FATHER: Is it ready yet?

MOTHER: I've only got two hands – how about getting up and helping? Do you want to cook? “Patience is a virtue” but you certainly don't have any.

FATHER: Is it ready?

[MOTHER *re-enters with a gigantic chicken on a platter*].

MOTHER: [*To* THE CHILD] Come on – what's taking you so long – dinner's ready!

[THE CHILD *enters with another chair and places it at the opposite end of where FATHER is sitting who is ready to devour something scrumptious.*]

FATHER and MOTHER: [*To* THE CHILD] What's that?

[THE CHILD *runs off stage.*]

FATHER: Is the chicken ready yet?

MOTHER: Be patient. [*To THE CHILD*] Make sure you wash your hands.

FATHER: What's taking so long – five minutes and exactly thirty seconds. Are we having a visitor?

[*MOTHER doesn't hear FATHER and is busy getting the table and food ready*]

FATHER: I said - are we having company?

MOTHER: Just enough for us.

FATHER: An extra chair? That's not logical.

[*THE CHILD enters and gets everything ready for ROGER to eat at the table. THE CHILD places two dolls that look exactly like MOTHER and FATHER on ROGER's chair. ROGER is still missing.*]

THE CHILD: Roger's chair.

MOTHER and FATHER: Roger?

THE CHILD: I've washed my hands. I got the table ready. I won't eat until Roger is here. [*Shouting*] Roger, dinner is ready!

MOTHER: There's no one there dear.

FATHER: This isn't logical and I can't think straight on an empty stomach. Move that chair away! There is no Roger. Stop this silliness now.

THE CHILD: [*Mumbles*] Is so.

FATHER: I can hear you mumbling – no Roger.

THE CHILD: Is so.

FATHER: Is not.

THE CHILD: Is so.

MOTHER: Stop fighting – just this once, I can't handle it – I'm going to lose it. I won't be perfect.

FATHER: [*Mumbles*] No Roger.

THE CHILD: Fat head.

MOTHER and FATHER are in shock. They dislike disobedience. MOTHER drops the chicken onto the floor and all its insides spill out. FATHER, MOTHER and THE CHILD are now in slow movement as they fight over the plates, the chair for ROGER, the chicken on the floor and the dolls. As soon as the dolls are placed back

onto ROGER's chair by THE CHILD they all revert back into normal movement and FATHER and MOTHER exit very upset.

[THE CHILD is all alone at the table. THE CHILD re-organises the places at the table and takes special care around ROGER'S place and replaces the dolls (the Father doll is placed onto the FATHER's chair and the Mother doll is placed onto MOTHER's chair.)

THE CHILD: Roger? *[No answer].*

[Loud static can be heard]

4

Location: inside a dream

The Flight of the Bumblebee written by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov can be heard.

ROGER and THE CHILD appear and then they are represented as shadow puppets by the use of a silk screen. They begin playing various instruments; (they start with recorders then go onto harmonicas and then violins and then guitars - it becomes a competition). Then, they are back to normal size [actors on the stage] and enter the stage area in a small, old wooden boat. Inside the boat there are legs and arms stretched out as if the person inside has grown too big for the boat. The oars begin to row on their own and it is THE CHILD who is in the boat and snoring, yawning and talking about swimming in air. ROGER is in control of the boat and the oars get faster and faster and more erratic, and as they do THE CHILD gets more restless and tosses and turns in the little, wooden boat. When the oars stop THE CHILD snores (loud snoring can be heard) and then they begin to row again. THE CHILD eventually sits up and using its arms begins to swim away from the boat, kicking its legs. THE CHILD is swimming in the air and is asleep. THE CHILD is trying to return to the boat, holding on to the railing but the wind begins to blow even harder, trying to take THE CHILD away. ROGER is allowing THE CHILD to drown, swim and fight in the air as the words are sung, "The wind will blow and the cradle will rock and down, down will come baby, cradle and all." *The Flight of the Bumblebee* is played throughout and ceases when the wind finally stops pulling THE CHILD away from the boat.

THE CHILD is now fully awake. THE CHILD feels its body, face, arms and legs. THE CHILD slowly realises that they aren't safe.

ROGER: Sleeping dreaming imagining and not thinking. One day Roger had an idea – to be born a thousand times – Roger didn't want to be invisible anymore but real and to have a mum and dad - the Child's mum and dad.

5

Location: a backyard

THE CHILD *is playing in the garden, while MOTHER and FATHER are gardening and reading. There are strange colourful flowers.* THE FLOWERS *are similar to THE OTHERS.*

MOTHER: [*Looking up from her book*]. What are you doing?

FATHER: [*Digging a large hole. There are large dirt marks on his face*]. I'm gardening - what does it look like.

THE FLOWERS: Father lies he likes lies he lies he's looking for numbers in a box a box full of numbers to make The Child eat them.

FATHER: What are you reading?

MOTHER: It says here that a mother's milk has nutrients that can make the brain bigger.

THE FLOWERS: Mother lies she likes lies she lies she's reading about perfection a book full of details to make The Child eat them.

FATHER *stops digging and takes MOTHER's book and MOTHER starts sweeping the dirt back into the hole.*

MOTHER and FATHER: Perfect.

THE FLOWERS: Lies they like lies planting lies like seeds.

ROGER/VOICE OVER: Lies they like lies planting lies like seeds mother and father lie they lie all the time they want The Child to count and be perfect. I'm perfect and I like to lie. I want The Child's mum and dad to love me.

FATHER *drops the book and goes to help* MOTHER. *They finally find a large, old box in the hole. They open it up and discover an egg with "GROW ME" written on its shell. FATHER shakes it to see if there is anything inside.*

THE FLOWER: Roger wants to be born born Roger born a thousand times Roger to be born born real and to have a mum and dad a mum and dad of his own poor poor Roger wanting to be born a thousand times.

MOTHER: What does it mean?

THE CHILD: Where do babies come from?

FATHER: Don't look at me.

THE FLOWERS: Cabbage patches and Storks; a fire place.

MOTHER: Hot.

FATHER: What an egg!

THE CHILD: I like eggs but what about the baby chicks?

MOTHER: Take your rib out, plant it and it'll grow into a bone tree.

FATHER: Dreamer. That's not logical at all.

THE CHILD: I want another me.

MOTHER: I'm too busy.

THE FLOWERS: Cabbage patches and Storks
– what about a hot air balloon?

THE CHILD: I want another me.

MOTHER: I'd *only* love you half-as-much.

THE CHILD: Me?

FATHER: Just half?

THE CHILD: I don't like eggs.

MOTHER: Plant this next to the egg. [*Hands FATHER a stick*] No ribs today.

FATHER: I'll humour you - that'll do.

THE FLOWERS: Grow and dream and count
grow dream grow and count Roger is coming

he wants The Child's The Child's mum and dad
Roger can be logical and perfect grow Roger
Roger grow.

THE CHILD: My rib.

FATHER: Not logical.

MOTHER: Not perfect.

THE FLOWERS: Reject.

FATHER *and* MOTHER *exit*. THE CHILD *places the stick-like rib into the hole with the egg and covers it*. THE CHILD *decides to leave but then remembers something and comes back to the fresh mound*. THE CHILD *finds a watering can and waters the ground where the stick-like rib and egg are buried*.

[*A cow moos and loud static can be heard*]

THE CHILD: [*Imitating MOTHER*] I don't want another baby – they'll end up hating each other – I can't make two perfect. [*Imitating FATHER*] I like the way we are. I'd only love you half-as-much. I can't teach two to count. Roger can you hear me. I don't like this game anymore. Come out now! I'm tired of you trying to be born a thousand times. It'll never work.

[*Loud static can be heard*]

THE CHILD *exits*.

6

Location: early morning

There are slight sounds of bush animals and various creatures can be heard, and then the sounds get louder. There is a distinct sound of bones scraping and cracking and splitting and the sound is getting louder and louder. An egg pushes through the dirt and rests on top of the dirt mound. There is a stick-like rib poking out from the top of the egg and it is breaking through and growing. A cow moos. There is a hand holding the stick-like rib and then a head and then a body breaks out fiercely from the egg shell, using the stick-like rib to scratch its back – ROGER is born and its not the first time ROGER has done this.

[Loud static can be heard]

ROGER: Aahh goooo ddddd scrrrrattchity.

THE CHILD enters with a watering can and notices that the egg has been hatched. THE CHILD places the watering can down. ROGER is busy scratching and using strange language as this is what happens each time ROGER is born again and ROGER doesn't notice that he's being watched.

ROGER: Aahh goooo ddddd scrrrrattchity.

THE CHILD: It won't work – you'll never be real like me.

ROGER: Oooo - You. *[ROGER copies every movement and gesture that THE CHILD makes – they mirror each other].*

THE CHILD: Stop copying.

ROGER: Me?

THE CHILD: Yes, you!

ROGER: You.

THE CHILD: Me?

ROGER: I'm you.

THE CHILD: No, me – I'm me.

ROGER: I want... *[THE CHILD anticipates his needs and offers ROGER a drink from the watering can].* I grew – I was like a whirling milky drop. Touch me. I'm real.

THE CHILD: No you're not. I grew all the time; sometimes for six seconds and other times for six hundred hours. I'm this tall [THE CHILD *reaches beyond their height*]. You're not real.

[A cow moos and loud static can be heard]

ROGER: My mummy. Where is she?

THE CHILD: Those egg bits and sticks are your mother. She's my mummy not yours. She can only love you half-as-much.

ROGER goes over to the broken egg shell and brings the stick with him. He tries to cuddle and talk to them but after a while he wants something more. They fall through his fingers and are awkward when he tries to embrace them. He then goes up to THE CHILD and grabs THE CHILD and they tumble to the floor. They kick and fight and hold each other down, taking turns. They gradually become gentler.

[A cow moos and loud static can be heard.]

ROGER: Don't water me so much next time.

ROGER and THE CHILD exit hand-in-hand as friends.

7

Location: inside a dream

[Note to the director/optional: THE CHILD is seen via projected image/s onto the stage. THE CHILD is swimming in the air. There are clouds dancing and crashing around THE CHILD. There are seagulls squawking as they fly with THE CHILD and as THE CHILD flies over various strange sky animals such as a kite that has a beak and wings or a fish with wings and turtles that can fly, and lots of birds. There are airplanes and there is a hot-air balloon. ROGER is watching and he is envious. ROGER could also be a projected image or a puppet or an actor on the stage.]

[Additional note: If projected image/s is not an option, puppetry or a stage wire could be used to fly in THE CHILD and the various other sky items.]

THE CHILD: It's all mine.

THE CHILD is swimming and the waves are dancing and crashing around THE CHILD. There are seagulls squawking as they fly above the various crabs scuttling away. There are sea urchins searching the water. ROGER is leaving.

ROGER: It's all mine.

With the use of sound and animation/film "a rewind effect" can be used here. The projected sequence/s is then played in reverse and THE CHILD can be seen swimming and the waves are dancing and crashing around THE CHILD. There are seagulls squawking as they fly backwards over various crabs scuttling away. There are sea urchins searching the water.

ROGER is coming. If projected images is not an option reversed stylized choreographed movement by the actors can be implemented.

THE CHILD: It's all mine.

[THE CHILD's arms flap about and THE CHILD's body moves in time with the waves. There are sounds of loud voices being rewound; it is difficult to understand what they are saying.]

[MOTHER and FATHER are not on the stage or in the dream sequence/s]

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Whose fault is this? How many times have I told you to clean up your room! I won't have a pig living in my house [*In an aggrieved tone.*]

THE CHILD: It wasn't me – it was Roger.

THE CHILD *is now a "live" actor on the stage and falls heavily to the ground and then ROGER appears.*

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] What's this Roger business?

THE CHILD *gets up, quickly.*

ROGER: I didn't do it – you did.

THE CHILD: He's this tall [*points to knees*]. He sits on my back, like this. Roger gets a ride like a baby monkey. He's got red hair.

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] That's not very perfect.

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] It's sick. It isn't logical. Clean your room, now!

THE CHILD: I'm pretending; I'm tricking. Roger isn't real [THE CHILD *is embarrassed.*]

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Whose fault is this!

THE CHILD: Roger's.

ROGER: But, I didn't do it.

THE CHILD *falls heavily to the ground and then ROGER disappears from view.*

[*This sequence is optional and can be a projected image: The sea is thick and dreamy; THE CHILD is struggling; THE CHILD can't breathe; THE CHILD floats and the waves are pushing THE CHILD along; THE CHILD's body jerks; fingers and arms and legs twitch; THE CHILD is soft and smiling.*]

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Not logical!

THE CHILD: I can swim.

[THE CHILD *holds onto* ROGER; ROGER *picks* THE CHILD *up and swims to the top for air.*]

THE CHILD: I'm pretending; just tricking. Roger isn't really real.

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Whose fault is this!

THE CHILD *swims and the waves are dancing and crashing. There are seagulls squawking as they fly over various crabs scuttling. There are sea urchins searching the water.*

[*Optional: This image is then rewound as previously, complete with the sound of voices that are difficult to understand.*]

THE CHILD: This is all mine [*holding onto* ROGER *very tightly.*]

ROGER: I am real.

8

Location: inside a car

A large car is moving. THE CHILD, MOTHER and FATHER are in the car. THE CHILD is wearing large floaties on each arm, a swimmer's cap and goggles. THE CHILD is practising deep breathing and blowing bubbles.

FATHER: [*To a passing motorist*] Sardines for brains!

MOTHER: [*To the FATHER*] Why do you incite them? [*To THE CHILD*] Behave. Sit up straight. Seat belt on?

THE CHILD: [*To ROGER who is not present*] You must wear your seat belt. Here, let me help you.

MOTHER: [*To THE CHILD*] What are you doing? Put your seat belt on.

FATHER: [*To the motorists*] Someone has to teach them a lesson.

MOTHER: [*To the FATHER*] You're no expert. [*To THE CHILD*] Sit up straight. Got your seat belt on?

THE CHILD: Roger won't put his on.

FATHER: I hate bad drivers. They're usually female. For the last time there is no Roger.

THE CHILD: Is so

FATHER: Is not.

THE CHILD: Is so.

FATHER: Is not.

THE CHILD: Is so.

MOTHER: That's enough.

FATHER: Statistics have suggested the same result. The female brain is smaller than the male's. They find it harder to know their left from their right.

THE CHILD: There – I got it – Roger's safe now.

FATHER: No seat belt? All you worry about is this stupid Roger - I'll smack you – for the last time there is no Roger.

THE CHILD: Is so.

THE FATHER: Is not.

THE CHILD: Is so.

FATHER: [*He tries to swipe at THE CHILD*] Is not!

[Nearly crashing into another car]

MOTHER: Watch out!

THE CHILD: You missed the turn.

FATHER: On your left.

MOTHER: You mean right, right?

FATHER: Right.

THE CHILD: Fat head.

FATHER *and* MOTHER *are in shock.*

[The car stops.]

9

Location: An intersection

THE CHILD, MOTHER *and* FATHER *are in their frozen positions from the last scene. They are still in the car and they are all in various fighting positions.*

MOTHER *has her hands around FATHER'S throat. FATHER is trying to smack THE CHILD and THE CHILD is pulling MOTHER'S hair.*

[ROGER *enters dressed like a Kangaroo. Each member of the family unfreezes when they say their dialogue*]

THE CHILD: [*Unfreezes*] I don't like water on my face.

MOTHER: [*Unfreezes*] They just cut you off. Bad manners!

FATHER: [*Unfreezes*] I bet it's a woman.

THE CHILD: [*Yelling out the window*] I can swim!

MOTHER: [*Looking out the window and saying to the FATHER*] It was an old man, you're the fat head!

[ROGER/KANGAROO *eats grass and looks around nervously, sniffing the air.*]

FATHER: Old bloke with breasts?

MOTHER: Hair on his chin.

FATHER: Hairy chin with lucky legs?

MOTHER: That's not nice dear – IT WAS A BLOKE!

FATHER: Calm your mother down will you? She's gone crazy again.

THE CHILD: [*To ROGER the Kangaroo out side the window*] I can swim Roger.

[*The car starts moving and FATHER honks the horn*]

MOTHER: Why do you incite them?

FATHER: It mi'as well be a woman.

MOTHER: Hello. *Child* in back; listening to everything you're saying. We need to be perfect - set a good example.

ROGER *scratches his body and cleans his face. He leaves Kangaroo droppings when he moves away. FATHER honks the horn several times. THE CHILD is*

moving their arms around as if completing breast stroke. THE CHILD pretends to be a Kangaroo like ROGER and combines Kangaroo movements with swimming movements.

FATHER: You can't swim.

THE CHILD: Yesterday, sixty seconds ago, I could.

The car stops. MOTHER and FATHER freeze in time. The car stops. THE CHILD tries to swim out of the car window, but the floaties are too big. THE CHILD takes them off and gets through the window more easily. THE CHILD walks towards the Kangaroo.

THE CHILD: I can swim.

KANGAROO: Haai [*Hello in Afrikaans pronounced Ha-i.*]

Tungjatjeta [*Hello in Albanian pronounced To-gyat-yeta.*]

THE CHILD: Six hundred years ago, I could breathe under water.

KANGAROO: Têl nidō [*Hello in Arabic pronounced Tehl-neye-doe.*]

THE CHILD: I saw Aliens but they can't breathe like me.

KANGAROO: Nei ho [*Hello in Cantonese.*]

THE CHILD: Roger, I know it's you - you're still not real.

KANGAROO: Drats. I told you not to water me so much.

[*Note to director: ROGER is struggling with identity and language and trying to become a real entity that will enable him to have THE CHILD's parents. He "reborns" himself all the time and uses the different languages to convey this struggle.*]

[*THE CHILD gets back into the car and puts the floaties back on. MOTHER and FATHER unfreeze and begin driving again.*]

THE CHILD: I can swim! I saw Aliens, like snakes with a thousand eyes, but they couldn't breathe like me.

FATHER: You can't swim.

THE CHILD: You missed the turn.

MOTHER: That's not perfect.

The car turns and speeds off. FATHER can be seen and heard honking the horn. MOTHER is shaking her head and THE CHILD is practising how to breathe underwater. THE CHILD puts their head out of the window, waving at ROGER/KANGAROO. ROGER/KANGAROO follows the car. MOTHER places her hands around FATHER's throat and they struggle inside the car while FATHER won't stop honking. [This is completed in slow motion and is intended to be light humour, focusing on the parents' struggles with being perfect and logical all the time.]

10**Location: a public swimming pool**

There are noises of children playing, having swimming lessons, laughter and splashing.

THE CHILD *and* ROGER *enter in matching swim suits.*

THE CHILD: How many times have you been born now?

ROGER: A billion.

THE CHILD: If you have blood inside you then you're real.

ROGER: [*Excited about the prospect*] Find out.

THE CHILD *grabs* ROGER *and finds pieces of long strands of red material which start to come out of* ROGER's *body. Each time a long strand comes out a plucking noise can be heard similar to a string on a Cello being plucked.*

ROGER: I'm real then.

THE CHILD: I love blood.

ROGER: Take more. I have lots. I'm real.

THE CHILD *takes more blood out from* ROGER's *stomach, until there is a pile next to them. The plucking sound intensifies.*

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one – ready or not here I come. Am I getting warmer?

[THE CHILD *quickly stuffs the red strands back into* ROGER].

THE CHILD: Cold

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Warmer?

THE CHILD: Colder.

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Warmer?

THE CHILD: Warm.

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Warmer.

THE CHILD: Hot.

ROGER: Boiling.

THE CHILD: Burning.

ROGER: Blistering.

THE CHILD: Melting - skin's peeling right off.

ROGER: Blood - dried up and rotten.

[ROGER and THE CHILD act out death and blood and guts physically.]

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] That's enough...don't make me angry again. It was your fault I lost it in the car.

THE CHILD and ROGER: Was not.

FATHER: Was so.

THE CHILD and ROGER: Was not.

MOTHER'S VOICE: Stop that fighting – everyone is staring – you're embarrassing me.

FATHER: It's time for your swimming lesson, come on.

ROGER: Stay with me – you can swim.

THE CHILD: [*To FATHER*] I can swim.

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] I'm sick of this argument. It's not nice when you argue.

THE CHILD: [*To MOTHER and FATHER*] You argue all the time.

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] We're adults you're not.

ROGER: Stay with me – you can swim. I'm real you know.

THE CHILD: I can swim!

MOTHER: [*Still off stage*] Don't be silly. You can't swim. You can't even put your face in the water. Stop this tantrum right now. Everyone is looking. You're embarrassing us.

ROGER: Stay with me – you can swim – you can swim in air.

THE CHILD: It's not me – it's Roger.

FATHER: Ridiculous.

ROGER: Stay with me – you're not logical or perfect.

THE CHILD: But, you're not real. They said so.

ROGER and THE CHILD move away from the blood strands. ROGER takes the strands and tries to put them back inside his body. ROGER and THE CHILD then run after FATHER.

ROGER: They're my parents. I can swim - perfect.

THE CHILD: Get lost Roger – you're not logical or perfect. They're mine and I can swim. You can't have them.

ROGER: [*Facing THE CHILD*] Sink to the bottom. I'll be watching. No breath - [*gurgles and demonstrates a drowning*].

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] What's taking you so long? Your swimming teacher's waiting.

THE CHILD: [*Running*] I'm coming.

MOTHER'S VOICE: Perfect.

FATHER'S VOICE: Logical.

ROGER is left behind.

ROGER: But, I am real. Aren't I?

11

Location: a swimming lesson

On one side of the stage is a large stick that has branches on it. The stick-like tree is skinny and has no life and there is a camp fire under it for when ROGER cooks.

ROGER: When will they come?

THE CHILD: Soon.

ROGER: Will you tell them?

THE CHILD: No.

ROGER: Tell them, please.

THE CHILD: [*Trying to put yellow floaties on*] Help me.

ROGER: You're all big now and you have a real mum and dad.

FATHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] Have you started your bubbling in the water?

THE CHILD: Why won't you help me?

ROGER: You don't need me anymore. Remember I'm not real.

THE CHILD: Help me. I think you're real.

[*THE CHILD enters the water with ROGER*]

MOTHER'S VOICE: [*Off stage*] When you've finished swimming it's your violin lesson.

