

Dramaturgy as Mentoring: An Investigation Of Personal Practice

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DRAMATURGY AS MENTORING
AN INVESTIGATION OF PERSONAL PRACTICE

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

..... Saffron Benner / /2004

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Dramaturgy as mentoring: an investigation of personal practice

This thesis investigates contemporary Australian script dramaturgy as a form of mentoring. It analyses conventional dramaturgical practices, and the forms of professional development for dramaturgs and playwrights currently used by the arts industry. These issues are explored through two case studies that are self-reflective descriptions of my dramaturgical practice in different playwrighting contexts.

Although there is considerable international literature on the practice of production dramaturgy, there is extremely limited literature on the subject of Australian dramaturgy. While dramaturgy has often been the subject of industry debate, few dramaturgs have discussed or analysed the specificities of their practice. As an extensive investigation of personal dramaturgical practice my thesis is unique, and therefore makes a significant contribution to the literature on Australian dramaturgy.

My research discovered that there were considerable congruencies between dramaturgy and mentoring, which constitute the main forms of development for writers and new work in the Australian arts industry. Mentoring theory therefore provides the conceptual framework of my research.

My research uses a modified form of feminist phenomenography as its methodology. Data was analysed using a combination of feminist research and phenomenographic techniques. Data was primarily collected through interviews with the research participants; my own work notes; and personal reflections. An inclusive approach to my research invited the participants to comment on and contribute to the analysis of their own interviews and case studies.

The first case study describes my experiences as dramaturg for Queensland playwright, Margery Forde in the development of *X-Stacy* (1998). The second case study describes my experiences in the collaborative development of a satirical cabaret *Slings and Arrows* (1999) with WIT, an unfunded, feminist

theatre group. Each of these case studies represents, respectively, a mentoring partnership and group mentoring.

The final chapter draws together the thematic findings from the case studies and the key implications of the Literature Review and Conceptual Framework to address the initial research questions and propose some recommendations based on the research findings. My research demonstrates that there is clear evidence to support an interpretation of dramaturgy as mentoring, but that the arts industry needs to reconsider the methods and methodologies of both practices for contemporary and future relevance. In light of these findings, my research makes a number of recommendations for the arts industry; dramaturgs; educational and training institutions; and funding bodies. These key recommendations include:

- That the arts industry redefine and implement dramaturgy as a form of mentoring;
- That dramaturgs develop more accessible and in-depth analysis about their practices in order to demystify the role and purpose of dramaturgy;
- That relevant training courses and qualifications be established for dramaturgical practice;
- That funding bodies examine the distribution and amounts of funding and account for long-term investments in the development of playwrights and new work.

These recommendations are made on the premise that there are considerable improvements to be made on the current development of Australian playwrights and their work, and to ensure a vibrant, innovative creative future. The introduction of mentoring practices can only improve the discipline or profession of dramaturgs and playwrights in Australia and the quality of their practice.

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1. Research contexts	2
2. Research questions	4
3. Definitions	7
4. Methodology, data collection and analysis.....	8
5. Research findings and recommendations	10
5.1. Findings	10
5.2. Recommendations	12
6. Thesis structure	13

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1. Research contexts

This thesis investigates contemporary Australian script dramaturgy as a form of mentoring. The purpose of my research is to analyse conventional dramaturgical practices, and the forms of professional development for dramaturgs, playwrights and new work as currently used by the arts industry. These issues are explored through two case studies that are self-reflexive descriptions of my dramaturgical practice and experiences in different playwrighting contexts.

The first case study describes my experiences as dramaturg for Margery Forde – a professional playwright who was commissioned by Queensland’s La Boite Theatre in 1997 to write a new script suitable for their youth demographic. The result, *X-Stacy*, subsequently received numerous awards, critical and public acclaim, and was performed extensively throughout Australia (see Appendix B). The second case study describes my experiences as dramaturg, performer, and co-writer with WIT – an unfunded, feminist theatre group with whom I collaboratively devised and performed the satirical cabaret *Slings and Arrows* in 1999.