THE CHILD: [*finally gets floaties on arms*]. I do want to be perfect.

ROGER: If I were real they'd love me more.

THE CHILD: If I was perfect they'd love me more. I can swim now.

FATHER: No, you're flying. Look at your arm; like a chicken's.

ROGER: Chickens can't fly.

FATHER: When you're finished swimming it's Maths time.

THE CHILD: Chickens lay eggs – why can't they fly?

ROGER: Scrambled. I like tomato sauce. Lots of red.

THE CHILD: I'm swimming in blood.

ROGER: Sinking, like a hard boiled egg in a pot.

THE CHILD: I'm off!

ROGER: [*Smelling*] Yuck, you sure are.

THE CHILD enters the water and long strands of blue and red ribbon can be seen flapping and floating just above THE CHILD's knees representing the water line. The water is coming and heaving THE CHILD under and over. THE CHILD chokes and coughs and takes in water.

ROGER: When will you really tell them about me?

THE CHILD: I can't, they won't love me as much – you're not logical and I'm not perfect.

The water keeps coming up and THE CHILD keeps choking. THE CHILD's floaties pop and slowly deflate; with a wheezing noise as the air escapes.

ROGER: I will be you and no one will know the difference. I can fly and swim and run and you're all dumb inside. How do you like your eggs?

[THE CHILD twitches and slowly rocks to and fro. The blue and red ribbons are now near THE CHILD's shoulders.]

THE CHILD: Help me Roger.

ROGER: *[He is breaking shells and cooking the eggs]* I like mine sunny side up.

MOTHER and FATHER enter.

[As THE CHILD is drowning ROGER's presence becomes apparent to FATHER and MOTHER]

ROGER: *[To FATHER and MOTHER]* I've been waiting for you. I'm real, logical and perfect. I'm better than The Child. Love me.

[ROGER begins playing a tune on his recorder which places MOTHER and FATHER into a slight trance].

MOTHER: Where is our Child? Are you the teacher?

ROGER: *[Stops playing]* How do you like your eggs? Bruised or cracked?

MOTHER: Where has our Child gone?

FATHER: Don't panic. I'm sure our Child is around.

[A loud sound of eggs cracking can be heard.]

MOTHER: *[Smelling]* Something's off.

ROGER: The Child can't swim you know.

MOTHER and **FATHER:** We know.

[THE CHILD falls to the ground and the ribbons are hovering above THE CHILD. ROGER starts playing the red striped recorder again]

FATHER: Roger?

MOTHER: Where's our child?

ROGER: *[stops playing]* I'm real. The child can't swim. You can't save your child without believing in me. I'm real you know.

THE CHILD's legs and arms move like a flying bird in slow motion. THE CHILD's face is angelic and THE CHILD's smile is massive. THE CHILD's movements change from flying like a bird to swimming in deep water. THE CHILD takes off its floaties.

THE CHILD: I'm swimming in air!

MOTHER: Do something!

THE CHILD begins to drown again.

ROGER: What about some scrambled eggs? The child likes them churned and scratched with a fork.

THE CHILD chokes and splutters and the water swirls. The blue and red ribbons are now at THE CHILD's neck.

FATHER: *[To THE CHILD]* Use your legs – stop choking – relax – swim to the side.

[FATHER and MOTHER go to save the child but ROGER begins playing on the red striped recorder which stops them.]

ROGER: [ROGER is still playing the recorder and his voice can be heard over the recorder's sound] Say, "I'm real" – say, "I'm logical". Say, "I'm perfect".

MOTHER and FATHER hesitate. MOTHER and FATHER are struggling with accepting ROGER's invisible and real presence and his music.

ROGER: [Stops playing] Are you logical, perfect? Could you count before the age of four? Could you play the violin at the age of five? Were you more perfect than any other child? Were you so logical you couldn't see how beautiful the imagination is?

[THE CHILD continues to drown]

ROGER: Are you perfect!

FATHER and MOTHER hold onto to each other.

FATHER and MOTHER: No.

ROGER: Or logical?

FATHER and MOTHER: No.

ROGER: Say it!

FATHER: The imagination is perfect.

ROGER: Say it!

MOTHER: The imagination is logical.

The music ceases and ROGER saves THE CHILD from drowning. THE CHILD swims in the air with arms outstretched towards FATHER and MOTHER.

12**Location: nighttime**

ROGER *and* THE CHILD *swim in air. They are dancing in the air together and*
MOTHER *and* FATHER *love them all.*

FATHER: My Child was strong and smart my Child was myself and I made my Child go back inside the egg shell and grow another day. I could count much better than my Child but my Child could swim in air better than me.

THE CHILD: My mummy and daddy came to the sea and we saw the deep blue and the sky and kicked and kicked and reached the sky all by myself and took in water 'cause I could swim, swim in air with Roger.

MOTHER: I dream that I am full with a baby and it feels like my water is thick as my bubbly blood and that my tummy is swollen with wee wee. My Child said Roger is coming to be with baby. I can feel my baby's hands stretching on my gizzards and my fat wobbly bits pushing and pulling. My child is perfect.

ROGER: Imagining and counting real and not real it's all logical imagining and counting real and not real. I am real.

FATHER, MOTHER, THE CHILD and ROGER: Counting and imagining, counting and imagining. Real and not real it's all perfect and logical. Imagining and counting. Its all real.

The end

Introduction

I have purposely written a play for young people that will challenge the reader and the spectator both aesthetically and contextually regarding fantasy and the imaginary Other that is research-based. The play's themes touch on morality, birth, child ownership, reality and fantasy as well the views of adults and children regarding the imaginary companion. The protagonist in the play (The Child) shares a position with the imaginary Other who is Roger (and who is both good and evil) while coming to terms with their mutual existences. These topics are rarely viewed on the stage for children and yet they are topics that are continually expressed in the playground and amongst family and friends.¹

In the thesis component, I present for analysis three published children's plays from the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia in order to investigate how the role of the imagination in the form of a fantasy world, imaginary objects and the imaginary companion, from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint, function to assist in presenting the "invisible" onto the stage, while keeping in mind the following research questions:

- 1) how might these processes be implemented and to what purpose?
- 2) how can they be applied in order to create alternative and experimental plays for young people?

Due to the difficulty regarding the notion of "the imagination" as either an activity completed by the playwright as subject, which has the potential to influence the dramatic world or the idea of the imagination as explored within the engagement of the performance itself in which the actors' interpretation would be at issue, I have endeavoured to avoid any hypothesised claims about the imagination in the lives of young children. Instead, I have concentrated on the role of the imagination as a way to create a fantasy world, imaginary objects and the imaginary companion that has been influenced by the chosen plays' textual evidence and "possible" performances. Essentially, for the purpose of this analysis, I am concerned with how practitioners

¹ I have obtained this perspective due to my professional involvement with researching and writing plays for young people since 1998.

“might” write and performers “might” perform the invisible onto the stage from a Children’s Theatre practitioner’s viewpoint.

It is also important to note that the rejection of a theatre *by* children or the problem of age limit when defining Children’s Theatre or Theatre for Young Audiences can often become problematic. To combat this situation, I have emphasised that theatre experiences for and with children are interchangeably referred to as Children’s Theatre and/or Theatre for Youth/Theatre for Young Audiences/People, and can be defined as:

Elaborated theatrical product, given under the form of a performance by adult professional or like, in front of an audience specifically, or not necessarily so, made up of children, but meant for a children’s audience, homogeneous in principle, in functional places or otherwise, or at school. (ASSITEJ: terminology, 1978 Madrid, p. 30)

Other descriptions of the term Children’s Theatre could have been used, and which are dated after the above 1978 definition. However, this particular definition reflects my intentions regarding the writing of *Swimming in Air*.

Additionally, there will always be a major problem in a study such as this when trying to define the limits of the field. For example, it is also evident that this study could have expanded to include every aspect of theatre experiences for and by children, and other related and interdisciplinary areas of research, such as children’s literature, early childhood psychology concerning “role play”, or performance studies within Drama-in-Education. Due to the necessary constrains of the thesis component, I have therefore only briefly investigated literature for children, early childhood studies, the forming of Creative Dramatics (CD), Creative Drama, Drama-in-Education (DIE) and Theatre-in-Education (TIE) in the United States of America, Britain and Australia, and only in relation to the selected plays that are discussed in the thesis component. I have approached the investigation in this way in order to assist the reader to contextualise “imagination” and “childhood” when reading the thesis component and to simultaneously illustrate the links between the theories and the development of *Swimming in Air*.

The three plays

The three printed and published playtexts and their corresponding productions can be read and viewed in many different ways by different readerships and spectators. When

selecting the three plays, I intentionally avoided the Nativity or religious plays for children, Oriental, indigenous or Amateur theatre traditions, or subversive or visual theatre experiences (such as puppetry or the transmediated or sometimes referred to as “connectivity” theatre experience).² These are all valuable theatre traditions, and form an important part of the overall historical narrative of children’s plays globally, deserving an in-depth analysis outside the scope of this thesis. Rather, I chose to focus on mainstream, Western and English language children’s plays as well as plays that have had an important influence on Theatre for Young Audiences locally, nationally and internationally. It was also important to consider plays that covered the major time period that I was investigating which is from the 1900s onwards as well as plays that were associated with Children’s Theatre becoming a separate genre, departing from adult theatre entertainments.³ Therefore, I selected three plays that were produced post 1900s and plays that were of an influential nature regarding the theatrical activity for young people and the awareness of “childhood” theory and research from the early-twentieth-century through to the early-twenty-first century. The plays selected for analysis are: J. M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904), Charlotte Chorpenning’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (1934) and David Holman’s *The Small Poppies* (1989). Moreover, these plays were chosen due to each production utilising the role of the imagination in alternative ways and for differing purposes. More specifically, I envisaged that these plays would be useful when investigating the textual creation of “Never Land” and the decision to cast a female in the first *Peter Pan* production (1904) as well as the imaginary object and its relationship to the performance of the invisible clothing and imaginary weaving machine in *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (1934) and finally, the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* (1989) as an extension of the self.

Furthermore, in chapters two, three and four, I provide a scriptwriting and performance analysis from my viewpoint, because I am concerned with how Children’s Theatre practitioners and performers might write and perform the invisible onto the stage. While I realise that this process could easily be used to analyse adult theatre experiences, I chose children’s plays due to my professional artistic career path that has centred on creating plays for young people since 1998.

² Australia. *Australia Council and the NSW Ministry of the Arts, Theatre Board, Program Review Series. Support for Young People’s Theatre.* Sydney: Arts Information Program AC, 2003: 13-47.

³ Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children’s Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 175.

Limitations

This exegesis does not constitute a comprehensive argument. Rather the exploration is presented as a “stepping stone” towards researching and critiquing the history and practice of Theatre for Young Audiences/People in Australia, and how certain theories have influenced the development of *Swimming in Air*. It needs to be noted that discussions surrounding child-based evidence from the stances of development psychologists such as Woolley (2006), Morrison (2005) and Taylor (1998), or theatre educators such as Rosenberg (1997) or other judiciously selected theorists such as Rancière (1968) and their corresponding theories associated with early childhood development are outside the scope of the thesis component. Additionally, I purposely do not deal with mainstream or popular children’s entertainment platforms such as the *Wiggles*, or children’s film or television such as Australia’s national broadcaster (ABC TV). Nor, do I specifically analyse or discuss in detail the visual communications in the theatre per se – aspects such as the performers’ appearances, costumes, makeup, hairstyle, and/or the specific theatre spaces in which these texts would have been performed. Lastly, I do not discuss the role of theatre Festivals for and by young people in Australia or internationally as this particular subject, even though important, is also outside the scope of the thesis component.

Overview of the thesis structure

The thesis component centres on a creative practitioner’s approach to using theory in order to articulate a creative writing process such as the role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint and how the analysis has served to develop the play *Swimming in Air*. The theoretical boundaries associated with the “imagination” are located within each play’s textual boundaries such as the role of the imagination in the form of a fantasy world, the literary object, imaginary objects and/or the imaginary character, and how each imaginative device “might” have been used as a scriptwriting and performed technique (from my perspective). In order to link the theory to the development of *Swimming in Air*, I have structured chapters two, three and four to include an explanation of how the theories and the utilisation of the respective imaginary devices have been incorporated into *Swimming in Air*.

Overall, the thesis has been arranged into five chapters. In chapter one, I do not present an argument but rather an overview that reinforces Children’s Theatre as having a strong historical narrative that has not been entirely documented appropriately or at

times correctly. Usually, and specifically in Australia, it has been excluded from traditional theatre studies or viewed as a subgenre to adult theatre. This section of the thesis, which is presented in two parts, explores and investigates some of the consequences of the elision and often misrepresentation of Children's Theatre from the historical record. In this section, I also focus on the idea that theatre for children has changed over time and therefore its corresponding definitions. For example, the terms Children's Theatre, Theatre-in-Education, Creative Dramatics and Theatre for Young Audiences are precarious ones. Indeed, I would argue that the term Children's Theatre cannot be concretely defined yet that does not mean one does not try or continue to use the term. As Fitzgerald notes, 'definitions are only a rough guide because many companies' activities cannot be labeled neatly or exclusively with any one of these terms as they cut across them'.⁴

In chapter two, I center on J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) and the writer's connection with the "everyday" and "fantasy" as well as how the "imagination" can influence the writer from a scriptwriting viewpoint. The 1904 production of Barrie's play has often been ignored and has usually been discussed as a novel, film or as a 'mere' pantomime, or more recently analysed from a psychoanalytical perspective and as one of the first plays to participate in the creation of the emerging subgenre of Children's Theatre.⁵ The 1904 playtext is rarely discussed in its original form (as a three-act fantasy play) or from a writer's or performer's viewpoint.

In the third chapter, I analyse the *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1934) by Charlotte Chorpenning. I point out that during the 1930s in North America's mainstream Children's Theatre adaptations of traditional fairy tales for the stage were occurring exponentially, reflecting moral and educational overtones. In this chapter, I explore Chorpenning's scriptwriting devices such as stage directions, descriptive dialogue and the use of the actor's imagination to assist in making the invisible visible.

In the fourth chapter, I investigate David Holman's remounted 2000 production of his play *The Small Poppies* (1989). I focus on Holman's keen awareness of creating plays that do not talk down to their audience and productions that reflect "real" life or "socially-aware" situations, which have influenced the Australian Children's Theatre

⁴ Fitzgerald, M. *International Guide to Children's Theatre and Educational Theatre, A History and Geographical Source Book*. Ed. Lowell Swartzell. New York: Greenwood Press, 1990, pp. 4-5

⁵ Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 175.

movement (which includes Theatre-in-Education and Theatre for Young Audiences/People). In this chapter, I investigate the role of the imaginary companion as an extension of the self and how the writer might utilise the imaginary companion in order to frame the protagonist's emotional journey.

In the final chapter, I discuss the overall exploration of the thesis with special reference to the discoveries made in chapters two, three and four as well as my position on the role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint and its influence regarding the development of *Swimming in Air*. Additionally, I complete a brief summary concerning the contemporary narrative of the Children's Theatre movement in Australia from an international perspective, focusing from the 1960s onwards. Finally, I point towards other potential areas of future research, which would enhance and develop the current but limited analysis pertaining to Children's Theatre in Australia.

Chapter one

A brief overview of Australia's Children's Theatre movement

Introduction

Compared to the Children's Theatre movement in the United States of America and Britain it has been difficult to acquire a clear and comprehensive understanding of Australia's Children's Theatre model pre and post Federation. At times, the information obtained has been scattered, and it has been difficult to concisely analyse a unified movement or to determine an "all inclusive" Children's Theatre definition.

To point out some of the complex reasoning behind the difficulty of defining such a movement as well as the marginalisation that has occurred regarding Children's Theatre's omission within adult theatre studies and a rather scholarly sway towards Creative Dramatics, I will posit, in this chapter, that Australia's Children's Theatre is not a recent occurrence, has evolved over time and pre-dates other child-centred "drama/educational" activities for and with children.

To achieve this, I have structured the following chapter in to two parts. The first section briefly elaborates on why Children's Theatre is important, explores the development of Creative Dramatics, Drama-in-Education and Theatre-in-Education in relation to Australia's Children's Theatre movement from an international perspective. Then, I discuss various Children's Theatre definitions that have assisted in the "structuring" of a term that is based on purpose rather than on aesthetic value.

In the second part, I explore numerous theatre experiences for and with children that pre-date other child-centred art forms and educational activities such as the Marsh Family of Juveniles in order to reposition a Children's Theatre model in Australia prior to Federation before the Rayner Sister formed Theatre of Youth (TOY) in 1929-1930, and then the establishment of the Australian Children's Theatre (ACT) and Shakespeare in Jeans Company during the early 1950s.

Part one

i) Why is Children's Theatre important?

There are various authors from Western countries who have discussed the importance and the international impact of child-centred programs such as Creative Dramatics (CD), Creative Drama, Drama-in-Education (DIE) and Theatre-in-Education (TIE). Numerous international academics and practitioners have

completed vast studies on Creative Dramatics, Drama-in-Education and Theatre-in-Education such as Gavin Bolton (UK), Dorothy Heathcote (UK), John O'Toole (Australia), Peter Slade (UK), and Winifred Ward (USA).⁶ However, there are no texts to date which specifically view and present a comprehensive overview of Australia's Children's Theatre movement or its influence on other child-centred arts and educational programs from early settlement to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The incomplete theatrical and historical narrative concerning Australia's Children's Theatre movement is in no way an isolated occurrence. As Jack Zipes points out:

Until the late 1960s there was hardly a word published about children's theatre in West Germany. None of the major books on theatre in West Germany ever mentioned children's theatre, and *Theatre Heute*, the major drama magazine, published only one article about fairy-tale plays between 1960 and 1969.⁷

The theatrical influences of Britain, North America and Europe on Australia's theatre movement have been profound and this is true for both adults' and Children's Theatre alike. However, despite diverse and outside stimuli the history of the adult theatre has been richly documented in comparison to Children's Theatre by various theatre researchers, such as Eric Irvin (1985), Philip Parsons and others (1988), Oscar Brockett (1995), Martin Banham (1995) and Darren R. Cohen (1997). This comes as no surprise when Children's Theatre is often compared unsympathetically as a less important art form and/or as an inferior academic field of study and/or as a "sub-genre" to adult theatre, Creative Dramatics, Drama-in-Education and/or Theatre-in-Education.⁸ Moreover, there is the concern regarding Children's Theatre's association with and focus on the child audience member (the child is unable to always articulate their aesthetic needs), and the creation of productions by adults for children that cater to society's concepts of "appropriate entertainment" or "correct" educational and moral instruction (rather than on high-quality and/or aesthetic objectives) which has not helped either.

⁶ See for more details regarding an extensive overview of Creative Dramatics and Drama-in-Education the following complete texts: Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama for Learning* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press, 1954) and Winifred Ward, *Theatre for Children* (New York: Appleton, 1939).

⁷ Jack Zipes, *Political Plays for Children*, ed and trans. Jack Zipes (Saint Louis: Telos Press, 1976): 1.

⁸ Manon van de Water, "Constructive Narratives, Situating Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States," *Youth Theatre Journal* 14 (2000), Shifra Schonmann, *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People. Images and Observations*, (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006), Lowell Swortzell, *International Guide to Children's Theatre and Educational Theatre: A Historical and Geographical Source Book*, (New York: Greenwood, 1990), Australia. *Australia Council and the NSW Ministry of the Arts*, Theatre Board, Program Review Series. Support for Young People's Theatre. Sydney: Arts Information Program AC, 2003.

The above specific points have influenced the misconception and omission of Children's Theatre within the adult theatrical and historical record. For example, often theatre designed for children is considered by adults as being educational or morally useful rather than aesthetically worthwhile, or that Children's Theatre can help children to learn how to act, and is therefore more suited to Creative Dramatics or Creative Drama and/or Theatre-in-Education concepts and practices. However, international Children's Theatre researchers such as Roger Bedard (USA), Lowell Swortzell (USA), Nellie McCaslin (USA) and Shifra Schonmann (Israel) explain that Children's Theatre's exclusion from adult theatre studies is mainly due to the common usage of the term "Children's Theatre" to cover a whole range of "theatre" and/or "drama" activities for and with children. This term often creates confusion, because 'it does not distinguish between children performing for other children and adults performing for children,'⁹ or the various educational and theatrical differences associated with Creative Dramatics and Children's Theatre.

ii) Defining other child-centred educational art forms and Children's Theatre

At the turn of the twentieth century, theatre experiences for children in North America and Britain became heavily connected with educational objectives and early childhood psychology practices and theories (such as "role play" and the use of "drama" in clinical, social and pedagogical situations). Theatre research studies that discuss and analyse Children's Theatre in a more comprehensive way have mainly occurred internationally, and at the turn of the twentieth century as well. These discussions have been completed by academics and theatre practitioners in North America, Britain and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) such as Chorpenning (1954), Bishop (1927), Satz and Cherniavsky (1935).

During this time, practitioners in Children's Theatre in North America and parts of Europe were beginning to break away from the mainstream staging of family and adult events, and viewing Children's Theatre as a specialised field of study and as an art form. For example, the United States of America's Theatre organisation such as The Children's Educational Theatre was founded in 1903 by Alice Minnie Herts, and according to Nellie McCaslin and Winifred Ward this date was the

⁹ Shifra Schonmann, *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People, Images and Observations*, (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006): 10.