Each of these case studies describes a specific, personal experience of dramaturgy. Both were selected for their significance to my own professional development, and because they represent two distinct, major forms of live performance writing in Australia. Margery is an individual, professional playwright who was commissioned by a subsidised, mainhouse production company. WIT were an unfunded, feminist performance group who collaboratively devised an unconventional comic text that was subsequently

performed in the basement of a Brisbane nightclub. Both Margery and WIT produced highly successful new works, and dramaturgy played a key role in the development of the texts and their creators.

The specific creative contexts of each study required dramaturgy to be applied in very different ways. My research is a comparative description and analysis of dramaturgical practice in a more conventional writer/dramaturg partnership and dramaturgy in a collaborative, group process. Bly (1996) explains that one of dramaturgy's greatest contributions is to "illuminate the process of collaboration" (p. xiv). My research aims to elucidate dramaturgy as a collaborative process and to understand the implications of such collaboration for the development of new work.

Although there is considerable published material on the practice of production dramaturgy (particularly in America where production work is more common), there is very little published or unpublished work on script dramaturgy, especially in Australia. In this research, I have built upon and been inspired by Gough's (1991) unpublished honours thesis, *Modern Dramaturgical Practice in Australia*; and Gorman's (1992) *National Report on Script Consultancy in the Theatre: Dramaturgy*.

Both of these texts represent the only significant investigations of Australian dramaturgy to date. Gough and Gorman each conducted extensive qualitative surveys of diverse theatre practitioners. Their research outlined a detailed understanding of dramaturgical practice in the early 1990s, and they both, independently, made some strikingly similar findings. These included:

- Recognising that the future of Australian dramaturgy and theatre practice lay in the long-term, strategic development of playwrights and new work;

- Calling for dramaturgy to be recognised as a significant, distinct profession that could make substantial contributions to the development of the arts industry;
- Noting that there was a significant need to establish appropriate training and qualifications for dramaturgs and;
- Calling for increased funding to develop dramaturgs, playwrights, and new work, but acknowledging that there was an equally important need to change long-held ideas and practices in the development of new work. (Gough 1991, p. 26 – 29; Gorman 1992, p. 110 – 113).

Significantly, little has changed in the arts industry since this important research was conducted. Australia still lacks a cohesive national cultural policy, training for dramaturgs, adequate funding for long-term development, or a unified, industry approach to dramaturgy, playwrighting, and the creation and production of new work.

Gorman's and Gough's work provided my own research with important information for a contemporary comparison of industry attitudes to dramaturgy and the development of new work. However, neither is an investigation of personal practice. Just over ten years later, it is time to reconsider the industry's attitude towards dramaturgy, and the development of dramaturgical practices in light of Gough's (1991) definitions. Assessing the arts industry's past and present approach to new work is vital in order to reach any conclusions about its future directions and the role dramaturgs can or should play.

2. Research questions

My thesis was motivated by three main research objectives:

- Self-analysis:** The first objective was to document and analyse my own professional practice. This analysis was important for several

reasons. When I began this research in 1998, I had been a professional, freelance dramaturg for three years. In this time, I had established some methodologies and personal work ethics influenced by my experiences.

These methodologies and ethics constituted my professional standards. However, I had no way of comparing or assessing the validity of my standards since there are no formal training courses or established codes of conduct or practice in Australian dramaturgy. While dramaturgy as a profession has often been the subject of industry debate, few dramaturgs have discussed or analysed the specificities of their practice. To my knowledge, there is no extensive investigation or explication of personal dramaturgical practice in an Australian academic, industry, or public context. Literature on the subject of Australian dramaturgy is also extremely limited – most of it is restricted to industry journals and newsletters; and unpublished theses or seminar/conference papers.

Researching and writing about my own dramaturgical experiences, therefore, was not only crucial to understanding and developing my professional practice, it could make significant contributions to the literature on Australian dramaturgy. My initial research question, therefore, was: What is the nature of my dramaturgy and its significance for the wider field?

- ii. **New ways of perceiving and understanding:** My second research question was designed to investigate present forms of development practice by asking: How are playwrights and new work currently developed, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of these strategies ? My research revealed that there are two significant forms of professional development for playwrights and new work – dramaturgy and mentoring. Significantly, there was almost no comparison of these two approaches in the literature despite the fact that they contained several points of theoretical and practical congruence. Additionally, there were many aspects of

mentoring theory and practice that were similar or applicable to my own dramaturgical methodologies.

These discoveries raised important new questions: What are the similarities and differences between dramaturgy and mentoring?, and: What are the consequences of reconceiving dramaturgy as a form of mentoring for future development practices?

My second research objective, therefore, was to develop alternative perceptions and understandings of dramaturgy that could contribute to the long and short-term development of dramaturgical practice. I decided to use a feminist research approach, which was not only appropriate for challenging conventional precepts, it also represented my personal ideology and was therefore wholly suitable to an investigation of my own practice. Moreover, feminist methodology is central to my research due to several characteristics it shares with dramaturgical practice. These characteristics include: the need for theory grounded in practice; the use of interactive, transactive, and inclusive processes that prioritise change and; a focus on collaborative forms of communication and creativity. Feminist research enabled me to devise appropriate and rigorous forms of analysis and develop new ways of perceiving and understanding dramaturgical practice.

- iii. **Contributions to the field:** My final research question was motivated by personal experience and recurring issues in the literature: Why is dramaturgy still so underused and misunderstood after thirty years of practice, and: Why has so little been written about Australian dramaturgy ? In fact, these questions are intensely interconnected. The dearth of literature about and sporadic analysis of dramaturgy have contributed to ongoing misconceptions about the profession and impeded its progress. Likewise, dramaturgy's relatively recent introduction to Australian theatre has meant that both its practice and theory are still evolving.

These issues suggest a need for more analysis rather than less. Yet a long-held mistrust or misunderstanding of academia by many theatre practitioners, and a resistance to 'intellectualising' theatre practices, has hindered dramaturgy's development in Australia (Fotheringham 1997, p. 8; Gough 1991, Appendix E:18, E:33, E:46, E:66; Gallasch and Baxter 2003 - 2004, p. 38 & 39). My research, therefore, has several concurrent objectives. By making transparent my own dramaturgical practices, I aim to create an accessible text that discloses dramaturgical processes, thereby challenging some of the persistent assumptions impeding dramaturgy's widespread use and acceptance in the arts industry. In doing so, I am also contributing to literature and debates about Australian dramaturgy. My final research objective, therefore, is to mediate between traditionally separated contexts – theory and practice; academia and the arts industry – and reveal their substantial and necessary interconnections.

3. Definitions

Traditionally, dramaturgy is synonymous with playwrighting. In other words, dramaturgy describes the systems and structures that are unique to the playwrighting process (Gough 1991, p. 1; Esslin 1978, p. 48). Contemporary dramaturgy, however, refers to a form of script development, management, theory, and/or criticism (Gough 1991, p. 1; Dramaturgy Northwest 1999). In 1991, Australian dramaturg Louise Gough drew a distinction between the kinds of dramaturgy practiced in the production of established, canonical texts, and dramaturgy used in the development of playwrights and original work. She defined the former practice as production dramaturgy; the latter, script dramaturgy (p. 29).

Gorman's (1992) research also supported the separation of dramaturgical roles in this way (p. 112 – 113). Today, the industry continues to support this distinction. Panelists at a recent national forum on dramaturgy agreed that there was a need

for dramaturgs in two areas of Australian theatre – someone to ‘curate’ or facilitate a company’s long-term artistic future or vision, and someone to develop writers and new work (personal notes, 14 July 2003; Gallasch and Baxter 2003 - 2004, p. 41). The primary focus of my own practice has been script dramaturgy, which constitutes the main form of dramaturgy in Australia. ‘Contemporary’ script dramaturgy, in turn, refers to around thirty years of dramaturgical practice since it was first introduced in the early 1970s.