‘birthdate of the [Children’s Theatre] movement [in the United States of America]’.¹⁰ In the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Moscow Theatre for Children was founded in 1918 by a fifteen-year-old, Natalie Satz, and her father. Theatre for children in Moscow was seen as an opportunity for social reform and this was achieved via entertaining children, creating a theatre that was ‘united by one aspiration - to create for children’.¹¹ Early Russian Children’s Theatre was ‘a means of communist education’¹² and Satz became one of the key persons to organise this venture. Satz was later established as an Honoured Artist and general manager, and Artistic Director. L. N. Cherniavsky was responsible for writing the history of The Moscow Theatre for Children, publishing the company’s structure and artistic goals:

The Moscow Theatre for Children is first and foremost a theatre. Like every other theatrical organism, it has a permanent company, which consists of 50 actors, playwrights, composers, stage managers, artists, an orchestra, stage-hands, dressmakers, administrators – in short, all the various people that there are in every other theatre. One hundred and seventy-five grown-up people are united by one aspiration – to create for children. And that is why the staff of our theatre also includes teachers, specialists in group games, and professors.¹³

In Britain, a noticeable theatre project that used Children’s Theatre concepts in educational settings began in London schools and had strong links with various pedagogical outcomes. The Stewart Headlam Association was founded in 1908, and this Association toured Shakespeare productions on a regular basis and into elementary schools. In 1927, George Bishop explained how the Association began touring into schools:

We not only gave performances at very popular prices in all parts of London, but we held examinations at the County Hall near the Temple of the work done by the pupils themselves. Only a few schools competed at first but in a year or two the plan expanded so fast that in spring of 1902, when I left for America we had over a hundred scenes acted by pupils from over a hundred schools. Essays were written by the thousand and prizes awarded...¹⁴

Later, in the late 1940s, Winifred Ward (USA) and Dorothy Heathcote (UK) separately realised that certain “dramatic” concepts associated with Children’s

10 Nellie McCaslin, *Theatre for Children in the United States: A History*, (Oklahoma: Norman, 1971): 8 and Winifred Ward, *Theatre for Children*, (New York: Appleton, 1939): 21.

11 L. N. Cherniavsky, *The Moscow Theatre for Children*, ed and trans. L. N. Cherniavsky (Moscow: Cooperative Society, 1935): 5.

12 Lowell Swortzell, *International Guide to Children’s Theatre and Educational Theatre: A Historical and Geographical Source Book*, (New York: Greenwood, 1990): 322.

13 Cherniavsky 5.

14 George Watson Bishop, “Drama,” *The Journal of the British Drama League* 5 (1927): 114.

Theatre such as “drama”, “play” and “scene-making” could be used to solve Math and Science problems in the classroom, and in a fun way. Additionally, North America’s Children’s Theatre pioneer Charlotte B. Chorpenning, the Artistic Director of the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, and whom I discuss in more detail in chapter three, began to create stage adaptations from famous fables and fairy tales such as *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (1934) from 1932 to 1952.¹⁵ During this time there was often debate amongst practitioners and researchers within the newly formed field of Creative Dramatics about the similarities and differences with Children’s Theatre and other child-centre drama activities. Additionally, there were various difficulties surfacing when researchers and practitioners tried to define Creative Dramatics, Creative Drama, Drama-in-Education, Theatre-in-Education and especially when they compared these definitions to Children’s Theatre. One of the reasons for this is that the terms were being defined differently due to the place in which the “drama” experience was taking place. For example, Creative Drama or Creative Dramatics was often referred to as Drama-in-Education in North America but as Creative Drama in Australia. Theatre-in-Education was often defined as theatre with educational or moral objectives and designed to tour into schools in Australia, whereas in Britain it was heavily connected to the community, and could be a theatre show that toured into schools, or it could also be a part of a larger educational program that implemented Creative Dramatic structures. For example, in Britain, theatre that toured into schools often incorporated the child spectator as the instigator of the plot development and outcome, or used “drama” to help students to learn about evolution or historical events in the classroom. However, usually one of the main differences between Children’s Theatre and other child-centred educational/arts forms is that the facilitators do not place an emphasis on how well the children are performing or creating an “in-house” theatre experience and instead, the drama-focused activities (CD, DIE or TIE) are completed in the classroom, and are linked to the school’s curriculum with a drama specialist or performer/teacher as the leader. It is the process of children taking part in the project that is of importance to the Creative Drama facilitator, whereas in Theatre for Young Audiences (Australia) or commonly known as Children’s Theatre throughout this study, the

¹⁵ Roger Bedard, *Dramatic Literature for Children: A Century in Review*, (New Orleans: Anchorage Press 1984): 7.

focus is on the child audience member as a spectator of adults performing theatre or can also be theatre experiences by and with children.¹⁶

iii) Defining Children's Theatre in the 1950s

In 1953, because of the close relationship between Children's Theatre and the benefits associated with "drama" in the classroom, the Children's Theatre Conference in the United States of America met to discuss drama for and with children to formulate concrete definitions. The conference organised seven acknowledged leaders within the Drama-in-Education profession to bring about a unified opinion. It took them two years to do so. During this event, Isabel Burger, Kenneth L. Graham, Mouzon Law, Dorothy Schwartz, Sara Spencer, Winifred Ward and Ann Viola collaborated to try and define Children's Theatre as a separate entity to Drama-in-Education:

[Children's Theatre is] plays written by playwrights...presented by living actors for child audiences. The players may be adults, children, or a combination of the two. Lines are memorized, action is directed, and scenery and costumes are used. In the formal play the director, bending every effort toward the primary purpose of offering a finished product for public entertainment, engages the best actors available and subjects them to the strict discipline required of any creative artist recognizing his obligation to the spectator.¹⁷

According to Manon van de Water, an influential Theatre for Youth academic in North America, marginalisation of Children's Theatre is not because of the 'lack of growth or interest, rather the way the history of...[Children's Theatre] and its terms have been constructed'¹⁸, and this is especially so in Australia. In Australia, it would be Britain's Theatre-in-Education movement (rather than the United States of America's Drama-in-Education model) that would have an impact on a new type of Children's Theatre in the 1950s. Australia's Children's Theatre movement would be defined by its aesthetic-driven objectives rather than based on an educational one.¹⁹

16 For a detailed overview of Creative Dramatics see Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama for Learning*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995): 83-85, 170-173 and 176-177 and for Theatre-in-Education see the complete text: John O'Toole, *Theatre in Education*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), Peter Slade, *Child Drama*, (London: University of London, 1954): 19-23, 30-31 and 304-307 and refer to the forming of Theatre Centre in 1963 by Brian Way (UK).

17 Ann Viola, "Drama with and for Children an Interpretation of Terms," *Educational Theatre Journal* 2 (1956): 140.

18 Manon van de Water, "Constructive Narratives, Situating Theatre for Young Audiences in the United States," *Youth Theatre Journal* 14 (2000): 105.

19 Theatre-in-Education see the complete text: John O'Toole, *Theatre in Education*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), Peter Slade, *Child Drama*, (London: University of London, 1954): 19-23, 30-31 and 304-307 and refer to the forming of the Theatre Centre in 1963 by Brian Way (UK)..

Throughout Australia, from the early 1950s onwards, instead of a focus on Creative Drama or Drama-in-Education which used “drama” and “role play” in the classroom there were various companies that began touring and implementing Theatre-in-Education programs into Australia’s schools. These productions focused on aesthetic worth via socially aware themes with educational objectives as secondary.²⁰

Throughout the 1950s-1980s Theatre-in-Education shows were being completed by:

Children’s Activities Time’s Society (CATS in Western Australia), [Perth’s] Theatre Arts Players (TAP in Western Australia), Pageant Theatre Company (Western Australia) [sic NSW], Patch Theatre Company (Western Australia), the Old Tote Players (New South Wales), the Young Elizabethans (Victoria), The Tintookies (Victoria), the Australian Theatre for Young People (New South Wales), and Australia’s Children’s Theatre (Victoria) [from the 1950s-1980s].²¹

iv) Defining Children’s Theatre post-1950

After World War II, theatre experiences for children were often referred to as Children’s Theatre or Theatre-in-Education (Australia) or Theatre for Youth (North America), and at times, these terms were not being used to differentiate between aesthetically motivated contemporary theatre experiences for young people or the common fairy tale adaptation. Rather, the term Children’s Theatre became an oversimplified label that was associated with theatre experiences for young children that produce pantomimes, adaptations of fairy tales or the Christmas Nativity play (as a public draw card and not as aesthetic or contemporary theatre experiences for young people). Additionally, advocates for high-quality Theatre-in-Education experiences for young people such as John O’Toole and Gavin Bolton had numerous ideas for an Australian audience about Theatre-in-Education in the 1970s, which were influenced from the British Theatre-in-Education movement. O’Toole became an important researcher concerning Theatre-in-Education and its theatrical and historical story within Australia’s Children’s Theatre’s movement:

Australian theatre-in-education was certainly influenced by Britain’s burgeoning movement. As in the UK, there had been travelling teams providing theatrical services in schools for many years... In the 1970s Britain was very influential, in TIE [theatre-in-education as in DIE [drama-in-education]]. One of the energies which led to major growth here [Australia] was the excitement with Coventry Belgrade’s

²⁰ John O’Toole and Penny Bundy, “Kites and Magpies,” *Learning Through Theatre, New Perspectives on theatre-in-education*, (London: Routledge, 1993): 134.

²¹ Katherine Brisbane, *Not wrong but different*, (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005): 26-27.

initiative. In this growth period, companies were founded [in Australia] which have been continuously influential ever since.²²

It would not be until the 1990s in the United States of America that the American Alliance for Theatre and Education (AATE) would hold another conference, inviting directors and playwrights working within the field of Children's Theatre such as Scot E. Copeland, Kathleen Collins, Gayle Cornelison, James Still, Larry Presgrove, Pamela Sterling, Moses Goldberg, Victor Podogrosi, Tom Behm and Roger Bedard to revisit and redefine the 1956 Children's Theatre definition. The ten practitioners stated that Children's Theatre (at this time it was being referred to as Theatre for Young Audiences/People in Australia or as Theatre for Youth in the United States of America) was defined as:

an aesthetic-driven, live performance which includes elements relevant to the child. Although Theatre for Young Audiences can amaze, challenge, inform, and empower young people by providing access to the humanizing effect of theatre, the priority is on the creation of a work of art.²³

Much later in Australia, the Australia Council's Theatre Board in 2003 defined Children's Theatre as, 'professional theatre work targeted at audiences less than twelve years of age'.²⁴ At first glance, there does not seem to be anything inappropriate with the above evolving definitions or that Creative Dramatics and Theatre-in-Education were utilising concepts associated with Children's Theatre without due acknowledgment. With the exception of the Australia Council's Theatre Board, North America's 1953 and 1990 definitions do show a thoughtful progress. Nevertheless, these definitions are problematic.

First, these definitions were occurring during the same time that Creative Dramatics and Theatre-in-Education were at a high-point of implementation internationally, and yet a comprehensive theatrical and historical narrative regarding Children's Theatre's diverse, overall and theatrical concepts (which have also influenced other child-centred drama activities) had not yet occurred. Second, all three definitions illustrate a lack of global collaboration, and do not reflect the

²² John O'Toole and Penny Bundy, "Kites and Magpies," *Learning Through Theatre, New Perspectives on theatre-in-education*, (London: Routledge, 1993): 134.

²³ *The American Alliance (AATE)*. Proc. of Theatre and Education Conf., 1990, n.p. This definition was formulated by Scot E. Copeland, Kathleen Collins, Gayle Cornelison, James Still, Larry Presgrove, Pamela Sterling, Moses Goldberg, Victor Podagrosi, Tom Behm, and Roger Bedard.

²⁴ Australia. *Australia Council and the NSW Ministry of the Arts*, Theatre Board, Program Review Series. Support for Young People's Theatre. Sydney: Arts Information Program AC, 2003: 13-47.

historical and theatrical development of Children's Theatre prior to the 1950s. More specifically, the Children's Theatre Conference in the United States of America (in 1953) invited educational specialists and not theatre practitioners to define Children's Theatre. This supports the marginal "practicum" treatment of Children's Theatre as a "subgenre" to Creative Dramatics, Theatre-in-Education and adult theatre rather than being an important art form. Third, the breadth of the language used for the definitions at times is limiting such as "finished", "best actors", "subjects them to strict discipline" and "obligation to the spectator", generating an artistically restrictive dialogue. There is also minimal reference to past cultural or aesthetic quality and experiences associated with Children's Theatre or theatre designed by and for children. Fourth, the second definition that occurred in 1990 utilises a theatrical language which is constructed around an artistic vision such as "aesthetic driven", "creation" and "work of art" but nevertheless, the definition has not included certain points that were relevant from the first definition, such as 'the players may be adults, children, or a combination of the two'.²⁵ Finally, Australia's definition is one sentence in length which is inadequate and overlooks the 1953 and 1990 definitions altogether.

Instead of acquiring a definition based on a comprehensive theatrical and historical narrative which includes diverse theatre experiences for, by and with children or acknowledging Children's Theatre's influence on the development of Creative Dramatics and/or Theatre-in-Education, Children's Theatre as a term has been inadequately structured, and over a long period of time. For example, in 1953 Ann Viola (one of the Children's Theatre Conference associates) expressed:

Many people seem to hold the mistaken impression that the functions of the Children's Theatre is to train little children to get up on a stage and act, and there is even some confusion among Children's Theatre folk themselves, as to where creative drama ends, and formal Children's Theatre begins.²⁶

As Viola points out, the line between Creative Dramatics or Drama-in-Education, Theatre-in-Education and Children's Theatre is often blurred. However, not only have Creative Dramatics, Drama-in-Education and Theatre-in-Education developed successfully because of the steady growth and interest in the child, and the changes that have occurred regarding the welfare of children since WWII, but also from the

²⁵ Ann Viola, "Drama with and for Children an Interpretation of Terms," *Educational Theatre Journal* 2 (1956): 140.

²⁶ Ann Viola, "Drama with and for Children an Interpretation of Terms," 139.

various Children's Theatre productions and their influences which existed prior to and post twentieth century, and included children performing for other children and to mixed audiences. With this in mind, in the next section, I explore this particular notion of a Children's Theatre movement occurring prior to the 1900s from an international and Australian perspective before elaborating on Australia's early Children's Theatre movement from the 1920s onwards.

Part two

In the following section, I first present examples of international theatre experiences for children that have occurred prior to the implementation of Creative Dramatics and/or Drama-in-Education. Second, I explore theatre experiences that occurred in Australia prior to the 1900s as well as the so called "gap" of non-activity, which I later argue as helping to develop Australia's forming of a unique Children's Theatre movement that catered to young people's aesthetic needs rather than educational outcomes.

i) Pre-twentieth century, an overview

Dixie Ann Campbell suggests that 'dramaturgists reveal that as far back as 2000 BC, the Chinese sword dances and festival included children in the audiences, and in the Grecian festivals of 500 BC, the children enacted the child roles'.²⁷ Lowell Swortzell further posits that Children's Theatre has been a part of the adult theatre's history for many centuries:

Popular theatre has attracted young people as playgoers from the time of the Greeks onward. Even earlier, children participated as performers in Egyptian ceremonies – young girls as dancers and boys as acrobats – while others watched at festivals and celebrations that in design an execution took on an undeniably theatrical look.²⁸

Swortzell mentions that Plato, 'in summarizing tastes of the theatre going public, contended that an audience survey would show young children voting for puppet and magic shows, older boys and girls for comedy and educated men and women for tragedy'.²⁹ It was Plato who suggested that the child audience member was subjected to, 'pantomime [which] emerged as an art form during the first century BC [and was]

27 Swortzell xvii and also see Dixie Ann Campbell, "An Introduction of Children's Theatre to Ohio University through a Production of The Emperor's New Clothes," master thesis., Ohio University, 1953, 6-7

28 Swortzell xviii.

29 Swortzell xviii.

developed by acrobats, jugglers, and mime performers who long had been performing in the public squares of Greece and Italy'.³⁰ Philip Coggin also argues that in Ancient Greece, boys from the streets of Athens were taught to perform in the annual festival of Dionysus in exchange for an education.³¹ During this time, it is also plausible to consider that the audience would have consisted of men, women and children.

Various children's roles in Shakespeare's plays from the late-1500s were written by adults and performed by a troupe of boy actors to adult audiences in private theatres and at the court of Elizabeth I. In the seventeenth century in England, the St. Paul and Chapel Royal Choir Boys gave dramatic performances, but the productions were designed as adult entertainment. Children's Theatre in England, as such, dates its inception to 1784 in the plays of Madame de Genlis.³² The Elizabethan boys' companies and the development of the pantomime from adult content to children's entertainment throughout the early to mid-Victorian times could also be considered as part of the Children's Theatre history.³³

ii) Australia's early Children's Theatre movement (pre-1900s)

In Australia, in the early to mid-nineteenth century, North America's and Britain's theatrical developments influenced the popularity of pantomimes in Geelong in Victoria, and "respectable children" with their parents were in the audience. The *Geelong Advertiser* in 1848 published that the Theatre Royal produced pantomimes to full houses:

THE THEATRE ROYAL [1848]. – The pantomime was played on Tuesday (Regatta) night, for the first time, to a house filled almost to suffocation. Long before the hour arrived for opening the theatre doors, a crowd of not less than three hundred and fifty to four hundred people had assembled outside awaiting to obtain admission and this to on a night when the rain was falling in torrents... We observed a great number of respectable children, of course under the guardianship of their parents and friends, and if they did not enjoy the pantomime it was only from the injury they did themselves from excessive laughter.³⁴

30 Plato cited in Swartzell xix.

31 Philip A. Coggin, *Drama and Education, an Historical Survey from Ancient Greece to the Present Day*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956): 13.

32 Campbell 6-7.

33 For more details concerning this specific argument see Hazel Waters, "That Astonishing Clever Child," *Theatre Notebook* L (1996): 78-94, Ann Blake, "Shakespeare's Roles for Children, A Stage History," *Theatre Notebook* XLVIII (1994): 122-137 and George K. Hunter, *John Lyly, The Humanist as Courtier*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962): 92-114.

34 *Geelong Advertiser* 28 December, 1848: 7.

During this period, Australia's theatre practitioners were intentionally designing shows for the family audience and for entertaining all differing "classes" and the "masses", while focusing on acquiring a successful box office. Various United States of America's theatre companies such as the Marsh Troupe (1861), 'travelled from America to operate for several months in Melbourne and they were a popular Children's Theatre company'.³⁵ This particular company consisted of 'thirty-four boys and girls; from five, to sixteen',³⁶ and in 1861 Benjamin McArthur explained that the Marsh troupe's program was, '[a group of] juvenile players from America [that] rented the Lyceum for a fruitful three-month engagement and, these prodigies mounted a potpourri of melodrama, burlesque, and farce'.³⁷ Moreover, a gentleman of the time in Harold Love's text *The Australian Stage* reported that the Marsh Troupe was a theatre of juveniles for a mixed audience:

Mac and I went and enjoyed the entertainment inside, the principal part of the performers consisting of young girls, who played both male and female characters in a very creditable manner [the Marsh Family of Juveniles].³⁸

The above references and quotes illustrate that not only was there an early Children's Theatre movement evident prior to the implementation of Creative Dramatics and Theatre-in-Education, but Australia had already begun showing an eager aptitude towards providing a unique and professional theatre experience for children and their families. Additionally, there are other records that suggest that children performing on the stage for families and more specifically for the child audience member during this time was occurring and often. For example, it was common for Australia's theatre managers to adapt English, North American and European children's fairy tales to suit local audiences. Many of these adaptations were completed by William Mower Akhurst and later by Marcus Clarke and Garnet Walch.³⁹ It is also important to note that theatre academics such as Alan Scott (1972), Ann Blake (1994), Hazel Waters (1996) and Anne Varty (2008) consider that these particular cultural and theatrical events belong to an "all-inclusive" narrative history concerning Children's Theatre as well. However, the influence that Children's Theatre has had on the

³⁵ Harold Love, *The Australian Stage, A Documentary History*, (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1984): 81.

³⁶ *The Courier* [Brisbane] 28 June 1861: 4.

³⁷ Benjamin McArthur, *The Man who was Rip Van Winkle*, (London: Yale University Press, London, 2007): 196.

³⁸ "A Night on the Town in Gold-boom Melbourne 1862," ed. Harold Love. *The Australian Stage, A Documentary History*, (Sydney: New South Wales Press, 1984): 82-83.

³⁹ Love 81.

creation of Creative Dramatics, Creative Drama, Drama-in-Education and Theatre-in-Education is still in need of further analysis. I would therefore suggest that the continual exclusion of professional and commercial entertainment for and with children throughout the ages by practitioners and academics within adult theatre and Creative Drama studies has contributed to the incomplete historical and theatrical overview of Children's Theatre as a specialised theatre genre.⁴⁰ As I have pointed out previously, there have been professional companies presenting Children's Theatre and cultural and festival theatre events, for and with young people in the early years of white colonial settlement, and since 1848.⁴¹

iii) Australia's twentieth-century Children's Theatre (post 1920s)

Without active dialogue, research into the "overall" theatrical history of Children's Theatre's practices, its changing definition and pedagogical programs in Australia an incomplete historical vacuum will remain. The below is one example:

Professional theatre for children and young people in Australia began after the Second World War. In 1955 there was only one organization performing programs related to school studies – the Shakespeare in Jeans Company of the Young Elizabethan Players. There was also Australian Children's Theatre, founded in Melbourne in 1948 by the sisters Joan and Betty Rayner to tour productions though out the country. During the 1960s Children's Theatre companies sprang up, among them Australian Theatre for Young People in Sydney, the Arena Theatre Company in Melbourne and Patch Children's Theatre [sic, Patch Theatre Company] and the Children's Activities Time Society in Perth. By 1975 more than 20 full-time companies were touring schools and performing in the community.⁴²

However, it was the Rayner sisters from New Zealand, who had studied the art of the strolling players with Constance Smedley of Greenleaf Theatre in London (she was also the sisters' godmother), who would open the first permanent Children's Theatre Company, TOY (Theatre of Youth) in Sydney in 1928/9. The Rayner sisters studied in Paris and Berlin and worked together throughout their professional career. The Rayner sisters founded, performed and directed the Theatre of Youth from 1929 to

⁴⁰ Even though there are no current academic journals focusing entirely on the discourse surrounding Children's Theatre in Australia there was *Lowdown*. *Lowdown* was created and released from Adelaide's Carclew's Youth Arts centre in 1978/9. *Lowdown* was first edited by Geoffrey Brown, and was initially instigated by Joan Pope, Margaret Leaske and others. *Lowdown* was Australia's national magazine that specifically debated and reviewed Theatre for Young Audiences and has recently been closed due to Government funding cuts in 2011. There is also no text to date that views the history of Children's Theatre in Australia. There is however, *The Australasian Drama Studies* journal which is refereed journal and has published articles regarding Children's Theatre in Australia but this hasn't been completed on a regular basis.

⁴¹ For a comprehensive investigation of the Rayner sisters see Mavis T. Clark, *Joan and Betty Rayner: Strolling Players*, (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1972): 80-89 also see, Michael FitzGerald, *International Guide to Children's Theatre and Educational Theatre: A Historical and Geographical Source Book*, ed. Lowell Swortzell (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990): 1-10.

⁴² Michael Fitzgerald, *Companion to Theatre in Australia*, ed. Philip Parsons et al., (Sydney: Currency Press, 1988): 654-656.

1931. The sisters produced and performed specifically for children and their families and desired children to understand different cultures via the medium of theatre. Through the performing of high-quality shows that focused on entertainment, utilising folksongs and folk plays that they had studied overseas, bringing the first theatre company that was specifically designed to cater for children's aesthetic tastes to Australia. However, the Theatre of Youth Company was short-lived as many Australian families were struggling to place food on their tables. The Depression had arrived and even if parents had enough money to pay for their children to see a show at the Theatre of Youth they competed with the talkies in the early 1930s. Mavis Clarke explains this situation concerning the two sisters:

Despite such excellent press reviews, the audiences at the Theatre of Youth were not always large or responsive; sometimes they were small and whispering. When the actors were worried whether the ticket sales would cover the rent, it was hard to be spontaneous for whisperers.⁴³

Although their main shows were for adults in the first year of the Theatre of Youth in 1929, from 'April to December Joan and Betty gave special Saturday afternoon matinees for children.'⁴⁴ With the success of these shows, the sisters approached the New South Wales Education Department with the suggestion that children should come to the theatre and experience an "in-house" theatre show at the Theatre of Youth venue. However, the Education Department and the community at the time were unaware of the overseas focus on a specialised Children's Theatre movement, or the implementation of Creative Dramatics into the school curriculum that was occurring in North America, Britain and parts of Europe. The Australian community believed that it was easier for those who could still afford shows for their children to send them to a Saturday matinee at the local cinema than to take them into the city to see a performance at the Theatre of Youth. However, if theatre for children had received the same community and government support as Children's Theatre, Creative Dramatics and/or Theatre-in-Education developments overseas, the Australia's Children's Theatre movement may have separated from family entertainment earlier and departed from adult theatre quite differently, acquiring a stronger academic and artistic voice. Perhaps, if theatre for children in Australia had experienced the same "breaking away" from the adult theatre industry, or developed

⁴³ Clark 32.

⁴⁴ Clark 39.

Creative Dramatics into the school curriculum much earlier than the 1930s, such as what was occurring in North America, Britain and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at the time, Australia's Children's Theatre movement may have formed stronger allegiances with educational objectives. This could also be a reason why North America's and Britain's Children's Theatre movements are able to boast of a stronger historical and theatrical narrative than Australia. However, this point can only be speculated upon, because the Depression in the 1930s and later, the Second World War, forced the sisters to re-think their situation.

In 1930, The Rayner sisters made a decision to close down the Theatre of Youth and return to Europe and later North America to gain more touring experience. It would not be until after the Second World War that they would return to Australia and form the Australian Children's Theatre (ACT in Melbourne) in 1952.⁴⁵ The Australian Children's Theatre Company would eventually be supported by the Education Department, but not before the sisters funded the company from their own finances and operated as a not-for-profit organisation for three years, securing an office, theatre venue and a van to tour in. The lack of initial support from the Education Department and from the wider community did not deter them from travelling extensively into regional areas throughout New South Wales and Victoria during the 1950s and 1960s, while completing metropolitan tours. The sisters would eventually be acknowledged, but after many years of hard work and with minimal reference to the establishment of Theatre of Youth (TOY):

To the Australian Children's Theatre – a non-profit making organization founded and directed by Miss Joan and Betty Rayner – is due the entire credit for the idea, for the approach to the Council and for the organization of the tour throughout Victoria, New South Wales, and Tasmania. Education Departments are co-operating enthusiastically.⁴⁶

iv) A new form of Children's Theatre in Australia (post-1950s)

Despite the lack of documentation pertaining to theatre experiences for and with children, the dedication of the Rayner sisters as well as the eventual and impending international influences from Creative Dramatics and Drama-in-Education models in North America and Britain would sway Australia's parent community and the Education Department to revisit the importance of arts in the school curriculum.

⁴⁵ Clark 32.

⁴⁶ *The Age* [Melbourne] d.n February 1952: 140.

However, unlike North America, Britain and Europe, education and moral teaching would not be at the core of Australia's Children's Theatre practices during the 1950s or after. For example, The Shakespeare in Jeans Company in Australia was established in 1958 and was influenced by the Rayner sisters' Theatre of Youth initiative. This company valued an aesthetic theatre experience over curriculum outcomes as David McKenzie reports:

The aim of all these groups, from the Rayners [Australian Children's Theatre] to the Young Elizabethan Players, was to take "culture" with a capital C into schools to provide students with an experience of "theatre", rather than to present a performance related to issues raised in the curriculum.⁴⁷

The Australian Children's Theatre (ACT) and the Shakespeare in Jeans Company during the early 1950s began to acquire a reputation of delivering high-quality entertainment with educational outcomes as secondary. These two companies were also paramount in encouraging other practitioners to work within the revamped Children's Theatre movement.⁴⁸ As a result, the Australian Children's Theatre model from the late 1950s onwards experienced a huge growth, adapting, evolving and creating a unique entity. Eventually, and more specifically after the end of the Second World War, Australia's Children's Theatre would boast of affording primacy to aesthetic worth over educational outcomes, and would later be referred to as Theatre-in-Education and then in the 1990s as Theatre for Young Audiences/People. However, Australia's Children's Theatre movement would still be without an academic and/or practitioner based theatrical and historical narrative concerning the early origins of Children's Theatre, and especially compared to the United States of America, Britain and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Conclusion

Australia's population distribution and the size of the country will always influence the Children's Theatre movement (present and past) regarding funding opportunities and competing with mainstream adult theatre experiences. Additionally, there will always be problems with defining Children's Theatre because of the term not reflecting the diverse theatrical and historical occurrences adequately and in relation

⁴⁷ David McKenzie, "A History of TIE in New South Wales," *Do It* 51 (1992): 8.

⁴⁸ This included companies such as Pageant Theatre in New South Wales (1967-1976) and the Australian Theatre for Young People in Sydney (1963), Arena Theatre in Melbourne (1966), Patch Theatre in Perth (1939) and Jigsaw Theatre Company in Canberra (1974).

to theatre for and by children, and over time. For example, the focus on Children's Theatre's purpose rather than on its aesthetic worth, the confusion surrounding the continual comparison with adult theatre, other child-centred drama and educational activities and programs.

Over time, Children's Theatre has metamorphosed itself into other child-centred drama and educational activities in order to survive into the twenty-first century, such as catering for mixed audiences, touring and performing into schools and being heavily connected with educational outcomes. Accordingly, the term Children's Theatre has evolved over time as well, and especially at the turn of the twentieth century when society began to view "childhood" as a separate and important part of entering "personhood".

Australia's Children's Theatre model that has been discussed in this chapter has briefly paid attention to the early to mid-twentieth century, and it has been difficult to acquire a clear understanding of Children's Theatre throughout this period. This has been mainly due to information being scattered, and at times out-of-date. Nevertheless, I have endeavored to point out that Australia has enjoyed theatre productions that were adapted and produced specifically for "the child audience member" and their families by various North American, British and European adult and Children's Theatre companies alike, and prior to other child-centred drama and educational activities being implemented into the school curriculum. I would also point out that the distinctive waiting period (or gap) for young audiences in Australia (compared to the United States of America, Britain and parts of Europe) to receive a permanent Children's Theatre model was not necessarily due to "inactivity". Rather, this view is due to a lack of documentation available and therefore evidence, and the confusion surrounding a term that is required to illustrate an "all inclusive" Children's Theatre movement without a detailed historical narrative to explain its diverse nature, is perhaps the true reason behind this situation.⁴⁹

Finally, Australia's isolation from various Western and international Children's Theatre movements and Creative Dramatic trends is also an important consideration

⁴⁹ Even though I have found it difficult to find any records to indicate a rich Children's Theatre activity occurring in Australia for young people during the second World War, I would still argue that this was not necessarily the case. For example, during the second World War when there were lighting restrictions there were still radio programs being broadcast such as the Australian Broadcasting Association (ABC) Children's Hour, and school's broadcasts when early childhood schools were closed from 1939-1945. The *Kindergarten of the Air* was started in 1942 during the wartime bombing threat in Western Australia and there had been schools broadcasted from the mid 1930s that offered poetry and dramatizations and literary "playlets" during school hours. Therefore, it is highly likely that there were also other child-centred theatre experiences occurring at the same time.

as to why Australia has developed a Children's Theatre model that is of an aesthetic focus rather than an educational one.⁵⁰ Despite the apparent "gap" concerning the possibility of "inactivity" in Australia regarding theatre for and by young people from the early 1900s and especially between the 1930s-1950s, I would finally point out that this is not necessarily the case nor has this hindered an Australian Children's Theatre movement but rather assisted in creating a unique, socially focused and contemporary Children's Theatre movement, which has continued to evolve over time.

In the following three chapters, I explore the role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in three select children's plays. I focus on how the playwrights and performers (from my perspective) "might" have used specific imaginative devices to bring the "invisible" onto the stage as well as how these particular imaginative devices have influenced the development of *Swimming in Air*. It is important to note that all evidence associated with the following three scripts and their corresponding performances as well as my interpretations come directly from the respective plays and performance notes during each play's production time.

⁵⁰ For a comprehensive investigation of the Rayner sisters and the evidence that Australia's early Children's Theatre movement was aesthetic-driven rather than based on educational objectives or that it focused on aesthetic worth via socially aware themes with educational objectives as secondary see Mavis T. Clark, *Joan and Betty Rayner: Strolling Players*, (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1972).

Chapter two

Fantasy and a girl Peter

Peter: But how?

*Barrie: By believing and using your imagination.*⁵¹

Introduction

In this chapter, J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904)⁵² is explored in its original text to performance as a three-act fantasy play and as a production that rests easily between Naturalism and Symbolism. In turn, this analysis not only presents *Peter Pan* as a play that sits between Naturalism and Symbolism but also as an alternative view to the often misrepresentation that *Peter Pan* is a mere pantomime from the 'ghetto of Children's Theatre'⁵³ or that casting a female positions a 'Peter in drag'.⁵⁴

In order to explore and illustrate the imaginative writing and performance process within the play's creation of a fantasy world as well as some of the artistic and practical reasons behind the decision to cast a girl Peter, I will first and briefly contextualise the various influences that have assisted J. M. Barrie to write the fantasy world of The Never Land. Second, I will provide examples of how the role of the imagination has been implemented from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in the form of; 1) a world-within-a-world as a scene structure, 2) the use of special effects, 3) the literary object, and lastly how these techniques have inspired the development of *Swimming in Air*.

It is also important to note that the role of fantasy as scriptwriting and performance techniques in this chapter will refer to Gary Wolfe's definition: 'fantasy is associated with daydreaming and the creative process [and is] a fictional narrative describing events that the reader [or audience] believes to be Impossible'.⁵⁵

51 *Finding Neverland*. Dir. Forster, Marc. Perf. Johnny Depp and Kate Winslet. Miramax Films, USA: Buena Vista Home entertainment, 2000.

52 *Peter Pan* was first performed at the Duke of York Theatre in London on December 27, 1904. Prior to the original stage production the character of Peter Pan first appeared in Barrie's book *The Little White Bird or the Adventures in Kensington Gardens* (1902), public domain full text: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1376>>. After *Peter Pan* (the stage production) became successful the stage narrative was also placed within the novels *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1902) and *Peter and Wendy* (1911) public domain full text: Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 1902. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1376>> The play was not published as a playtext until 1924 and underwent many changes.

53 Irving Wardle, *Times*, December 18, 1982 cited in J. Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or, The Impossibility of Children's Fiction*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993): 113.

54 Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests; Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety*, (London: Penguin, 1992): 165.

55 Gary K. Wolfe, *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy*, (Connecticut: Greenwood, 1986): 38.

i) Relevant plays prior to *Peter Pan*

Seymour Hicks's stage play *Bluebell in Fairyland* (1901), which juxtaposed the everyday with fairies, greatly affected Barrie's writing. Once he saw this play he was fascinated, retelling and acting, 'its various roles for any child who would listen'.⁵⁶ Additionally, there were other plays Barrie wrote (receiving both positive and negative theatre criticism) as well as his personal and novel writing endeavours that were perhaps even more influential regarding the development of *Peter Pan*. For example, *Quality Street* (1902) was a play about an "old maid" who portrays and pretends to be her flirty niece to win the attention of a former suitor. This play pivots on identity and illusion, and did not have an obvious structured plot line (which was highly uncommon during the early twentieth century theatre shows in England).⁵⁷ Another popular play that would also later influence the writing of *Peter Pan* was *The Admirable Crichton* (1902). This play reflects Barrie's interest in identity and illusion while positioning two contending "real" locations side-by-side. Overall, each of the above named productions blurred the line between illusion and reality by implementing a scene structure that framed two worlds that were often and paradoxically competing.

ii) Outside influences and the symbolic elements of *Peter Pan*

At the beginning of the Edwardian period, King Edward VII travelled extensively through parts of Europe, and was known for filtering back innovative ideas and supporting new concepts concerning art and fashion into London society. At the same time, the English theatre was welcoming a high-point of activity, incorporating a wide range of entertainments. Baz Kershaw explains this by suggesting that the London art and theatre scene was unique in the early 1900s, because it presented a variety of, 'sophisticated problem plays...rough-and-tumble, music songs and dance...providing diversity of choice...and appeal across the social scale'.⁵⁸ Moreover, European playwrights and directors were beginning to break away from popular Naturalistic styles, such as Henrik Ibsen, Anton Chekhov, August Strindberg and Vsevolod Meyerhold. These particular practitioners were entering

⁵⁶ Lisa Chaney, *Hide and Seek with Angels, A life of J. M. Barrie*, (London: Hutchinson, 2005): 190.

⁵⁷ Chaney 86.

⁵⁸ Baz Kershaw, *The Cambridge History of British Theatre*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 5. Also see Paul Sheridan, *Penny Theatres of Victorian London* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1981): 161-181 for a comprehensive history concerning the "gaff" theatre for children which were twenty minute shows of popular theatre productions for adults and children, costing one penny per show and this was occurring prior to the 1900s.

into the latest subversive wave of theatre, Symbolism and producing plays about the ‘working-class story’ and themes ‘surrounding women’s suffrage.’⁵⁹ More importantly they were creating the new “dream” plays throughout Europe. Even though Naturalism in the early 1900s was still an extremely popular style for the London audience, I would suggest that King Edward VII’s extensive travelling adventures, the new “dream” plays by the various European playwrights and the London spectator ‘desiring a diversity of choice’ were all influential for Barrie’s writing experimentations. Additionally, what Barrie achieved differently from Naturalistic styles appearing on the London stage (and especially with the creation of *Peter Pan*) was to unite the audience’s imagination with a shared and unique vision, using symbolic elements that would re-open and re-visit the realm of childhood from an adult’s perspective. Therefore, it is plausible that *Peter Pan* was not written as a mere pantomime as it was situated between Naturalistic and Symbolic styles, (even though it was not an extreme symbolist theatre production *per se*). Rather, *Peter Pan* was a play that used symbolic elements to hint at immortality whilst implementing the scene structure “semi-real to fantasy to semi-real”. The use of symbolic elements and the play’s scene structure was a metaphor to time and a way in which to help the audience to envisage and therefore believe in the impossible world of The Never Land. As Lisa Chaney stipulates in the following:

the secret of its power and the reason for its greatness as a work of art lies in the extraordinary vividness of the symbols...In this myth two worlds are depicted for us...These worlds are distinguished above all by their contrasting attitudes to time.⁶⁰

Moreover, the numerous symbolic elements such as children flying, fairies, a shadow departing from its owner and children fighting adults were an attempt to create suggestive, ‘metaphorical and evocative meanings within the text, and subsequently the performance’.⁶¹ Incorporating these “meanings” within a “semi-real to fantasy to semi-real” scene structure thus in turn allowed the linking of the audience’s imagination via their childhood memories to then envisage the fantasy world of The Never Land onto the stage. The use of symbolic elements and juxtaposing semi-real alongside fantasy is also a technique that I have purposely implemented in *Swimming in Air*. For example, when developing the imaginary character, Roger - as both good

⁵⁹ Simon Trussler, *Cambridge Illustrated History, British Theatre*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994): 260.

⁶⁰ Chaney 235.

⁶¹ J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*, (London: Samuel French, 1924): 6, 14-15 and 21-23.

and evil regarding his relationship with The Child often results in unusual occurrences happening in each scene such as swimming in air, strange sounds, puppetry and quirky visual stimuli.

iii) **Barrie influenced Barrie**

Barrie wrote and produced many novels, plays and poems before writing *Peter Pan*.⁶² However, more specifically Barrie's creative developments towards the use of fantasy as scriptwriting and performance techniques can be more readily viewed in *The Boy Castaways* (1901). This text is an example of when Barrie steered towards the use of fantasy within his writings, and purposely. *The Boy Castaways* was a creative and private adventure journal with photographs of a holiday that were taken by Barrie of the Davies boys. Barrie had met the Davies boys when he was walking his Newfoundland dog in London's Kensington Gardens in 1897, and subsequently he became a regular visitor at the Davies household. In 1901, he invited the Davies family to Black Lake Cottage. This is where the album of photographs of the boys acting out a pirate adventure occurred (though there were only ever two copies made). Even though unpublished, the creation of *The Boy Castaways* was a pivotal point in Barrie's writing career. This is when he began to consciously and artistically experiment with the everyday while incorporating the world of the imagination into his writings with plays such as *Quality Street* and *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) and later *Peter Pan* (1904).

iv) **Synopsis**

Peter Pan is about a little boy called Peter who never wants to grow up and lives in a place called Never Land which is a "fantasy" island where no one ages. Peter has a deep mother-issue and mistrusts adults. He has countless adventures with his friends such as other lost boys, fairies, pirates and Indians. The play's plot centres around Peter and the girl Wendy who becomes his mother-figure but would perhaps want something more from Peter.

62 For example see *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888), *Better Dead* (1888), *A Window in Thrums* (1889), *My Lady Nicotine* (1890) republished in 1926 with subtitle *A Study in Smoke*, *The Little Minister* (1891), *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), *Margaret Ogilvy* (1896), *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), *Quality Street* (1901), *The Admirable Crichton* (1902) and *The Little White Bird; or, Adventures in Kensington Gardens* (1902).

v) **A scriptwriting technique, fantasy in *Peter Pan***

The initial steps that Barrie took to establish and subsequently immerse his audience in a “world-within-a-world” or “semi-real to fantasy to semi-real” scene structure in *Peter Pan* was to write the first act, incorporating strange characters and situations.

For example:

The only occupant of the room at present is Nana, the nurse, reclining, not as you might expect on the one soft chair, but on the floor. She is a Newfoundland dog, and though this may shock the grandiose, the not exactly affluent will make allowances. The Darlings could not afford to have a nurse, they could not afford indeed to have children; and now you are beginning to understand how they did it. Of course Nana has been trained by Mrs. Darling, but like all treasures she was born to it. In this play we shall see her chiefly inside the house, but she was just as exemplary outside, escorting the two elders to school with an umbrella in her mouth, for instance, and butting them back into line if they strayed.⁶³

In the children’s nursery, Barrie deliberately places the character Nana (as an impossible canine nurse) to open the production, making certain that Mrs. Darling sees Peter flying outside her window (p. 4). This specific scene “set-up” enables and instigates subtle links (symbolic elements) which later assists the audience to envisage the uncanny and up-and-coming fantasy world of The Never Land, such as:

As she enters the room she is startled to see a strange little face outside the window and a hand groping as if it wanted to come in.

Mrs. Darling: Who are you?

The unknown disappears; she hurries to the window.

No-one there. And yet I feel sure I saw a face. My children! (pp. 3-4)

I have also implemented this type of scriptwriting technique in *Swimming in Air* in order to create “preparation scenes” such as what occurs in scenes one and two in *Swimming in Air*. For example, I have incorporated uncanny segments throughout most scenes such as the slightly “odd” alongside the normal so that I can prepare the audience for future “unreal” scenes such as what occurs in scenes four and six in *Swimming in Air*.

Patrick Braybrooke in 1924 stated that the playwright’s philosophy, ‘is that of the prevalence of illusion, things are not what they seem’.⁶⁴ Barrie intentionally implemented such a scriptwriting technique to create a strange reality that was believable. For Barrie, the opposite of play was not what was serious but what was

⁶³ Barrie *Peter Pan* 2. All other playtext references associated with *Peter Pan* will refer to page numbers only.

⁶⁴ Patrick Braybrooke, *J. M. Barrie, A Study in Fairies and Mortals*, (New York: Haskell House, 1971): 151.

semi-real, and *Peter Pan* as does *Swimming in Air*, pushes the boundaries associated with what was real, semi-real as well as highly unreal. Moreover, this semi-real scene prior to the highly unreal fantasy scene of The Never Land was also implemented in order to further signify the fantasy world of The Never Land's *paracosms*.⁶⁵ Barrie did this by including fantasy symbols or strange elements prior to the highly unreal fantasy scene of The Never Land, such as the dog named Nana as a nurse, 'who turns on the "hot" and "cold" taps in the bath with its teeth' (p. 4) and a shadow 'caught tight in the window-sash' (p. 4) that is independent from its owner. These symbolic elements encouraged the audience's initiation regarding the use of their imagination whilst nurturing and preparing them for the up-and-coming impossible world of The Never Land. The theorist Lin Carer suggests that, 'the problem of creating an imaginary world on paper is the largest and most serious...and it is a complex problem involving many different factors.'⁶⁶ Barrie combated these "different factors" by deliberately using the role of fantasy as a scriptwriting technique to write a play that not only incorporated a "semi-real to fantasy to semi-real" structure but also artistically displayed the inner workings of a child's mind onto the stage. Or, as Althusser would suggest, 'the play itself *is* the spectator's consciousness.'⁶⁷

I have also consciously used this idea such as "nothing is what it seems" and "writing the imagination onto the stage" by creating textual hints in *Swimming in Air* that are abstract, but which are also textual clues or snippets of what I believe The Child's mind "might" look like if it was "written" onto the stage. I have achieved this by using visual hints rather than overt stage directions to help embellish opposing worlds. This process is similar to how Barrie placed side-by-side competing worlds in *Peter Pan*, blurring illusion and reality whilst the audience experiences the first semi-real scene (in the nursery), and then goes onto the highly unreal scene (which then leads the audience to the last semi-real scene in *Peter Pan*) (pp. 74-83).