4. Methodology, data collection and analysis

I have used feminist phenomenography as the primary theoretical context for my research. The personal nature of my research, combined with the limited analytical and theoretical contexts within which to consider dramaturgy, meant that I needed to (re)define my own, appropriate methodology. Part of my research process, therefore, involved finding points of compatibility between two traditionally distinct ideologies. Where necessary, I also challenged some of the conventions within each approach.

Feminist phenomenography acknowledges the epistemological significance of lived experiences and so validates an analysis of dramaturgy based on the experiences of myself and others. Additionally, feminist phenomenography emphasises the importance of self-reflexive research – as a participant-researcher I needed to find theoretical constructs that prioritised the integral role of a researcher in his/her work.

My methodology also stresses the importance of intersubjectivity in the creation of socially constructed meanings. This was crucial to understanding the emotional and creative relationships between the research participants and myself, and the intensely collaborative, interactive nature of dramaturgy, mentoring, and playwrighting. Finally, feminist phenomenography challenges traditional, Cartesian

dualisms such as theory versus practice and objectivity versus subjectivity. Similar dualisms have typified dramaturgy and the arts industry for many years.

Although a feminist perspective is wholly appropriate for a study of my own practices – particularly my involvement with a feminist theatre group – this is not intended to limit the implications or broader purpose of my research. My case studies are examples of specific women’s experiences, not women’s specific experiences. That is, their specificity is not biologically determined. As experiences of dramaturgy and playwrighting, my case studies are unique, but this does not mean that their meanings cannot have wider significance or relevance for other practitioners – both male and female. In this way, my research seeks to find aspects of “commonality underlying the diversity” (Levesque-Lopman citing Mitchell 1988, p. 47) of dramaturgical practice.

Data for my research was collected primarily through comprehensive, conversational interviews with the research participants; my own work notes taken during each dramaturgical process; and personal reflections recorded during or just after each experience. These methods were supplemented by personal emails from the research participants and others (such as Sue Rider, the director of *X-Stacy*); and the publicity material and media reviews for each production.

The largely informal nature of my data collection is supported by my feminist methodology and reflects the personal and amicable relationships between the research participants and myself, as well as our original dramaturgical processes. My inclusive, collaborative methodology also meant that Margery Forde and the members of WIT were given transcripts of their interviews and case studies and invited to provide feedback, clarification, or make changes based on privacy requirements.

My data was analysed using a combination of feminist and phenomenological techniques. These methods focused on uncovering (inter)subjective accounts of

lived experiences; the micro and macro contexts and the connections between experience; and the multiple, underlying meanings within each experience. The data is subsequently presented as (self)reflective descriptions that seek to (re)capture the experiences as they were for each participant, and uncover knowledge that may have been unclear to us during the event. Indeed, new discoveries were made throughout the research and writing processes of this thesis as data analysis was treated as an ongoing procedure.

5. Research findings and recommendations

My research identifies a number of significant factors supporting the argument of dramaturgy as a form of mentoring. These factors lead to a number of recommendations that can contribute to the ongoing development of writers and new work. My findings and recommendations are discussed in detail in Chapter Eight, but are summarised below:

5.1. Findings

My research reveals that the arts industry often considers dramaturgy and mentoring as separate techniques. Dramaturgy is generally used in the development of a script, without necessarily concentrating on the writer's professional maturation. Mentoring, in contrast, normally involves the long-term development of writers and not always in relation to a specific text. However, my research reveals that dramaturgy and mentoring actually share a number of significant methods and methodologies. These similarities support the amalgamation of dramaturgy and mentoring as a unified, collaborative process with long- and short-term strategies that address both the writer and the needs of her/his text.