⁶⁵ There is only a very small amount of literature on "imagined worlds" in English. Paracosms or "imagined worlds" were first noted by the late Robert Silvey in the 1940s, who spent his working life carrying out audience research for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), and who had had an imagined world as a child. When he retired he began to investigate and write about them. He teamed up with a British psychiatrist, Stephen MacKeith and together they contacted a number of people who had had paracosms. The completed project resulted in a chapter in Delmont, C. Morrison's, *Organizing Early Experience: Imagination and Cognition in Childhood*, (New York: Baywood Publishing, 1988): 198-208. After Silvey's death in 1981, MacKeith joined with psychologist, writer and film maker, David Cohen to further analyse the information.

⁶⁶ Lin Carer, *Imaginary Words, The Art of Fantasy*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973): 174.

⁶⁷ Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Vintage, 1970): 150.

vi) The text and special effects

Barrie was able to further establish the audience's perception of the fantasy "symbols" by the use of special effects to help expand on the textual meaning of the script. Special effects were extremely popular during the early 1900s in the theatre. For example, up to fifty people (performers and technical staff) were employed to take part in the first production of *Peter Pan*, and to operate the mechanical equipment. At one point this entailed 'an Eagle which was to catch Smee by the seat of his trousers and carry him off after he had stolen the moon'.⁶⁸ I have also been highly influenced by this idea - that anything is possible in the theatre, especially when it comes to special effects and technology. *Swimming in Air* has been created based on imaginative freedom and the use of techno-driven special effects. Barrie was well aware of the importance of technical apparatuses for the early twentieth-century theatre spectators when he wrote *Peter Pan*. He understood the early twentieth century audience's limitations when envisaging the impossible on the stage. He had a keen sense of play and was experienced when it came to understanding how the theatre's special effects could assist in the creation of the fantasy world of The Never Land. Often, audience members during this time went to the theatre to be entertained with little effort on their part. Sir Frederick Pollock, a respected Society of Art member in 1887 is reputed to have said: 'they need not bring any mind at all to the theatre; they were not expected to do so; it was all done for them by carpenters and scene-shifters'.⁶⁹ When Barrie wrote *Peter Pan* he valued the audience member's enjoyment of special effects and therefore wrote a script accordingly. I have also focused on the importance of knowing your audience when writing *Swimming in Air*. Jonathon Levy further points out the difficulty of such a task. He advocates that when a writer imagines the audience (when writing) that it is similar to grasping the shadows inside one's mind:

When a playwright imagines a play, he imagines not only the play but the audience for it. He may not know it. At the moment of writing, he may think he has put the audience out of his mind. But when he thinks back on that moment of writing, he will remember that the audience was always with him, as a boundary of shadows just beyond the spill of his mind's light.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Chaney 182. This particular stage direction does not appear in the 1924 Samuel French publication which is the first print version of *Peter Pan*. Barrie heavily re-edited and wrote an additional two scenes from the original 1904 three act play.

⁶⁹ Sir Frederick Pollock cited in Michael, R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981): 16.

⁷⁰ J. Levy, *A Theatre of the Imagination*, (Connecticut: New Plays Books, 1987): 24.

vii) Performance and fantasy: a girl Peter

The first performer to play Peter was Nina Boucicault (Pauline Chase played Peter from the 1906 to 1907 and then for the 1914 to 1915 seasons). After Boucicault's successful run of the play, Barrie would often direct the female performers in the subsequent *Peter Pan* productions by referencing past female actresses, 'Peter should be a lovable tomboy, as...Pauline Chase portrayed him...or...he must be the whimsical, fairy creature that Nina Boucicault made him.'⁷¹ George Shelton also professed that whoever played Peter needed to have an extraordinary and unique talent with numerous acting experiences in order to portray the combination that was, 'impishness and suggest a creature partly human and partly elfish in a manner which no other actress except Miss Boucicault is able to do.'⁷² However, when *Peter Pan* was first shown to an audience a child in the original 1904 auditorium stated, 'Pan and Wendy were very good, but I wished Peter was a real boy instead of a girl'.⁷³ In the late twentieth century critics often objected to a female being cast as Peter. For example, Giles Gordan a leading Scottish literary agent (in the 1920s) said: 'let us never see a gal as Peter again'.⁷⁴ With the various conflicting and continuous discussions surrounding the casting of a girl Peter certain questions arise such as: what was the reaction of the audience when Peter (cast as a female) first appeared on the stage in 1904? Was this decision something Barrie artistically and therefore intentionally sought and if so why? These questions are not easy to answer, however by asking such questions I was able to make a clear decision to create a character in *Swimming in Air* that was both girl/boy, which resulted in the character, The Child.

viii) Women, Peter and Barrie

Not only was there a lack of stimulating parts for women on the stage throughout the late nineteenth century to early twentieth century, English society viewed acting for women as an 'improper occupation.'⁷⁵ In 1898, Clement Scott warned: 'it is nearly impossible for a woman to remain pure who adopts the stage as a profession.'⁷⁶ However, despite the obstacles women actresses faced at the time (which Barrie

71 A. Birkin, *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1979): 105.

72 H. M. Walbrook, *J. M. Barrie and the Theatre*, (London: F. V. White and Co. 1922): 101.

73 W. N. Flower, "What the Audience Thinks: Mary Rose and Peter Pan Competition Results," *Bookman* 59 (1920): 119.

74 Bruce Hanson, *The Peter Pan Chronicles*, (New York: Birch Lane Press, 2000): 239 cited in Angel, M. Pilkington, "Peter Pan, Myth & Fantasy," *Midsummer Magazine Online*. June 2000. 13 June 2011 <www.bard.org/Education/studyguides/PeterPan/panmyth.html>.

75 Trussler 260.

76 Trussler 260.

would have been aware of) he still chose to cast a female as Peter. He wrote to Maude Adams after the first run, illustrating his continual enthusiastic commitment towards casting the “right” actor who was talented and appropriate for the part: ‘I should like you to be the boy and the girl and most of the children and the pirate captain’.⁷⁷ Therefore, in my opinion, Barrie was more interested in acquiring a talented performer who could ‘handle the many lines and also appear convincingly as a young male’⁷⁸, rather than adhering to the pantomime tradition. He decided on a performer who could ‘blend pathos with frolicsomeness’⁷⁹, and purposely cast a female as Peter in order to reconfirm the writer’s intention to project the ‘literary object’ onto the stage.⁸⁰ Jacques Rancière refers to the “literary object” as, ‘what the spectator *must see* is what the director *makes her see*.’⁸¹ Furthermore, numerous actresses shared Barrie’s opinion about finding the “right” actor for the part, such as The Divine Sarah⁸² a French stage and film actress who played Hamlet (1899)⁸³ and the male lead, Duke of Reichstadt in *L’Aiglon* a play about the life of Napoleon II of France. Maude Adams (1872-1953), with whom Barrie was in constant contact with was an American stage and film actress⁸⁴ who also played the male lead role in *L’Aiglon* (1900) (which would foreshadow her portrayal of Peter Pan five years later). Female performers consistently portrayed male roles or “trouser” parts throughout the early twentieth century (and other than in pantomimes) and did so successfully. By females opting to perform leading male roles they continued to work and practice their craft (equal to male actors and often expressing their superiority). As Sarah Bernhardt concurs in the following:

A woman is better suited to play parts like *L’Aiglon* and Hamlet than a man. These roles portray youths of twenty or twenty-one with the minds of men of forty. A boy of twenty cannot understand the philosophy of Hamlet nor the poetic enthusiasm of *L’Aiglon*. . . An older man does not look like a boy nor has he the ready adaptability

⁷⁷ Birkin 105.

⁷⁸ Hanson 25-26 cited in Angel, M. Pilkington, “Peter Pan, Myth & Fantasy,” *Midsummer Magazine Online*. June 2000. 13 June 2011 <www.bard.org/Education/studyguides/PeterPan/panmyth.html>.

⁷⁹ *The Times* 4.

⁸⁰ Barrie’s decision to cast a female Peter Pan is similar to Merleau Ponty’s argument regarding the writer’s words which are not just referring to objects in the world but continue to re-create images in the reader’s mind. See, Eric Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*, (Bucks, UK: Acumen Publishing, 2002): 137.

⁸¹ Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2009): 14.

⁸² Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923) was a French stage and early film actress. Bernhardt made her fame on the stages of Europe in the 1870s and was soon in demand in Europe and America. She developed a reputation as a serious dramatic actress, earning the title “The Divine Sarah”.

⁸³ Sarah Siddons at the age of twenty in the eighteenth century was the first female to play Hamlet. She played Hamlet for over twenty-five years. Other female Hamlets have been Eleanor Duse, Eva La Gallienne, Diane Verona, Frances de la Tour, Clare Howard and Angela Winkler.

⁸⁴ Maude Adams performed as Peter Pan in 1905, 1906, 1912 and 1915.

of the woman who can combine the light carriage of youth with the mature thought of the man. The woman more readily looks the part and has the maturity of mind to grasp it.⁸⁵

Additionally, many of the actresses who have played Peter Pan strived to complete their parts as Sarah Bernhardt has suggested above. Sandy Duncan was also another such actress:

When I was doing it there was a lot of encouragement to be Peter Pan. I said if I'm going to do it I'd like to do it as much as possible like a boy.⁸⁶

Barrie sought the "right" actor to play the part, and he was often identified for directing his actors strongly (and before the term artistic director was in common use). For example, he was known for employing the physical stage, continually attempting to find new ways of eliminating dialogue and utilise action which served the play better. Therefore, he cast based on the textual character's traits, the writer's "literary object" and the production requirements. Clayton Hamilton points out that he took on the role of director to find, 'a good moment in a good part'.⁸⁷ It was Barrie who wrote about the importance of approaching a part with a child's outlook, suggesting the famous theatre motto "less is more", and that naturalness must be *her* passion:

...naturalness must be her passion; indeed, it should be the aim of everyone in the play...All the characters, whether grown-ups, or babies, must wear a child's outlook on life as their only important adornment...A good motto for all would be "The little less, and how much it is".⁸⁸

ix) What gaze? A girl Peter

When a girl Peter flies through the Darling's open window in leggy tights, feminine features and short hair what is the audience's relationship with the image that they are being presented with? What type of image did Nina Boucicault in tights produce? Is Peter a boy or a girl or both? Is The Child in *Swimming in Air* a boy or a girl? Does it matter? Is this confusion related to viewing children as an object rather than as belonging to personhood? Was Barrie succeeding in creating the "literary object" onto the stage by casting a female as Peter or did he fail? When Peter is cast as a

⁸⁵ Charles Marowitz, "Asta Nielsen & Hamlet's Gender-Benders," 28 December 2009: 1. 3 May 2010.

<<http://www.swans.com/library/art15/cmarow155.html>>.

⁸⁶ Flower 119.

⁸⁷ Clayton Hamilton, *Conversations on Contemporary Drama*, (New York: p.n., 1924): 86.

⁸⁸ Barrie 3.

male does this change Barrie's original meaning of the "literary object"? In my view when casting Peter or The Child in *Swimming in Air* the decision should be based on talent rather than on gender. With this in mind another question arises regarding the early twentieth century audience member: who owned the masculine position when a female was playing Peter Pan? For, Barrie's text states that Peter Pan is a boy (p. 14). However, the writer/director (Barrie) was determined that Peter be played by a girl. These are complicated questions that are difficult to answer and are further reflected in my decision to keep The Child's gender in *Swimming in Air* ambiguous, and to create a "child" character that was boy/girl or "girl/boy". For the gaze in the hands of an experienced performer, as E. Ann Kaplan suggests, is not being, 'necessarily male (literally), but to own and activate the gaze, given our language and the structure of the unconscious, is to [therefore] be in the "masculine" position'.⁸⁹

Moreover, there may be a simple answer to Barrie's decision to cast a female as Peter, which might have been due to an actor's weight in order to allow the flying of Peter to seem effortless.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the spectators in the auditorium were perhaps more concerned with, 'watching others watching' a girl Peter, than necessarily gazing at an actor in tights who was playing a boy and flying across the stage, effectively.⁹¹

Conclusion

The creation of *Peter Pan* has not only helped to 'establish the category of the children's play as a distinct dramatic subgenre [in the early twentieth century]'⁹² but it has also influenced me to explore the imagination and its power in *Swimming in Air*. Even though when Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*, fantasy on the stage for mixed audiences was certainly not new through plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1594), *Dick Whittington and His Cat* (1882), *Alice in Wonderland* (1886), *The Belles of the Village* and *Cinderella* (1889), *The Real Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1888), *The House That Jack Built* (1894), and *Bluebell in Fairyland* (1901). Nevertheless, *Peter Pan* was an alternative production compared to these plays because it was riddled with numerous symbolic elements and implemented a diverse scene structure "semi-real to fantasy to semi-real". This departed from what was commonly being

⁸⁹ E. Ann Kaplan, *Women and Film; Both Sides of the Camera*, (London: Methuen, 1983): 30.

⁹⁰ Chaney 182.

⁹¹ William Ralph, McGraw, "James. M. Barrie Concepts of Dramatic Action," *Modern Drama* September (1962): 140.

⁹² Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009): 175.

seen on the stage (with exception of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*) at the turn of the twentieth century.

Peter Pan is often referred to as a pantomime. This is understandable considering the play's structure and plot line is drenched with typical pantomime motifs, such as the principal boy being played by a girl as well as animal characters in the form of Nana, a canine nurse, the use of slap-stick comedy and the themes of good and evil (*Peter Pan* and *Hook*). There is also audience participation, such as Peter asking the audience, 'Do you believe in fairies? Say, quick that you believe! If you believe, clap your hands' (p. 61) Nevertheless, I would point out that *Peter Pan* is not a typical pantomime just as *Swimming in Air* is not a typical children's play. There is the use of the scene structure "semi-real to fantasy to semi-real" with each scene having its own, 'time moved from within by an irresistible force, producing its own content.'⁹³ And, when J. M. Barrie wrote *Peter Pan* in 1903, it was wedged between the changing concepts of late nineteenth and early twentieth century society, theatre and literature as well as the initial stages of two emerging theatre genres, Symbolism and Children's Theatre. More specifically, Barrie implemented the role of fantasy as a scriptwriting technique to achieve a specific textual structure that juxtaposed "semi-real to fantasy to semi-real" or a "world-within-a-world" against the everyday that was slightly uncanny. The specific scriptwriting techniques that I have discovered in *Peter Pan* have greatly influenced my playwriting developments in *Swimming in Air* such as juxtaposing the uncanny alongside the normal. Barrie used strange or semi-real scenes while incorporating certain fantasy and symbolic elements to assist the audience to envisage the impossible fantasy world of The Never Land, and this can also be viewed in *Swimming in Air* such as when Roger asks The Child to find his blood in order to discover if he is real or not (p. 33).

Moreover, Barrie's decision to cast a female in the lead role was based on a director's desire to fulfill the writer's "literary object" onto the stage via high-quality acting techniques and weight considerations regarding the flying. A slight boy could have easily been cast as Peter but an adult actress would have had relevant performance and life experience. Barrie's decision to cast a female in a male's role today may seem unusual (unless this occurs in schools or tertiary productions, where the female performers invariably outnumber males or to make a specific gender-based point). However, for Barrie the issue of "gender within the text" was

⁹³ Althusser 137.

secondary to the “literary object” on the stage, which was also my intention when creating The Child in *Swimming in Air*. What was central to the purpose of finding the “right” Peter Pan who could authentically portray multiple characteristics, displaying part impish, fairy and pre-pubescent from text to performance was not a female in tights as a box office draw card but rather a lightweight, girl Peter who could be lifted by special effects in order to fly to The Never Land and portray youth with meaning. Finally, the theatre laws at the time were stringent, and to cast a young boy as Peter would have also created problems with the various other child characters who would have then needed to be even younger.⁹⁴

In the following chapter, I focus on the role of the imaginary object from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in the form of “the invisible cloth” and the “weaving machine” in Charlotte Chorpenning’s 1934 adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. I also point out how these particular imaginative techniques have assisted in producing *Swimming in Air*.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ See Gubar 181 for a detailed account of the controversy over child actors in the early twentieth century British theatre culture. Please note that I have purposely avoided discussing J. M. Barrie’s sexuality as this particular discussion has been covered extensively in other sources such as A. Birkin. *J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1979).

⁹⁵ Charlotte Chorpenning, *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, (New York: Samuel French Inc, 1934): 34-87. This script is a stage adaptation of the first publication by Hans Christian Andersen with the same title: “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, *Fairy Tales, Told for Children*, 1837. p.n.

Chapter three

Making the invisible visible

Introduction

In the following section, I briefly explore Charlotte B. Chorpenning's (1873-1955) impact on the Children's Theatre movement, the importance of the fairy tale adaptation during the 1930s-1940s, and the its connection to early childhood studies. Additionally, I focus on Chorpenning's directorial influences before completing a practitioner-based scriptwriting and performance analysis regarding *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1934). I also illustrate certain scriptwriting and performance techniques that I have implemented in *Swimming in Air* which have been influenced from the following exploration.

It is important to note that the imaginary object in this chapter will first refer to mime, which Jonathan Levy explains as:

...similar to offering the audience "charged hints" or a gesture, a line, a stage picture which passes as quickly as the spoken word – which the imagination [of the audience] then works upon to complete.⁹⁶

Secondly, the imaginary object will refer to how mime is described in the *Oxford Companion to Theatre* (1983) by Phyllis Hartnoll: 'entirely dependent on gesture and movement, usually accompanied by music, but wordless'.⁹⁷

i) Chorpenning and *The Emperor's New Clothes*

In the early twentieth century, one major influence behind the formation of a continuous and stable Children's Theatre model in the United States of America was the prominent playwright, director, educator and critic, Charlotte B. Chorpenning (1873-1955). According to Campton Bell and Roger Bedard, Chorpenning is often signified as 'the most powerful influence in the Children's Theatre movement in this country [USA]'.⁹⁸ I would posit that one of the main reasons for this was due to the research and archives that are available and trace Chorpenning's involvement with creating and designing theatre for young people as well as her publication, *Twenty-*

⁹⁶ Jonathan Levy, "Reflections on Peter Pan," *A Theatre of the Imagination, Reflections on Children and the Theatre*, (New York: American Theatre Association, 1979): 36.

⁹⁷ Phyllis Hartnoll, *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983): 549.

⁹⁸ Campton Bell, *Children's Theatre Conference Newsletter: Convention Edition*, 1953: 1 cited in Roger Bedard, "The Life and Work of Charlotte B. Chorpenning," diss. University of Kansas, 1979 preface.

One Years with Children's Theatre (1954). This was one of the first texts to investigate the artistic approach to theatre designed specifically for children as well as approaching 'the child's response' as an area of theatre research.⁹⁹

Chorpenning was the director of the Goodman Theatre from 1933-1953 and it was prior to taking up this position that she wrote the stage adaptation of Andersen's *The Emperor's New Clothes*.¹⁰⁰ During her time at the Goodman, she staged over seventy productions for children. Gnesin writes: 'Chorpenning turned a rather uncertain enterprise into a successful institution'.¹⁰¹ When Chorpenning retired from the Goodman Theatre in 1952, the theatre was playing to over '45,000 children each year'.¹⁰² Additionally, Chorpenning wrote twenty-eight plays and collaborated on eight others. While the records of that period do not provide a complete picture of Chorpenning's activities, Bedard's research suggests that it was 'apparent that she also directed at least sixty of these productions.'¹⁰³

Winifred Ward (1884-1975) the influential American Creative Dramatics academic and practitioner, was one of the initial inspirations behind Chorpenning's early dealings in creating and producing professional theatre for children. Ward's writings and teachings concerning Creative Dramatics, her influences regarding the utilisation of theatre concepts within children's educational outcomes and her interest in Drama-in-Education (DIE) have been noted thoroughly by Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote (1995).¹⁰⁴ At Evanston University, where Ward and Chorpenning met and worked together, Ward encouraged Chorpenning to write plays for children, resulting in *The Emperor's New Clothes*.¹⁰⁵ This production 'was first performed at the Children's Theatre of Evanston.'¹⁰⁶ Over six premiere performances eventuated, playing to audiences of three to five hundred children. As Elaine Rubin notes, Chorpenning was especially proud of this play, 'not only because of its artistic quality, but also because of its monetary success'.¹⁰⁷ After the initial Evanston

99 See complete text: Charlotte B. Chorpenning, *Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre*, (Kentucky: The Children's Theatre Press, 1954).

100 See complete text: Charlotte Chorpenning, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, (New York: Samuel French Inc, 1934).

101 Maurice Gnesin, *Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre, by Charlotte B. Chorpenning*, (Kentucky: The Children's Theatre Press, 1954): xi cited in Roger Bedard, "The Life and Work of Charlotte B. Chorpenning," diss. University of Kansas, 1979): preface.

102 Gnesin xi.

103 Bedard "The Life and Work of Charlotte B. Chorpenning," 75.

104 Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama for Learning*, (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995): 83-85, 170-173 and 176-177.

105 Chorpenning, *The Emperor's New Clothes*. All other textual references from this source will be noted as page numbers only.

106 Janet Rubin, "The Literary and Theatrical Contributions of Charlotte B. Chorpenning to Children's Theatre," diss. The Ohio State University, 1978): 11.

107 Rubin 144.

season, the production premiered in 1932 at the Goodman Theatre of the Art Institute of Chicago.¹⁰⁸

ii) Fairy tale to the stage

During the 1930s in the United States of America, adaptations of fairy tales by adults for children on the stage such as *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Jack and the Bean Stalk* were common. Jacqueline D. Woolley suggests that theatre practitioners, writers and artists, at this time, were viewing children and adults' understandings of fantasy as being similar:

It is suggested that children are not fundamentally different from adults in their ability to distinguish fantasy from reality. Both children and adults entertain fantastical beliefs and also engage in magical thinking.¹⁰⁹

It therefore seems plausible that during this time adults were deciding on what children should view and what adults believed to be entertaining. Consequently, fairy tales with moral undertones were popular. During the 1930s, society valued the moral subtext that the fairy tale could offer, such as *Beauty and the Beast* and *Cinderella*. These narrative adaptations to the stage were readily supported. Experts within the field such as Bruno Bettelheim wrote about how fairy tales reflected a child's inner pressures in a way that the child, 'unconsciously understood without belittling the most serious inner struggles which growing-up entailed.'¹¹⁰

Additionally, Bettelheim suggests that without the fairy tale structure children would find it impossible to understand moral overtones. Even though I do not necessarily agree with this statement (and that *The Emperor's New Clothes* was an adaptation from a famous fairy tale with obvious moral undertones) for me, Chorpenning still adapted a difficult story for the stage. First, the play required actors to bring about the believability of the imaginary object such as the Emperor's new (invisible) clothes and the (invisible) weaving machine, which is similar to the birthing of Roger or his "blood" discovery in *Swimming in Air*. If this was not completed in an authentic way, the play's main plot line would be at stake. Second, the actors would

¹⁰⁸ *Chicago Daily Tribune 1872-1963* 26 March 1932: 19.

¹⁰⁹ Jacqueline D. Woolley, "Thinking about Fantasy, Are Children Fundamentally Different Thinkers and Believers from Adults?" *Child Development* 68 (1997): 991.

¹¹⁰ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment, The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): 6-7.

need certain performance skills to embody the invisible, convincing the audience that what was being mimed was in fact imaginatively “real”.

iii) Synopsis

In *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, an Emperor decides to hire two tailors who promise to make him a set of remarkable new clothes that will be invisible to anyone who is either incompetent or stupid. When the Emperor goes to see his new clothes, he sees nothing at all. Afraid of being judged incompetent or stupid, the Emperor pretends to be delighted with the new clothes and wears them in a grand parade throughout town. Everyone at first pretends to see the “invisible” clothes until someone yells out that he is not wearing any clothes at all. The Emperor also soon realises that he is naked and runs away in shame. As the play’s subplot as concerned with two swindlers Zar and Zan who “pretend” what they are weaving is actually “real” so they can make a fool of the Emperor and trick the General into being expelled from the kingdom.

iv) Chorpenning: director and the imagination

Chorpenning was known for her theatrical intuition as a director of plays for children. She understood the importance of various theatrical elements to enhance the display of the imaginary object onto the stage, such as the lavish use of lighting and atmospheric music. Moreover, Chorpenning implemented comedic action to assist in audience engagement. As Marjorie Grossel Chandler explains:

The pictorial and musical effects were intriguing to the audience and their general effect on the children adds greatly to the entertainment and satisfaction they experienced. She [Chorpenning] had good creative ability in working with situations that needed more action brought out, more comedy emphasized.¹¹¹

The goal of Chorpenning’s directorial influence at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago was according to Shifra Schonmann, to instigate a place to create productions that ‘absorbed the audience in the illusion of the world on stage’.¹¹² She purposely wrote a play that used the actor’s imagination, comedic timing and musical effects to achieve such goals. This approach has also been influential regarding the character development of Roger in *Swimming in Air*. For example, the specific uses of comedic

¹¹¹ Marjorie Grossel Chandler, “An Analytical Study of the Published Plays of Charlotte B. Chorpenning: Based on Criteria Established by Mrs. Chorpenning and Others in the Field of Children’s Theatre,” diss. University of California, 1967): 234.

¹¹² Shifra Schonmann, *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People, Images and Observations*, (The Netherlands: Springer, 2006): 17.

timing in the family's meal scene and the unusual sound effects that occur throughout *Swimming in Air* have assisted in creating a space that sways the audience's imagination to see the invisible on the stage.

Since the early 1900s, fantasy alongside the development of "childhood" as a concept within the field of childhood psychology was also undergoing intense growth.¹¹³ For example, the United States of America's Children's Theatre movement and childhood psychology and education departments began to combine ideas, resulting in the formation of Creative Dramatics (which was later known as Drama-in-Education in the UK in the 1960s and in the 1970s in Australia) into the school curriculum. Helen Rosenberg states that:

The acquisition, cultivation, and manipulation of images, as well as the way in which these images evolve into active imagination, have long been sources of fascination for scientists, psychologists, and artists. Until recently, imagination had not been the focus of systematic investigation. In the last several decades however, serious studies that focus on mental imagery are on the increase. These studies are astoundingly far-ranging, from how imagery affects learning and psychological state, to how various artists use childhood experiences as sources of art-making, to how fantasy shapes one's choice in life. Researchers in the field of mental imagery agree that the study of the imagination will help clarify many cognitive and creative processes.¹¹⁴

Therefore, the study of the imagination in childhood, its connection to "play", and theatre experiences especially designed for children became hot topics from the 1940s to the 1980s. Various childhood psychologists such as Melanie Klein and Helen Rosenberg devoted years researching the imagination, the importance of "drama" and "play", and the creative and psychological development of the child. When Chorpenning's adaptation of *The Emperor's New Clothes* for the stage took place, the use of the imagination in the form of the imaginary object was timely with what would later become of interest within child psychology and early childhood education studies. I have been swayed by these ideas such as what is first written in the text later influences the director and the performers to act out the imaginary in order to envisage the "invisible" onto the stage.

113 The clinical word "Phantasy (or Fantasy)" as noted in J. L. Laplanche and Pontalis, J. B. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, is '[an] imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfillment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes', (USA: W W Norton and Company, 1974): 314. This definition is based on the analysis from Sigmund Freud's work. Freud's writings support the use of the term fantasy in evoking a distinction between imagination and reality (or perception).

114 Helen S. Rosenberg, *Creative Drama and Imagination*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1987): 49-50.

v) The imaginary object as a scriptwriting technique

It is no accident that the words “play”, “fantasy” and “imagination” are interrelated, overlapping continually in the theatre. Play can also mean game and theatre piece which is a key element in *Swimming in Air*. As Jonathan Levy concurs:

A sense of play is a necessary, perhaps the necessary, capacity a playwright must have. He must, of course, also be a craftsman, a “wright”, like a Boatwright or a Cartwright. But what animates and vivifies his craft is his sense of play. And this is particularly true of a playwright who would write for children.¹¹⁵

Levy goes on to suggest that, ‘the first products of fantasies...are first designed in the writing of the play’.¹¹⁶ Chorpenning’s emphasis on “play” “fantasy” and the “imaginary object” is most evident in the stage directions or *didascalia* that she implemented throughout the script and this process also coincides with Barrie’s imaginative writing technique as well as the one I use in *Swimming in Air*. For example, Chorpenning continually inserts “triggers”, giving the actors/readers/directors clues as to how to perform the piece, such as writing detailed accounts for the play’s antagonist, the General. Chorpenning often expresses (via stage directions) the General’s emotions or his specific actions, or goes on to explain the spatial awareness of the General in his surrounding environment. This in turn, assists the future performance of the piece and the actors who portray the protagonists Zan and Zar. This is especially so when the actors are required to mime the weaving of the invisible clothing or in *Swimming in Air* the drowning of The Child with the use of ribbons:

Zar

This is exciting!

(They weave rapidly, not looking up. The door is thrown open and the GENERAL enters, marked by the flags worn on his back. He is smiling complacently, having no fear that he will not see the stuff. He is about to speak, when he sees the empty loom. He can hardly believe his eyes. It had never occurred to him to fear the test. He gulps, and looks away and back again. He is overwhelmed, and struggles for composure. The rogues weave away, apparently unconscious of his presence. GENERAL poses himself carefully before he speaks.)

General

(Swallowing hard.) Uh-that is very wonderful stuff.

(The two leap to their feet, whirling around to face the General.) (pp. 42-43).

¹¹⁵ Jonathan. Levy, “Imagining an Audience,” *A Theatre of the Imagination* (Connecticut: New Plays Books, 1987): 28.

¹¹⁶ Levy 4.

According to Levy, ‘the actors perform[ing] on the stage has first come about because of the text.’¹¹⁷ Therefore, the General’s stage (text) actions such as “swallowing hard” and his attitude towards the imaginary object are paramount and will be instigated by the actor’s effective performance of the imaginary object. For, the General must pretend that what he sees is an imaginary object (which isn’t real) so that he will not be judged as a “fool” or worse ex-communicated by the people in the village (pp. 42-43). Two things are apparent here. First, the text implies that the actors will need to perform an imaginary object that is viewed by others as “real”. Second, due to the dialogue used, the audience is made aware of Zan and Zar’s “pretending” that the imaginary object is not actually “real” but being mimed in order to fool the Emperor’s court. Therefore, the script’s main plot device regarding the imaginary object will eventually feed the audience’s imagination, moving the plot forward by providing a space, time and a situation in which the audience can experiment with a “what if” situation. For example, Chorpenning appropriately scribes various stage directions or “triggers” to hint towards the role of fantasy as an imaginary object within the dialogue. She does this to invite the use of mime, such as ‘show me! Quick!’ and ‘*Illustrating with hands*’ (p. 34):

Zan I found an old man to teach me. I practiced all night long.

Zar Show me! Quick!

Zan Oh! This is a fine loom you found!

Zar I can think of fine stuff when I look at it. But I couldn’t find out how to weave.

Zan (*Illustrating with his hands.*) There are a thousand threads, running from top to bottom, like strings on a lyre. (p. 34)

Alternatively, the above example illustrates how the writer is textually imagining the actors’ delight in creating the invisible on the stage. The above dialogue and the corresponding italics ‘*Illustrating with his hands*’ work together to further hint at what needs to be done, or in other words the dialogue will assist the actors to create the invisible object in order for the imaginary object to take shape within the eventual performance process, such as ‘there are a thousand threads, running from top to bottom like strings on a lyre’ (p. 34).

117 Levy 4.

vi) The role of the imaginary object from text to performance

The role of the spoken text allied with the physical actions on the stage also assists in creating the imaginary object from text to performance, making certain imaginative connections occur with the audience. Additionally, the movement and blocking of all the cast members and especially the weavers were, according to Dixie Ann Campbell: ‘planned so that those actors functioned largely as a group or unit. Their entrances, exits, reactions, and kowtowing were designed to give a choral effect’.¹¹⁸ McAuley also concurs by suggesting that the space is never empty and that the performer’s body can be used to create specific types of imaginative links with the audience:

...theatre space is never empty, the activation of spatial planes through orientation of the performer’s body is always a means of bringing people and things into a relationship, of making connections.¹¹⁹

There has been a long history associated with this type of imagining/performance technique. The Ancient Greek drama of Euripides’ *The Bacchae* (400BC) did not use technical or special effects, and instead implemented large portions of dialogue to describe action-filled events which were happening off stage, such as the dismemberment of Pentheus. Rather than enacting events on the stage or using props or scenery the actors presented the plot by “telling” and used language, emotion and gesture ‘to inform the audience of what was or had happened.’¹²⁰ Another example is early modern theatre where props and sets were also used minimally. The dramas of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe in the 1500s to 1600s utilised the same imagining/performance technique via spoken text which was juxtaposed with physical actions, creating the imaginary object on to the stage without relying on naturalism or verisimilitude techniques.¹²¹ Additionally, Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), prior to his Technique becoming popular in the United States of America in the 1930s, realised that the rejuvenation of ‘imaginative thought’ (as early as the 1900s when he was an actor and later a director at the Moscow Arts Theatre) was an

¹¹⁸ Campbell 48.

¹¹⁹ Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 2002): 112.

¹²⁰ See completed text: Euripides, *The Bacchae: A new version by David Greig*. Trans. Ian Ruffell (London: National Theatre of Scotland, Faber and Faber, 2007).

¹²¹ M. Banham, *The Cambridge Guide to Theatre*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 319-322.

essential ingredient for an actor performing the imaginary object on the stage.¹²²

Chekhov's theories concerning the imagination and the psychological gesture are important in terms of analysing *The Emperor's New Clothes* and for explaining the decisions I have made when developing *Swimming in Air*, especially when creating fantasy in Children's Theatre. For Chekhov, the imagination is the catalyst which activates the creative process, giving originality and ingenuity to the writer and eventually the actor's performance process. Furthermore, this allows the actor to break away from his ego as well as being able to inspire the writer to work in a truly creative manner.

Moreover, there are many examples of plays written by Chorpenning throughout the 1930s and 1940s that encouraged the use of the imagination such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* (1937), *Cinderella* (1940), *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Grandmother Slyboots* and *Rumpelstiltskin* (1943). However, in *The Emperor's New Clothes*, because the play's main plot device pivots on the characters Zan and Zar making the 'invisible visible' (to use a Marcel Marceau phrase)¹²³ as well as the General and Emperor pretending that the weavers' product is real when it is imaginary (to save face), will be difficult to generate without the actor's ability to effectively implement the imaginary object onto the stage.

vii) The role of the imagination as a performance technique

One possible way an actor can invoke a feeling of belief when making the invisible on the stage (and I am specifically speaking about the characters Zan and Zar here) is to concentrate on the simple physical actions of their character. Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) frequently emphasised that: 'small physical actions, small physical truths and the moments of belief in them...acquire a great significance on the stage...'¹²⁴ Furthermore, Charles McGraw points out that sustaining belief is 'difficult and an ever-present problem.'¹²⁵ He goes on to say that because the actors perform in front of an audience, and this is completed live and distractions can occur,

¹²² See the complete text: Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor* (London: Routledge, 2002). This can also be seen in Chekhov's series of exercises and appropriate lessons that are published in *To the Actor*. At Dartington Hall, he stressed that the development of a strong library of mental images which could create impulses from the script and inspire improvisation was essential in creating truth on the stage. In his view, by imagining and re-imagining an activity, sometimes twenty different ways, his method could stimulate and stretch the imagination.

¹²³ *Marcel Marceau Speaks*. Dir. Fifield William. Perf. Marcel Marceau. Caedmon Records, 1971.

¹²⁴ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, (London: Methuen, 1981): 28 cited in David Magarshack, *Introduction to Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961): 49 and Charles McGraw, *A Basic Method*, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Wilson, 1975): 4.

¹²⁵ McGraw 16.

that the actors must use all of their imagining/performance skills to create a ‘rightness of truth’ such as:

Any doubt as to the rightness or truth of what he or the other actors are doing is likely to upset him immediately. An actor who treats his crown like the cardboard that it really is can destroy the belief of a stageful of others, just as a cynical child can destroy the magic of the game by protesting he can’t fight with “an old stick”.¹²⁶

On the other hand, it is not always necessary for actors to believe in what they are doing on the stage to be effective in creating the invisible. However, I would point out that it is perhaps the actor’s responsibility to induce “belief” into their actions in order to assist in creating the spectator’s belief regarding the invisible being made visible. This is still debatable, nevertheless I would further suggest that one way for an actor to “dig deep” into the imagination as a performance technique in terms of imaginary objects in *The Emperor’s New Clothes* and *Swimming in Air* is to draw from memory and personal experience.

viii) Performing the imagination

The combination of using memories and personal experience when creating the imagination on the stage is also in line with what David Zinder’s acting philosophy suggests:

The use of the imaginary object as a training technique can provide actors with a highly important tool for developing a creative approach to character and to moment-to-moment existence in the performance space.¹²⁷

According to Zinder (and also Chekhov’s method) the performer in the theatre imagines with the body and mind, and therefore the actor will not be able to avoid gesturing or moving without responding to his/her internal images.¹²⁸ Additionally, the actor’s childhood memories of “play” can assist in producing the imaginary object onto the stage.¹²⁹ Chorpenning made, as early as 1954, a similar observation concerning the imaginary object:

¹²⁶ McGraw 16.

¹²⁷ David Zinder, “The Actor Imagines with his Body, Michael Chekhov, An Examination of the Phenomenon,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 17 (2007): 12.

¹²⁸ David Zinder, “The Actor Imagines with his Body, Michael Chekhov, An Examination of the Phenomenon,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 17 (2007): 12.

¹²⁹ Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1991): 95.

I remember watching a young story playing group at Hull House. A little Queen was cradling her imaginary baby in her arms as she discussed with the other young actors a point of disagreement. One of them challenged her, "Show us what you mean". Carefully she laid her invisible baby on a nearby chair, to act out for them her idea. Weary from standing, I presently sat down on this chair. A scream from the Queen! "You're sitting on my baby!" I rose, hushing the baby and placed it on her arms. She quieted.¹³⁰

This further confirms the link between Chorpenning's above observation and the realness of the imagination, or as Zinder suggests 'bodymind'.¹³¹ It is here, in this connection between body and mind that the actors in *The Emperor's New Clothes* and in *Swimming in Air* will find the energy to explore the imaginary object via the 'technique of mime and imagination'.¹³² Actors who perform the characters Zan and Zar, or The Child and Roger in *Swimming in Air* who do not accept that the imagination is based on this type of creativity in the rehearsal room and the performance space, I would argue, may struggle with producing the energy that is required to help the audience to believe in the invisibility of the clothes and other imaginary objects in *Swimming in Air* such as Roger being invisible and a kangaroo. However, when actors establish this connection early and throughout the rehearsal process, and then incorporate what has been discovered into the performance space, they may, 'mentally, physically and vocally adapt and infuse the performance with ease and beauty and further free imaginative thought.'¹³³

ix) Combining theories

Chorpenning's writings and directing theories within Children's Theatre and Zinder's and Chekhov's performance techniques all focus on two main elements. First, 'a gesture is a psychology,' and second, 'the actor imagines with his body'. According to Zinder and Chekhov, creating the imaginary object onto the stage is 'not a question of intellectual analysis but of movement and gesture.'¹³⁴ In relation to *Swimming in Air*, a focus on movement and gesture in order to develop the imaginary object on to the stage enables the actor to 'penetrate through the outer appearance of the vision to its inner, fiery life, the habit of waiting actively until the image is right,

130 Chorpenning, *Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre* 8.

131 Zinder, "The Actor Imagines with his Body, Michael Chekhov, An Examination of the Phenomenon," 8.

132 Zinder, "The Actor Imagines with his Body, Michael Chekhov, An Examination of the Phenomenon," 8.

133 Kindelan 11.

134 David Zinder, *Body, Voice, Imagination*, (New York: A Theatre Arts Book, Routledge, 2002): xii.

bringing the artist to the verge of discovering new and hitherto hidden things.’¹³⁵ Additionally, the only limitation placed upon the actor is that of the degree to which they allow their imagination to be engaged with the imaginary object, suggesting ‘endless ways that they can imagine the invisible cloth’s texture, colour, structure or smell’.¹³⁶ Therefore, actors performing in *The Emperor’s New Clothes* and in *Swimming in Air* will require a director who encourages experimentation within the rehearsal process, allowing the imaginary object to enter the minds of the actors so, that on the day of the performance they will naturally and calmly invoke a “realness” concerning the imaginary object. Therefore, as Richard Lewis explains, the child audience member will then be able to view the imaginary object from a mere ‘miming gesture’ to something that has meaning and therefore ‘presence on the stage.’¹³⁷

Furthermore, Chorpenning stipulated that it was essential for the actors in *The Emperor’s New Clothes* to realise that for children it is not ‘imitating’ but ‘being’ that is important.¹³⁸ And, it is through mime that an actor will instigate the creation of this type of illusion that is necessary to produce the imaginary object onto the stage in *Swimming in Air*. Therefore, the imaginative techniques of Chorpenning, Zinder and Chekhov encourage: ‘the actor’s respect for his or her own imagination and the freedom to create from it.’¹³⁹ Mime experts such as Reid Gilbert describes their art as ‘respect for space’, Marceau describes mime as ‘making the invisible visible’ and for Kipnis, ‘mime is the art of creating the world by moving and positioning the human body.’¹⁴⁰ For Shepard, it is as simple as ‘communication by gesture.’¹⁴¹

Conclusion

In *The Emperor’s New Clothes* (as in *Swimming in Air*), the “real” object being performed effectively as an imaginary one is crucial in terms of the script’s main and subplot lines. To be able, even with the smallest of imaginary objects, to open a world by improvising and miming that world, is to bring to children what they are all

135 Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting* cited in David Zinder, *Body, Voice, Imagination* xii–xiii.

136 Richard Lewis, “The Theatre of Our Play, Improvising into the Life of the Imagination,” *The Drama Theatre Teacher* 5 (1993): 20-22.

137 Richard Lewis, “The Theatre of Our Play, Improvising into the Life of the Imagination,” 20-22.

138 Chorpenning, *Twenty-One Years with Children’s Theatre* 21.

139 Chekhov, *To the Actor* xxi.

140 Kipnis 4-5.

141 Richmond Shepard, *Mime, The Technique of Silence*, (New York: Richards Rosen Press, 1971): 3.

so gifted at doing themselves, imagining and playing. However, to create the imaginary object/s on the stage effectively is an extremely difficult challenge, similar to holding sand in one's hand. The role of the imaginary object from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint in *The Emperor's New Clothes* and in *Swimming in Air* is similar to the following conversation between Zar and Zan:

- Zar**
(*Shutting his eyes and having a good time.*) I see them! Bright threads! They make a rainbow on the loom.
- Zan**
In the shuttle are more threads.
- Zar**
I can't see the shuttle. (*Opening his eyes.*) I don't know what it is.
- Zan**
It is this shape. In it, there is a long spool. On it, is wound a long, long thread.
- Zar**
(*Shutting his eyes.*) I see it! Gold thread! Shining! Fine as a spider weaves!
- Zan**
(*Illustrating.*) You pass the shuttle under the threads on the loom, then under, then over, then under – if you keep on long enough, its cloth.
- Zar**
(*His eyes screwed up in his ecstasy.*) I see it! With patterns in it! Like the shadow of many leaves! And stars, in a pool!
- Zan**
Come and practice. (p. 34)

Perfecting the illusion of the imaginary object on the stage takes hours of practice and according to McAuley: 'the actors may have determined the emotional content of such a scene, [however] it is their physical actions in the space (gesture, moves and looks) that will articulate it for the audience.'¹⁴² Finally, in the future performances of *The Emperor's New Clothes* and *Swimming in Air*, it will be the "moves" and "gestures" from the actors that have the potential to link the hints and triggers first discovered within the text, assisting the audience to imagine the invisible onto the stage.