This amalgamation means developing new perceptions of, and practices for, dramaturgy and mentoring. New developments in mentoring are important for changing outmoded models of practice and relationships; for example, the assumption that an older practitioner will impart unilateral wisdom to a younger, less experienced writer. Dramaturgy also needs to undergo similar transformations, which are related to specific aspects of dramaturgical methods and methodologies. My research found that the following changes are necessary to both dramaturgy and mentoring, in order for them to be considered a unified theory and practice:

- More carefully matched dramaturgical/mentorship partnerships that incorporate and appreciate the disparate skills of participants. These relationships should be based on mutual trust, respect, and the participants' needs and skills rather than their age, formal education, vocational experience, or convenience (the much smaller pool of professionals in Australia means experienced writers or dramaturgs may be selected on the basis of their availability rather than their appropriateness).
- The need to begin dramaturgical/mentoring processes as early as possible to enhance compatibility, creativity, and long-term goals.
- The provision of financial, artistic and administrative infrastructures necessary for long-term development processes.
- Implementing and maintaining flexible, accountable, and relevant forms of development practices.
- Acknowledging dramaturgy as a distinct practice with transparent practices but invisible results.

- And employing a range of clearly defined and rigorously analysed dramaturgical techniques including, but not limited to: empathic criticism; dramaturgical questioning; negotiation; suggestion; reflection; structure; analysis; facilitation; and assessment.

My subsequent recommendations were based on these findings.

5.2. Recommendations

My recommendations are made with reference to the four main sectors of the arts industry most relevant to my research. These are:

- Theatre companies, directors, writers and other practitioners responsible for the development of new work: my recommendations are based on the premise that many of these practitioners consider the development of new work to be central to the future of the Australian arts industry, and that current development practices require significant revision and reconstruction.
- Dramaturgs: these recommendations are based on the conclusion that dramaturgs themselves have a responsibility to provide quality services and advocate their practice in accessible, accountable and transparent ways. My recommendations also account for the fact that dramaturgy has had a contentious history within the Australian arts industry and significant changes are necessary if it is to become an integral part of the industry's future.

- Education and training institutions: these recommendations are based on the finding that training for dramaturgs is still an urgent requirement and that there are important strategic connections to be made between the arts and education sectors to ensure dramaturgical innovation.
- Funding bodies: my research revealed that little has changed in terms of the provision of sufficient funds for the development of playwrights and new work. However, these recommendations do not just support ongoing calls for increased funding, but more innovative ways of distributing and using available capital.

All of these issues are discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight.

6. Thesis structure

Chapter One of this thesis has introduced the key concepts and objectives of my research. Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature in the field; a more comprehensive definition of terms used in my thesis; outlines the recent history and development of script dramaturgy; and identifies some of the key issues influencing dramaturgical practice in Australia.

Chapter Three explains the main concepts behind the premise of the thesis: defining mentoring and providing a comparative analysis with dramaturgical methods. Chapter Four explains my research methodology and how data was collected and analysed. Chapter Five constitutes the first case study – an exploration of a mentoring partnership through a reflective description of my work with Margery Forde. A comparative analysis of group mentoring and the role of dramaturgy in collective development processes is outlined in Chapter Six, the WIT case study. Finally, Chapter Seven provides a detailed outline of my research findings and recommendations.

There are several appendices at the end of the thesis which provide important frames of reference, particularly my interviews with the research participants. These appendices evoke the broader contexts within which my dramaturgy was originally used, assisting me to recreate the emotional and intellectual experiences of collaboratively creating new work.

Chapter Two LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Script dramaturgy.....	17
1.1. Definitions	17
1.2. Functions	20
1.2.1. Assessment	20
1.2.2. Facilitation.....	25
2. Australian dramaturgy	30
2.1. Background.....	30
2.2. Current and future practice	34
3. Dramaturgical practice – issues and directions.....	39
3.1. Training and qualifications	39
3.2. Objectivity/subjectivity	43
3.3. Trust and relationships.....	49
3.4. Invisible dramaturgy	52
3.5. Dramaturgical questioning	54
3.6. Women in dramaturgy.....	56
4. Conclusion	57

Chapter Two LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1991 Queensland dramaturg Louise Gough defined production dramaturgy and script dramaturgy as the two key forms of contemporary Australian dramaturgical practice, and attributed each with discrete yet overlapping functions. Although at this time dramaturgy had contributed to the development of Australian plays and playwrights for at least fifteen years, Gough's work represented one of the very few (published or unpublished) texts on the subject. For the most part, dramaturgy has been sporadically discussed and analysed in niche forums – industry newsletters, unpublished theses, and seminar or conference papers.