The next section focuses on the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* (1989)¹⁴³ and its impact on the development of *Swimming in Air*. Since David

¹⁴² Gay McAuley, *Space in Performance: Making Meaning in the Theatre*, (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2002): 94.

¹⁴³ *The Small Poppies* was first produced in association with The State Theatre Company of South Australia (founded in 1972) when they instigated the Theatre-in-Education sub-company in 1977, Magpie Theatre Company. *The Small Poppies* was originally produced in 1986 via a creative collaboration between the writer David Holman and Geoffrey Rush, then director of Magpie Theatre in Adelaide. This show was re-mounted in 2000, and successfully toured throughout the Eastern States of Australia and internationally with Geoffrey Rush in the lead role. Please note that all further references to the playtext are by page number in the text: David Holman, *No Worries, The Small Poppies and Beauty and the Beast* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1989).

Holman's imaginary character, Digger the dog, entered the theatre, interest in the imaginary character has continued to expand from early childhood studies into literature and cinema studies, reflecting a 'positive change in attitude towards the imaginary character'.¹⁴⁴ Therefore, one of the main reasons that I decided to create a play that centred on the imaginary character was due to the imaginary character's significance in young people's lives. As Jerome Kagan points out, 'the imaginary companion is an everyday occurrence and they become important participants in each day's experience.'¹⁴⁵ Additionally, an authentic portrayal of the imaginary character can also reinforce the importance of such a phenomenon as a positive and complex journey of discovery and not something of which to be ashamed.

144 M. Taylor, R.J., Chatters and J. Levin, "A Developmental Investigation of Children's Imaginary Companions," *Developmental Psychology* 29 (1993): 276-285.

145 Jerome Kagan, p. 285.

Chapter four

Envisaging the imaginary companion

Introduction

Swimming in Air pivots on the imaginary character as a complex and positive occurrence in young people's lives. The imaginary character in *Swimming in Air* is a young and intelligent boy named Roger who is both good and evil. Roger's dual personality is important to the unfolding of *Swimming in Air*'s main plot narrative, which is associated with the value and authenticity of the imagination in young people's lives. Roger's invisibility was heavily influenced by Holman's use of the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* as an emotional catalyst for the play's protagonist, Clint. I was also swayed by the literature that discusses the imaginary character in early childhood psychology studies. However, unlike Digger, Roger in *Swimming in Air* is able to manipulate and at times prevent The Child from achieving his/her goals. The decision to create such a multifaceted and intricate relationship between Roger and The Child was due to the various and diverse theories pertaining to the disapproval and/or positive attitudes towards children and their imaginary characters in early childhood psychology studies. This especially concerns the resistance by adults towards the imaginary character in young people's lives prior to the discovery of its worth.¹⁴⁶ Therefore, the premise of the discussion in this chapter is that the creative work of *The Small Poppies* provides an opportunity to reexamine the imaginary character from a scriptwriter's perspective as well as exploring some of the challenges which the performer "might" undertake when making the imaginary companion visible without actual presence onto the stage.

This chapter is presented as a case study from a reflective practitioner's viewpoint on the role of the imaginary character from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint, focusing on one example of a Theatre-in-Education playtext: *The Small Poppies*. The framing of the chapter involves briefly defining and socially contextualising the imaginary companion within early childhood psychology studies and discussing the Theatre-in-Education movement in Australia prior to and during

146 M. Taylor, R.J., Chatters and J. Levin, "A Developmental Investigation of Children's Imaginary Companions," *Developmental Psychology* 29 (1993): 276-285.

the creation of *The Small Poppies*.¹⁴⁷ Finally, I provide a scriptwriting and performance analysis regarding the role of the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* (from my perspective), illustrating how the specific imaginative devices assisted me to write *Swimming in Air*.

i) Theatre-in-Education (TIE)

Within adult theatre and at times Theatre for Young Audiences, Theatre-in-Education is often viewed with a degree of suspicion for being outdated, amateur, primarily education-based or focusing too heavily on social issues. This has at times presented an obstacle, even a diversion, to serious academic enquiry. As suggested in chapter one, Children's Theatre, Theatre-in-Education or Theatre for Youth/Theatre for Young Audiences are confusing terms, suggesting a fragmented process of definition outside and separate to the adult theatre context in which these specialised theatre art forms operate. In the early 1970s, a Theatre-in-Education model was implemented in Australia's primary and secondary schools via certain practitioners such as the director Richard Davey at the Playhouse in Perth, Western Australia, John Saunders' Acting Out company (Perth) as well as David Holman in Adelaide, South Australia, Barbara Manning, Roger Chapman, Andrew Ross and Graham Scott of the Bouverie Street Theatre-in-Education/Drama-in-Education team in Melbourne. These practitioners were influenced by the Theatre-in-Education movement throughout the 1960s to the 1970s that occurred in England.

Unlike the United States of America and England, when Theatre-in-Education productions in Australia were being created, rather than placing an emphasis on education-based themes and issues, the above named practitioners focused on a theatre for children for aesthetic value. Manning, Chapman and Ross employed writers and performers who could specifically write and perform for a young audience rather than using teacher-actors (which was the usual case throughout the 1960-1970s in England). As a result, a unique type of Theatre-in-Education model began to occur in Australia throughout the 1980s.

The Theatre-in-Education model in Australia would later evolve and become known as Theatre for Young Audiences/People with companies such as Arena Theatre Company in Victoria, Windmill Theatre Company in South Australia and

147 In Australia, the term "tall poppy syndrome" is used to express angst against those that are privileged from those that are not. The title of David Holman's play *The Small Poppies* is a possible reference to children's experiences being viewed as secondary to adults and therefore a marginalised Other within Australian culture and society.

Barking Gecko Theatre Company in Western Australia.¹⁴⁸ Recently, there have been strong signs pointing towards Theatre for Young Audiences returning to a softer approach regarding the 1980s socially aware Theatre-in-Education format such as returning to educational outcomes while meeting the demands for aesthetic value. For example, Western Australia's Barking Gecko Theatre and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre Companies are focusing on productions for children that are based on book adaptations, assisting young people with literacy improvement whilst meeting funding demands and acquiring box office success stories.¹⁴⁹

ii) Holman and *The Small Poppies*

In 1986, after working and writing for children and young people for many years in England, Holman migrated to Australia, where he eventually met and worked with Geoffrey Rush, honing and critiquing his Theatre-in-Education writing style. Geoffrey Rush and Chris Johnston were joint Artistic Directors of Magpie Theatre Company (which is now no longer operating) at the time.¹⁵⁰ And, it was during this particular creative exchange that Holman first wrote for Australia's young audience. Consequently, Rush, Holman and Johnston were involved in a successful collaborative process, with productions such as *No Worries* (1989) which received the Writer's Guild AWGIE award for best feature film script and was later made into a film. Holman's initial writing stint with Rush and the Magpie Theatre Company avoided "playing" or writing "down" to young audiences, departing from England's Theatre-in-Education model (and this was certainly unique at the time).¹⁵¹ *The Small Poppies* is one example of Holman's writing technique, reflecting a Theatre-in-Education style that was based on "real" life situations rather than on fairy tale

148 Theatre-in-Education is still occurring in many contemporary settings. Usually (in Australia), Theatre-in-Education is viewed as a separate genre or subgenre to Theatre for Young Audiences. This is mainly due to Theatre-in-Education having had and still having a theatrical focus for young people that is educationally based rather than focusing on aesthetic value.

149 The importance of Theatre-in-Education and its movements in Australia and internationally within the curriculum have been discussed by various international authors such as Winifred Ward (1939:USA), Peter Slade (1954:USA), John O'Toole (1979: Australia), Gavin Bolton (1995:UK), Dorothy Heathcote (1995:UK) as well as ASSITEJ placing an importance on the educational value of theatre for, by and with young people, and the recent new arts curriculum incentive in schools throughout Australia. ASSITEJ is where Theatre for Young Audience leaders come together every three years for a World Congress organised by the Association Internationale du Theatre Pour L'Enfance et la Jeunesse (ASSITEJ). "The membership of ASSITEJ currently consists of [more than] forty countries and provides the real and symbolic evidence that Children's Theatre is a worldwide movement, populated by dedicated artists and educators who are forging an art form against tremendous odds", (L. Swartzell, *International Guide to Children's Theatre and Educational Theatre; A Historical and Geographical Source Book* (London: Greenwood Press, 1990): xv.

150 The State Theatre Company of South Australia founded in 1972 is South Australia's leading professional theatre company. The company closed its doors in 1997 partially due to funding loss after reconstruction of Arts South Australia.

151 Stuart Bennett, *Theatre for Children and Young People* (London: Aurora Metro, 2005): 123.

adaptations or conservative, educational messages in the disguise of theatrical entertainment. A Holman play was unlike so many international Theatre-in-Education plays in the early 1990s, because *The Small Poppies* and other plays such as *No Worries* pivoted on a theatrical experience that was concerned with everyday life rather than pedagogical objectives. Stuart Bennett quotes Holman as saying:

What I learnt from working in TIE was the capability of involving a young audience in socially-aware theatre, and not playing down to them. Young audiences need socially-aware theatre in the current age of globalization. Through the years I have, along with many others, carried the torch for a theatre for the young which is both socially-aware and internationalist, but also exciting and emotionally involving.¹⁵²

Rush, Neil Armfield (director) and Holman remounted *The Small Poppies* in 2000,¹⁵³ and I was fortunate enough to be able to view this show. Later, I discuss some of my observations when referring to the imaginary character as a performance technique.

iii) Synopsis

The Small Poppies tells the story of a six-year-old boy starting school for the first time. Clint's mum is divorced and raising her son on her own. There are various other children starting school for the first time and handling the "big day" in alternative ways. Clint is the only one with an imaginary friend; a dog called Digger and Clint is threatened and punched by the class bully, Shane Miller. During Clint's initiation into "big school" the play conveys a parallel story (or subplot line) of two sisters in Vietnam who are about to migrate to Australia as refugees. Their parents are deceased and they are orphans and scared. The younger sister, Lep, is also starting at Clint's school and is ostracised for being Other. To make matters worse Clint's mother begins dating and enjoys her freedom away from Clint, and Clint's best friend, Maria, is moving away with her family. Subsequently, Clint confides in and finds comfort with his imaginary dog, Digger. The Principal at Clint's school, Mr. Brennan is concerned for his students (Clint and Lep) and instigates a plan to help Clint make new friends. Eventually, Clint realises that other children can also feel alone and scared. Therefore, Clint and Lep form a friendship despite a language

¹⁵² Stuart Bennett, *Theatre for Children and Young People* (London: Aurora Metro, 2005): 123.

¹⁵³ The 2000 production of *The Small Poppies* by David Holman was directed by Neil Armfield and performed by Company B Belvoir including Geoffrey Rush, Richard Sydenham, Felicity Price, Genevieve Mooy, Andrew S. Gilbert, Arkie Michael and Ursula Yovich and was performed as part of the Sydney, Melbourne and the Dublin Theatre Festivals.

and cultural barrier, and together they deter the school bully with Digger by their side.

iv) A journey into the imaginary character

Imaginary friends manifest themselves in the lives of many, reflecting their peculiarity in various mediums such as those depicted in *Harvey* (1950), *The Shining* (1980), *Fight Club* (1999), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001), *Forster's Home of Imaginary Friends* (2004-2010) or Snuffleupagus on *Sesame Street*¹⁵⁴ as well as David Burton's children's play *Ivy Shambit and the Sound Machine* (2010), or the Broadway play *Stinky Flowers and the Bad Banana* (2010).¹⁵⁵ In the early to mid part of the twentieth century, children who possessed an imaginary companion were not viewed positively regarding their psychological development. Often they were diagnosed as psychotic or having the potential to become so, and subsequently a child's imaginary companion was often suppressed or viewed as inappropriate. By the mid to late-1970s various studies of pre-school children in Texas, which were conducted by Martin Manosevitz and Norman Prentice, indicated that imaginary characters in children's lives were on the increase with almost a third of children exhibiting such phenomena. Two decades later, Jerome Kagan, another world leader in child psychology and especially regarding the temperament theory, noted that the imaginary character was a sign of mental health and a means of creative exploration. Kagan defines and socially contextualises the imaginary character as:

Invisible (as opposed to a toy or another object that the child invests with life)...imaginary friends are generally a sign of mental health. They are one of the most important ways that a child can exercise the imagination, which develops at around the age of three. Imaginary friends serve as an important emotional outlet that children can use to safely act out aggressive, controlling, rebellious, or other potentially threatening impulses. They also serve as a means of exploration, helping a child establish her identity by "trying out" different ways to be, including different genders. Finally, imaginary friends give children a zone of privacy at a time when there are few areas of their lives free from intrusion by others.¹⁵⁶

154 On *Sesame Street*, Snuffleupagus was originally portrayed as Big Bird's imaginary friend. However, the Children's Television Workshop ended this in light of high-profile stories on paedophilia and sexual abuse of children that had aired on shows such as *60 Minutes* in the mid-1980s. There was fear that the imaginary character on *Sesame Street* would deter children into believing that they could not tell certain stories without being branded a liar. The show then went through a period of rewriting in order to reveal the show's imaginary character was actually real.

155 One interesting and recent finding associated with the imaginary companion in children is the discovery of gender difference. As leading early childhood researcher Marjorie Taylor has found, "little boys appear to be more wrapped up in projecting themselves into roles of power, while girls from early on are developing characters outside themselves who demand attention and empathy", cited in M. Taylor, "Imaginary Friends." *Essays*. November 2010. *Essays*. 22 March 2011 <http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Imaginary_Friends/>.

156 Jerome Kagan, *The Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence*, ed. Susan B. Gall (New York: Gale, 1998): 285.

J. Kagan as well as J. Singer and D. Singer further summarised in the 1990s the benefits for children who possessed an imaginary friend, suggesting that adults had the power to deter or encourage the imaginative process:

Imaginary friends are commonplace, and they become important participants in each day's experience. Real and imagined people and events are accepted with the same unquestioning belief, and it is only the intrusion of adult reactions that ultimately pushes imagined experience to the periphery of sensory awareness and introduces the ideas that what is real is truer than what is imagined.¹⁵⁷

From the late 1990s onwards, the imaginary companion received renewed interest within early childhood psychology studies such as Marjorie Taylor's founding of the Imagination Laboratory at the University of Oregon which focuses on the development of imagination in children and its relation to social understanding, creativity, inhibitory control, and narrative skills. Apart from these clinical theories and studies on the imaginary character, on the stage *The Small Poppies* and other playtexts within the Theatre-in-Education genre were utilising the imaginary companion such as a catalyst for emotional expression and to challenge the actor to perform the invisible. Plays such as *Step on a Crack* (1976) by Susan Zeder and *Invisible Friends* by Alan Ayckbourn (1989)¹⁵⁸, to name but two, were also paving the way towards what would later become a research focus in early childhood studies. It can therefore be argued that Theatre-in-Education plays such as *The Small Poppies*, which reached an international audience as well as receiving various accolades, has assisted in bringing about renewed interest associated with the importance of the imaginary character in young people's lives. This specific point was my main focus when developing *Swimming in Air*.

v) Writing the invisible

Holman's use of dialogue that directly introduces the imaginary companion to the audience and numerous stage directions in *The Small Poppies* pre-date certain childhood psychology studies (J. Singer and D. Singer, 1990s), such as informing the audience that Digger (the imaginary character) is imaginary and not a "real" dog that is performed as invisible (p. 68). The research of Jerome Kagan and Marjorie Taylor

¹⁵⁷ Jerome Kagan, p. 285.

¹⁵⁸ Susan Zeder, "Step on a Crack," *Wish in One Hand Spit in the Other*, ed. Susan Pearson-Davis (New York: Anchorage Press, 1990): 137-197 and Paul Allen, "Invisible Friends," *A Pocket Guide to Alan Ayckbourn's Plays* (New York: Faber & Faber, 2004): 243-283.

coincides with Holman's earlier creative writing feat that children with imaginary friends would normally know the name and therefore identity of that friend.¹⁵⁹

Holman's playtext reconfirms the importance of children knowing their imaginary character's name and identity, for Digger, the dog, is an imaginary or "make-believe" or an "invisible dog" and not a "real" dog that is being mimed (p. 68). For example, this is first stipulated when Clint and Maria act out Clint's first day at big school:

MARIA: [*mimicking MRS WALSH*] You're a very naughty boy, Clint. You're a wombat. [*Indicating his bag*] And we do not bring our bags into class except for show and tell. We hang them in the corridor.

CLINT: Yes, Mrs. Walsh.

MARIA: And did I say bring a pretend dog into my classroom?

CLINT: No, Mrs. Walsh. Out, Digger! Right out. Wait for me in the sand pit. [*They watch the make-believe Digger go.*] (p. 68)

Marjorie Taylor states that, 'by age seven about 37% of children have had an invisible friend at some point'.¹⁶⁰ Children often give up their imaginary playmates around the ages of six or seven years, but this does not mean that children (or adults) who were older when viewing *The Small Poppies* or *Swimming in Air* would not have necessarily remembered having one. Furthermore, besides showcasing the difficulties associated with the many facets of multiculturalism and diversity, one possible perception behind Holman's writing choice (and mine in *Swimming in Air*) was to implement the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* to deliberately use the invisible character as a textual and physical framing device. This particular writing technique emphasises Clint's emotional crises and psychological journey.¹⁶¹ Additionally, the role of the imaginary character as a scriptwriting technique is more evident at the beginning of the play (pp. 59-86) such as when Clint finds out that his best friend Maria isn't going to be at his school any more. Maria won't be able to protect Clint from Shane Miller, the school bully and so Clint is comforted by the presence of his imaginary dog, Digger:

159 Kagan 285 and Marjorie Taylor, *Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 166.

160 Dr. Marjorie Taylor e-mail message to author, October 14, 2009: "Two-thirds of school-age children have an imaginary companion by aged 7." See also, M. Taylor et al., "A Developmental Investigation of Children's Imaginary Companions," *Developmental Psychology* 29 (1993): 276-285.

161 I would disagree with Robert Clarke's comments in "Review of *The Small Poppies*." *M/C Reviews* 7 June 2001: 1-2. Reviews. 11 April 2010 <<http://www.api-network.com/mc/reviews/events/smallpoppies.html>> where he suggests that the principal failing of the play was that it "skillfully and successfully exploited nostalgia for the "innocent" days of childhood and then mixed this up with a cartoonish portrayal of Australian multiculturalism and "benevolence" towards refugees and outsiders." With reference to the imaginary character, even though he makes an important point, this play is not completely focused on multiculturalism or refugee issues alone.

CLINT: Awww. No! But he's got to bring you back to big school here.
 [MARIA *shakes her head.*]
 What?
 [*He realises.*]
 Aw, nooo. No. You... What about me? Who am I going to school with? Shane Miller will bash me! Mum! I'll tell my mum to tell your dad.
MARIA: She won't tell him.
 [*She lets go a full-blooded scream, kicks CLINT's bag over, starts crying and exits.*
 CLINT *cries. He puts his arms around the imaginary dog.*] (p. 80)

The writer's stage directions, that frame the imaginary character throughout the play, are utilised to continually illustrate (to the director, the actor portraying Clint and the eventual spectators) the vulnerability of Clint's emotional condition and journey (pp. 87-107). The stage/character directions or "triggers" as well as the non-verbal actions for the character Maria, simultaneously aid in visually contextualising a potential, emotional charged scene. Therefore, the combination of the above textual techniques and the construction of the invisible imaginary companion gently unfold the relationship between Clint and Digger in an interesting and complex way, which is a technique I have purposely implemented in *Swimming in Air*.

Another example where the writer uses the imaginary companion as a potential emotional catalyst and as a textual and spatial framing device is in the below excerpt:

CLINT: Digger! Shane Miller! Awww nooo. Maria! Nooo.
 [THEO *slowly enters, bouncing. He still has the pullover wrapped round his head. He watches CLINT crying. THEO smiles. CLINT stops crying. CLINT tries to be reconciliatory. He reaches into his bag.*]
 I've got...
 [THEO *watches till CLINT brings out the lollies, then turns and leaves as Ayrton Senna.*]
THEO: Brmmm-mmm-mmm.
 [THEO *exits.*]
CLINT'S MUM: [*off*] Clint, what's all that noise?
CLINT: Mum, I don't want to go to big school.
CLINT'S MUM: [*off*] Silly. Of course you do.
CLINT: Not on my own. I don't. I don't. I don't. I don't. Digger!
 [*He clasps the imaginary dog in great desperation as the lights go down. The Airport P.A. starts almost immediately.*] (p. 80)

Here, the writer's active stage directions are similar to Chorpenning's "hints" or "triggers" used in *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1934). These textual "triggers" are instigated for the director and/or the performers to use in the rehearsal and/or production space. Rex Cramphorn further elaborates on the difficulty associated with

the playwright's formation of the textual space which in turn affects the space between the eventual performance and the spectator's space of understanding:

An audience perceives a text at every moment in direct relationship to the space it inhabits and an important part of that perception is the nature of the connection between the text's space and the audience's own space.¹⁶²

The specific textual triggers implemented by the writer are important because they will assist the creative team in the rehearsal process to produce the writer's vision or meaning (or as suggested in chapter two the "literary object"), and in the case of *The Small Poppies* and *Swimming in Air* will stimulate the connection between the invisible character and the audiences' capacity to imagine its visibility as being invisible. For, 'it is through the agency of the actor that objects are brought to the attention of the audience, and it is the actor who creates the mobility that is characteristic of the theatrical function of the object'.¹⁶³

In *Swimming in Air*, I intentionally used a similar scriptwriting technique associated with "textual hints". For example, I created dialogue to express Roger's invisibility via the characters, Others, such as their repetitive speech patterns which occurs at the beginning of the play. As a consequence, Roger's invisibility is mentioned early so that less confusion eventuates throughout the play in relation to Roger's identity and function.

vi) Performing the invisible

The theatre director Rex Cramphorn intimates that when he produces a play he is aware of the tension between two major polarities. First, 'what the writer means and the ways he has chosen to express his meaning', and second 'what I make of that meaning and the means at my disposal for expressing what I make of it'.¹⁶⁴ In many ways Cramphorn is pointing out the difficulties associated with transforming "text to performance", and thus the intrinsic artistic process such as:

It may well be that I can convince myself that I do not intend to make any other meaning than the writer's, but I will have to remind myself that I am relying on my

¹⁶² Rex Cramphorn, "L' Illusion Commique to Theatrical Illusion: Textual Changes for Performance," ed. Gay McAuley. *From Page to Space: L' Illusion Commique* (Sydney: Theatre Studies Service Unit University of Sydney, 2006): 60-61.

¹⁶³ Gay McAuley, *From Page to Stage: L' Illusion Commique*, ed. Gay McAuley (Sydney: Theatre Studies Service Unit University of Sydney, 2006): 90.

¹⁶⁴ Cramphorn 59.

own *perception* of what the writer meant... The tension is essentially that which must exist between the ideal and the actual or the idea and its realization.¹⁶⁵

To further understand the concerns that Cramphorn raises here, especially the creation of the imaginary and/or creative space from text to performance, one needs to rethink not only the writer's intentions within the text and the director's perception of that intention but also the role of "space". Antonin Artaud once wrote, 'I maintain that the stage is a tangible, physical place that needs to be filled and it ought to be allowed to speak its own concrete language.'¹⁶⁶ The specific textual hints or triggers in *The Small Poppies* and *Swimming in Air* are also similar to how Cramphorn and Artaud (and even Jacques Copeau) envisage a bare stage. It is a text written inside the performer's flesh because, 'on a bare stage the actor is obliged to create everything, to draw everything from his own being'.¹⁶⁷ The actor who portrays Clint in *The Small Poppies* is performing a special kind of "concrete language" and therefore requires the textual triggers and hints within the text to communicate with the body.¹⁶⁸

According to David Zinder, the actor's imagination and its process are an important aspect regarding the actor's craft (especially when developing such characters as an imaginary one). As Zinder states, 'the more developed and stronger the image [text], the more it stimulates the actor to physically incorporate [space], with his body and voice [performance]'.¹⁶⁹ Strong textual images help the actor to mime or mimic the imaginary character, such as when Clint calls for his friend Maria to show her his picture that he has drawn at big school (p. 66). Or, when the writer embeds strong images and juxtaposes these with dialogue, stage directions and aesthetic stimuli, this will eventually benefit the actor's and spectator's imagining process, subsequently aiding the audience to visualise the invisible:

CLINT: Maria! Maria!

165 Cramphorn 59.

166 Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans. M. C. Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1964): 27.

167 See complete text: Jacques Copeau, "Registres I," *Appels* (Paris: Gallimard, 1974).

168 The 2000 production I viewed, starring Geoffrey Rush, was a very energetic show, brightly presented by Stephen Curtis with the lighting designed by Stephen Hawker. The theatre was decorated with children's drawings within a classroom environment and the stage was large and wide. When Rush, who played Clint, arrived on the stage, I could see how he used his body effectively and implemented the dialogue to spatially arrange the imaginary dog onto the stage, assisting me to visualise the invisible as visible. For, the triggers that are embedded in the text further aid in the creation of strong images on the stage, eventually affecting the performer who in turn assists the audience to perceive the invisible becoming visible.

169 David Zinder, *Body, Voice, Imagination* (New York: A Theatre Arts Book Routledge, 2002): xiii.

[The music ends. A picture of CLINT's garden comes on, this time without holes for the characters [to place their heads in]. There are lots of poppies, a tree, a flower and a kangaroo. CLINT is followed by his make-believe dog.]
 Maria? Where is she Digger? Sit! Maria, I want to show you this. Maria?
[And he goes wandering off to find her.]
 Come on, Digger. Good boy,
[CLINT exits.] (p. 66)

In the 2000 production, the above section was performed to incorporate the non-verbal action (body), dialogue (voice), aesthetic stimuli, sound and lighting and the 'spatial arrangement of the people and objects' simultaneously.¹⁷⁰ This process, as Harvey O'Brien suggests, plunged the audience into the world of fantasy which not only assisted in the believability of adults performing child characters but also in the believability of the imaginary Digger:

They will probably find the exaggerated mannerisms of the adults entirely recognizable and equally funny. Adults should also find the characters of the children reasonably accurate, based as they are upon long observation of real children by the author.¹⁷¹

Without a performer's voice and physicality, the imaginary character would become a confusing entity (around and within the performance space), such as: where is the dog spatially? How big is the dog? Or, what does the dog look like? In the 2000 production, Rush consistently acted out "wandering off" with Digger and was able to use nonverbal actions (his body) to "perform" Digger being fast at his heels throughout the performance (pp. 68-89). At one point, Clint throws an imaginary ball on to the stage and mimes playing a game of cricket with Digger as the umpire (p. 79). Digger is incorporated throughout this section via action and verbal reconfirmation of his imaginary presence via the actors who are portraying Clint and Maria. Therefore, Digger's unique (invisible) involvement via the performer's belief of the imaginary companion in the cricket game such as Clint 'kick[ing] over his bag to indicate a broken wicket' (p. 79) produced laughter in the 2000 production as well as presenting a rich view of a deepening friendship that was developing between Clint and his imaginary companion.

These types of exchanges between Clint and Digger occur frequently in the play and further aid in the setting up of numerous and important emotional plot driven dilemmas that occur between Maria and Clint (p. 95). One such dilemma is

¹⁷⁰ Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, *Drama for Learning* (Portsmouth, PH: Heinemann, 1984): 173.

¹⁷¹ Harvey O'Brien, "Dublin Theatre Festival Review: The Small Poppies," *M/C Reviews* 2009: 1-2. Reviews. 11 October 2010.

when Maria informs Clint that she will attend a different school, because her family will move away for work reasons. She is not able to help Clint when he starts “big” school or assist him against the bully, Shane Miller. Consequently, Digger and Clint’s relationship intensifies. This is shown via the actor’s specific use of spatial arrangements regarding the invisible dog, such as miming the movements of Digger with the use of hands and body, or the actor’s gaze which was erratic and moved about the stage without any obvious fixed position in the 2000 Melbourne production. This did not only illustrate Clint’s increasing close bond with Digger but also his anxiety in lines such as, ‘Where is she Digger? Mum! Come on, Digger, you sit. Now roll over. Good boy’ (pp. 98-99). Clint and Digger’s relationship in many ways was secondary to the bond between Clint and the other children, but nevertheless Digger was extremely important to the theme that was associated with *The Small Poppies* - diversity and the experience of the Other (or an extension of the self) via the imaginary companion.

Eventually, it is the play’s authoritarian adult figure (Mr. Brennan the Principal), who assists Clint to understand that “big” school is scary for most children. This is achieved via the Principal’s non-verbal actions on pages 98-99 as well as the actor playing Mr. Brennan’s physical realisation and acknowledgement of Digger’s spatial reality:

CLINT: You’re sitting on Digger!

[MR. BRENNAN *looks under himself.*]

MR BRENNAN: Who?

CLINT: My dog.

MR BRENNAN: [*moving*] Sorry, Digger. Lovely coat. What sort?

CLINT: ‘S like a lamb color.

MR BRENNAN: Ah. [*Stroking DIGGER*] ‘Little lamb, who made thee?

Dost thou know who made thee? (pp. 98-99)

Mr. Brennan is able to convince Clint to stop running away from school and crossing the main road. This is due to his involvement in Clint’s life and therefore “seeing” and “knowing” his imaginary dog. The solution revolves around the Principal encouraging Clint to also form a “real” friendship with Lep, who is a female Vietnamese refugee and is also feeling alone. Lep never discourages the friendship Clint has with his imaginary dog. Their individual situations transform from being alone to enjoying “imagined” and “real” friendships whilst combating the school bully Shane Miller with Digger by their side (pp. 99-107).

Conclusion

The Small Poppies is an important play for young people in Australia, because as David Wood points out, plays such as these, ‘introduce[ed] children to a theatre-going habit, enjoyed into adulthood’.¹⁷² Additionally, the focus of the imaginary character in *The Small Poppies* and *Swimming in Air* may continue to influence the reinstatement of the imaginary companion within a social and literary context, encouraging teachers and parents to view the imagination as an important journey of discovery rather than as something of which to be ashamed. The imaginary companion in Holman’s *The Small Poppies* and *Swimming in Air* are similar to an extended space of the self or the creative imaginings of the invisible being made visible onto the stage. Clint’s and The Child’s imaginary character hold stories and insights into the lost self or the emotional complications associated with starting something new, or being set apart. Essentially, the audience is asked to remember and empathise with the experience of Clint’s first day of primary school with his imaginary friend,¹⁷³ and the reader with The Child’s experience of having to “feel” that his/her imaginary companion is something of which to be ashamed.

The various ways a writer and performer implement the role of the imagination can be consciously and culturally motivated and to some extent this process of how and when it is implemented is constrained by society’s views on the usefulness or importance of the imaginary companion.¹⁷⁴ Holman created a play that utilised the imaginary character within the text’s main plot line (alongside Australia’s multicultural and refugee issues) as an emotional and psychological catalyst, showcasing the protagonist’s personal journey at a time when specific studies in early childhood psychology were renewing their interest in the imaginary character in young children, and optimistically.

Moreover, in *The Small Poppies*, the protagonist Clint’s emotional journey as well as the importance of the imaginary character in other plays such as *Step on a Crack* (1976) by Susan Zeder, *Invisible Friends* by Alan Ayckbourn (1989) and *Swimming in Air* (coupled with ongoing research concerning the imaginary character and children) reflects a positive change in attitude towards the imaginary character.

¹⁷² Stuart Bennett, *Theatre for Children and Young People* (London: Aurora Metro, 2005): 113.

¹⁷³ Jerome Kagan, *The Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence*, ed., Susan B. Gall (New York: Gale, 1998): 285. Additionally, as Aristotle philosophised in *Poetics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997): 27 that tragedy in the theatre was a cathartic experience, a purging of the emotions Kagan argues that the imaginary character can also help a child establish his/her identity by “trying out” alternative ways to “Be” without necessarily having the same experience.

¹⁷⁴ Jerome Kagan, *The Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence*, ed., Susan B. Gall (New York: Gale, 1998): 285.

Moreover, Rush's 2000 Melbourne performance regarding the imaginary Digger in *The Small Poppies* is one example of a performer creating the imaginary character via the use of a writer's textual hints and triggers. Therefore, it is plausible that the writer's textual framing device was influential for Rush and when he performed Digger (and in particular his performance in Robert Mac's documentary) helping to incorporate a 'sense of transformation', to affect and be effective, thus allowing 'the drama [of the imaginary companion] to escape limitations of place'.¹⁷⁵ However, in *Swimming in Air* it will ultimately be the director's use of multi-media, puppetry or a "live" performer that will assist in effectively implementing the role of the imaginary companion in the form of "Roger".

¹⁷⁵ *The Small Poppies: A Documentary by Robert Mac*. Dir. Mac Robert. Perf. Geoffrey Rush. ABC Ronin, 2002.

Chapter five

Summary and future areas of study

Summary

The role of the imagination from a scriptwriting and performance viewpoint (as discussed in this thesis component) has been explored in terms of a “possible” artistic practice that can take place between the writing and the eventual performance of the play and with special reference to the creation of *Swimming in Air*. Each play, discussed in the thesis component departed from traditional children’s entertainment of the day. The playwrights who wrote and the performers who acted in these productions implemented the role of the imagination to create aesthetically motivated, interesting and/or socially aware theatre experiences, exploring and thus celebrating the role of the invisible on the stage. When viewing the imagination on the stage, the spectator intuitively comes to understand that something magical is happening, but the question remains: how does this process actually happen and can it be measured? Measuring the imaginary process a writer undertakes when creating fantasy worlds, imaginary objects and invisible characters is no easy task, and formulating similar imaginative devices into the development associated with the play *Swimming in Air* has been difficult but highly rewarding.

The importance of the imagination concerning the writing of theatre and the live performance experience as both a creative means and a place to entertain is evident in Children’s Theatre as well as in the theatre designed for adults. However, the possibility to theorise about the imagination and its connection amongst scriptwriters, performers and spectators within the field of Theatre for Young Audiences, and how particular imaginative techniques have influenced the creation of *Swimming in Air* provides an alternative discussion point.

The main scriptwriting and performance techniques that I have purposely incorporated into *Swimming in Air*, which were influenced by the various theories and script analyses that have been presented in chapters two, three and four are:

- 1) juxtaposing the uncanny alongside the normal
- 2) creating a non-gendered specific character as a literary object
- 3) developing imaginative invisible objects that challenge the performer and audience member to visualise the “impossible”

- 4) creating a play that centred on the imaginary character as an extension of the self.

It is important to note that the thesis component has addressed only a few of the numerous facets that the role of the imagination in the form of a fantasy world, imaginary object/s and the imaginary companion has had on the writing and future performance of *Swimming in Air*. Nevertheless, this type of analysis is especially important because of the connection, similarities and differences between the writing of the play and the future performances of that same play.

i) Contemporary Children's Theatre: post 2000s

Prior to the 1980s, Children's Theatre in Australia was much more educational or socially aware, and had a long "way to go" concerning international comparability such as with Sweden's rich aesthetically based Theatre for Youth productions. One of the biggest problems within the contemporary art form of Theatre for Young Audiences is that it is adults who write the plays, act and direct the performances and choose the plays to be watched by young audiences. This situation has not changed since children entered the stage during the festival of Dionysus, where the world of the young will always be constructed through the eyes of the adult. Nevertheless, since the late 1980s, there have been vast changes occurring within Australia's Children Theatre movement. Moreover, the Nugent Inquiry into the area of art funding in August, 1999 which looked at Australia's 31 major performing arts companies, and according to "Securing the Future", the Major Performing Arts Inquiry discussion paper suggested, 'strengthening youth product appeal and marketing, supporting emerging artist development programs and strengthening education programs.'¹⁷⁶ However, the inquiry also made other points, which at the time were disturbing but now are being implemented and supported. They suggested that a 'centralisation of artistic production needs to occur', such as merging theatre companies within the same geography, decreasing artistic production outside Sydney and Melbourne and amalgamating touring companies so that one major company tours multiple states on an ongoing basis.¹⁷⁷ Therefore (and in order for theatre to survive into the future) what seems to be most evident in the present developments of

¹⁷⁶ Tony Mack, "Securing the Future for Young Performing Artists," *Lowdown* 21 (1999): 8.

¹⁷⁷ M. A. Hunter, "Anxious Futures," diss. University of Queensland, 1999: 292.

Children's Theatre in the beginning of the twenty-first century is the emphases and development towards a new form of identity. As Tony Mack points out:

Australia is making up its cultural identity as it goes along. With constant waves of migration and cultural influences, we use culture and entertainment to update ourselves on who we are and how we're changing.¹⁷⁸

Since the creation of *Peter Pan* (1904), *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1934) and *The Small Poppies* (1989) attention towards funding Theatre for Young Audiences that reflect multicultural themes and cultural issues as well as an emphasis on indigenous arts, racism and tolerance have been instigated in Australia. As M. A Hunter writes, quoting Veronica Kelly:

Within contemporary [1990] Australian theatre's current "plural modes of address", there is no longer an easily identifiable mainstream with which to compare, let alone strike an offspring relationship. As, "women, gay and lesbian, community/Aboriginal and multicultural theater over the last decade... [move] from the theatrical margin to credibly inhabit, if not dominate, a centre undergoing various challenges to its centrality", so too youth-specific performance is contributing to a contest of cultural value amongst institutional and community-based sites of theatre.¹⁷⁹

Due to the pressure of Theatre of Young Audiences accessing funding resources successfully as well as the criticism surrounding low-quality Children's Theatre, Australia's Theatre for Young Audiences has been forced to "step-up" and become artistically and financially accountable. As a result, Children's Theatre has now become more innovative, political, social, multimedia based, experimental and achieving high standards (not always but mostly) domestically and internationally through theatre companies such as Arena (Melbourne), Barking Gecko (Western Australia), Patch (Adelaide), Zeal Theatre Company (Victoria) on the one hand, and family entertainment and community based companies such as Jigsaw (Canberra), Salamanca (Tasmania) and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre (Western Australia) on the other hand.

178 Tony Mack, "Building a Creative Partnership with your Audience," eds. Wolfgang Schneider and Tony Mack. *The ASSITEJ Book 2006/2007* (Croatia: Theatre Epicentre, 2007): 90. Please note that this article was first published in the ASSITEJ-USA publication *TYA Today* and is an abridged version of Tony Mack's keynote speech: "Playwriting for Young Symposium in Indianapolis," *ASSITEJ* (USA, Indiana: p.n., 2005): p.n.
179 M. A. Hunter, "Anxious Futures," diss. University of Queensland, 1999): 293.

ii) Researching TFYA

To date, the Children's Theatre model in Australia has not been documented well, but the vast production out-put has been tremendous. There are, however, large amounts of archival information being stored at most major theatre companies for young audiences throughout Australia, awaiting further analysis. The various articles that I have located by Australia's academics and practitioners specialising in Children's Theatre (which specifically focuses on theatre designed by adults for children) are few and many of these have not been published in academic refereed journals. Internationally, there has been much discussion associated with Creative Dramatics (CD), Theatre-in-Education (TIE) and the value that "play", "drama" and "scene making" within pedagogy has had on contemporary society, as well as the Youth Theatre movement.¹⁸⁰ It is timely therefore to revisit an "all inclusive" historical and theatrical production narrative regarding Children's Theatre and its connection to the wider community with a focus on Australia's involvement.

iii) Future areas of study

While there appears to be a period of "inactivity" during the early to mid twentieth century in Australia concerning theatre experiences for children, I would suggest that performances such as the Corroboree, various community cultural activities, parades and festivals which performed to mixed audiences have been overlooked as part of the overall Children's Theatre historical and theatrical record. Moreover, the investigation into the unexplored terrain regarding various practitioners who have actively worked within the field of Theatre-in-Education in the early 1960s and 1970s (and prior) throughout Australia would also be of interest. Practitioners such as Richard Davey from the Playhouse Theatre-in-Education team in Perth, co-director of C.A.T.S (Children's Activity Time's Society) and the Round Earth Company, John Saunders who assisted in the forming of Acting Out which later became Barking Gecko Theatre Company, Graham Scott of the Tie-Die team at Bouverie Street in Victoria, Ken Conway in Darwin, Jenny Blocksidge at La Boite in Sydney, Morna Jones at Little Patch Theatre Company and Marie Tomasetti

¹⁸⁰ See for more details regarding an extensive overview of Creative Dramatics and Drama-in-Education the following complete texts: Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama for Learning* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995), Peter Slade, *Child Drama* (London: University of London Press, 1954) and Winifred Ward, *Theatre for Children* (New York: Appleton, 1939). For Theatre-in-Education see John O'Toole, *Theatre in Education*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1976) and Sandra Gattenhof, "Deterritorialization: A Motivating Force in Contemporary Youth Performance", *Youth Theatre Journal* 18 (2004): 122-137 for an in-depth analysis of young people performing and co-authoring productions in Queensland, Sydney and Fremantle, Australia.

(Adelaide), Naomi Marks at Children's Arena Theatre (Melbourne), Diana Large in Hobart as well as Barbara Manning and Roger Chapman (whom I have briefly mentioned earlier) were all valuable contributors to the evolution of Australia's contemporary Theatre for Young Audiences.¹⁸¹

Additionally, the exploration into Children's Theatre as an alternative theatre or subversive theatre story would also be an interesting research area of study.

Alternative or avant-garde Children's Theatre has been explored in a PhD thesis by Anne Violette Cirella at the University of Texas. Her study posits that the 'historical intersection of adult drama with Children's Theatre is the point of departure for the reconsideration of the neglected field of Children's Theatre as high theatre, and not as a sub-theatre.'¹⁸² Cirella argues that the first step in this rehabilitation is to claim that there is an avant-garde Children's Theatre and that both movements intersect historically and aesthetically while diverging into socio-critical goals. For example, the French playwright Alfred Jarry's use of the puppet theatre, especially *Punch and Judy*, in his play *Ubu Roi* (1896) and the American playwright Aurand Harris's use of the same tradition in *Punch and Judy* (1970) underscore how both authors continue a single tradition of social critical drama. The French playwright Eugene Ionesco's *Les Chaises* (1952) and the British children's playwright Mary Melwood's *The Tingalary Bird* (1964) both make use of the farce, all of which leads Cirella to conclude that theatre historians interested in audience reaction should extend their study of avant-garde theatre to include Children's Theatre. An investigation of Australia's avant-garde Children's Theatre movement would therefore be an interesting future study and one that is required as much as a comprehensive and detailed account of Australia's Children's Theatre movement both locally and nationally. Another area of interest would be multimedia (or transmediated art practices) within Theatre for Young Audiences, and how the imagination has changed and evolved over time due to the advances in technology or the "post-human" movement in the theatre. Another area that is also in need of further research is child audience participation which Charlotte Chorpenning first began to orchestrate in the 1940s.

¹⁸¹ The details of the various names of practitioners and companies that are mentioned here all specialised in creating scripts and theatre shows for young people from the 1960s onwards: this information was given to the author via an email conversation with Dr. Joan Pope (PhD) on the 4th of October 2011.

¹⁸² Anne Violette Cirella, "Avant-Gardism in Children's Theatre: The Use of Absurdist Techniques by Anglophone Children's Playwrights," diss., University of Texas, Austin, 1998): 94.

Finally, I would like to point out that Theatre for Young Audiences requires a much stronger academic voice in terms of being an arrival rather than a “stepping stone” which would reassess Children Theatre as a specialised and separate art form to adult theatre. This can be achieved by completing a thorough and comprehensive investigation that is based on an “all-inclusive” Children’s Theatre movement which has a detailed historical production narrative out-put (such as exploring Children’s Theatre’s influence on other child-centred art forms, children performing for children and/or to mixed audiences). This type of research project would further reposition Children’s Theatre as an important academic field of study, and one that is founded on a Children’s Theatre paradigm that is culturally relevant and evidence based.

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