For these reasons, this review consolidates current, domestic literature and uses it in conjunction with published, international work to contextualise and analyse Australian dramaturgical practice. Using Gough's terminology, my focus is script dramaturgy, which constitutes the main form of dramaturgical practice in Australia. Over ten years after Gough's classification, there is an urgent need for further investigation of dramaturgy, especially in relation to the development of playwrights and new work. The specific focus of this review means that it is not primarily concerned with the history of dramaturgy itself, or its development in other countries – these issues have been comprehensively covered in the published literature.

The first part of this review defines script dramaturgy and discusses the difficulties associated with terminology. The next section provides an overview of changes to dramaturgy since its introduction to Australia. The final section will address significant, ongoing dramaturgical issues and their effects on contemporary practice. Together, these sections provide a broad context within which to consider my research questions.

1. Script dramaturgy

1.1. Definitions

Semantic debates about dramaturgy have existed since its introduction to English-language theatre. 'Dramaturge' is a German word of Greek etymology meaning literally 'to act' or 'do work' (Gough 1991, p. 1, 3; Cardullo 1995, p. 3; Hay 1995, p. 75). Gianakaris (1995) also claims that dramaturgy literally means 'contriver' in Greek and 'producer' in German (p. 89). These discrepancies illustrate the difficulties of finding a precise English translation for dramaturgy.

Semantic variations have meant that an aversion to dramaturgy is often associated with an aversion to the word itself. Borecca (1993) explains that dramaturgical theory and terminology are inextricably linked, as "the foundations of dramaturgical theory... are really critiques of terminology" (p. 59). Antipathy to the word 'dramaturgy' has been a recurrent issue in most English-speaking countries where arts practitioners have found it difficult to pronounce as well as define (Copelin 1995, p. 95; Alper 1978, p. 22 –23; Rosen 1995, p. 185). Powers (in Kleb 1978) observed the derisive effects of this aversion: "Everywhere I went people would say – even friends! – "What the hell is a dramaturg ?" And then they would make unkind puns" (p. 36).

In Australia, there has been a general reluctance to use the word at all. For example, some kind of dramaturgical position exists in most state theatre companies, but the job title varies widely. Playbox theatre in Melbourne has a "Literary Associate" (<http://www.playbox.com.au/company/reception.htm>, 20/05/2003). The Sydney Theatre company has both an "Acting Literary Manager" and an "Artistic Development Manager" (http://www.sydneytheatre.com.au/content.asp?cID_36, 20/05/2003). The Queensland Theatre Company has an "Artistic Development Manager" and "Artistic Development Coordinator" (<http://www.qldtheatreco.com.au>, 20/5/2003);

while the Melbourne Theatre Company has a combined “Associate Director/Literary Adviser“ (<http://www.mtc.com.au/playdev.htm>, 20/05/2003). Currently, only The Australian National Playwrights Centre employs a “Dramaturg“ (*Dialogue* 1999, p. 3). Gorman’s (1992) research found that “Many theatre professionals have expressed a strong dislike of the terms ‘dramaturgy’ and ‘dramaturg’ “ (p. 7). His findings were also supported by Gough’s (1991) earlier investigation (Appendix F:2, E:11). The ongoing reluctance to use the word dramaturgy is clearly demonstrated by some of Australia’s major production houses, and attempts to find new terms have been largely unsuccessful. For example, Gorman’s (1992) suggestion that ‘Script Editing’ replace dramaturgy (p. 7), does not adequately describe the multiple tasks undertaken by dramaturgs. Terms such as Artistic Development Manager/Coordinator seem corporate and vague, and others such as Script Consultant are simply not widely used.

Bly (1986a) explains that attempts by dramaturgs to clarify their profession often had adverse effects and their efforts contributed to dramaturgical resistance rather than acceptance:

Part of the problem lies in the words we have used to describe ourselves... Terms such as “in-house critic”, “devil’s advocate”, “theoretician”, “resident idealist”...”resident intellectual”, “third eye in the rehearsal”...and “conscience of the theater” are alternately pretentious, self-aggrandizing, insensitive, and inanely abstract (p. 5-6).

Dramaturgs have confusingly described themselves as: “an intimate participant, an outspoken audience member, a collaborator” (Rafolowicz 1978, p.27); a “play doctor” (Schechter 1978, p.58); “theater educators... a problem solver” (Walsh and Pettingill 1986, p. 52,55); an “ideal spectator” (Gough citing McGillick 1991, p.4); a “sounding board” (Grutzner 1991, p. 4; Ballet 1978, p.42; Gianakaris 1995, p. 95; Alper 1978, p. 15); and, even more obscurely, “an artistic friend within the theater”

(Nelson 1986, p. 40). Kate Cherry (1998), former dramaturg at Melbourne's Playbox theatre defined herself as "a facilitator, advocate and agitator for writers" (p. 24). Gough (1997) described her practice as "the facilitation of making meaning through art form negotiation" (p. 10). These statements illustrate some of the key functions of dramaturgy – facilitation, negotiation, and advocacy; but perhaps they raise more questions than they answer. What is 'agitation', and why is it necessary? How is meaning 'facilitated'? What sorts of 'meaning(s)'? What kind of 'negotiation'?

Trying to explain a dramaturg's work can be challenging since the role invariably changes, as Gough (1997) explains: "My role as a dramaturg is defined by the diverse contexts in which I work, and also the diverse range of practitioners that I come into contact with " (p. 10). The chameleon nature of dramaturgy means that it cannot be explained in a single, pithy statement, as "no single description will be accurate or all-encompassing for every situation" (Bly 1996, p. xxii). In this way, dramaturgy effectively evades any concrete definition.

However, contemporary dramaturgy can be divided into two broad areas of practice: work related to established scripts; and work on the development of new writing. Gough (1991) has identified three traditional forms – production dramaturgy, literary management, and text development, but her research simplifies these as production dramaturgy and script dramaturgy (p. 28). Gough's redefinition effectively clarifies the various functions of the dramaturg in relation to his/her diverse roles. Consequently, these terms will be used to describe contemporary dramaturgy throughout my research. While dramaturgical functions or tasks may overlap, it is important to note that script dramaturgy and production dramaturgy are, for the most part, separate areas of practice with distinct goals.

1.2. Functions

Gough's (1991) research identified seven key functions of traditional dramaturgical practice: research, recommendation, observation, enlightenment, assessment, facilitation and translation (p. 17). Although these tasks could overlap, Gough concluded that research, recommendation, observation, enlightenment, and translation were the core work of production dramaturgy, whilst assessment and facilitation were the focus of script dramaturgy (p. 28). The basis of most dramaturgical work in Australia has been assessment and facilitation. However there has been little analysis of how these functions are employed or their effects on the short and long term development of playwrights and playwriting. This section explains the functions of assessment and facilitation, and the key issues surrounding their development and use.

1.2.1. Assessment

Theoretically, assessments assist writers to develop their craft through the provision of informed feedback from an industry professional. They can take the form of written and/or verbal responses. Over the years, most production companies and script development agencies have favoured written assessments which vary from brief, form letters to longer, more detailed appraisals (Gough 1991, Appendix E:13, E:41; May 1995, p. 47 – 48). Gough (1991) found that many industry practitioners considered script assessment to play an important part in the development of new work (p. 23). However, there are some fundamental issues and questions about the relevance, value, responsibility, and quality of script assessments in terms of practice and implementation.

In recent years, for example, responsibility for script assessments has largely fallen on script development and writer's support agencies. Corbett (1998) explains that

the high costs of paying script readers, combined with the overburdened workloads of most literary managers, has meant that many companies can no longer afford to provide effective assessment services, and have stopped accepting unsolicited scripts (p. 27). The Melbourne Theatre Company, for example, prioritises development of commissioned work or “existing work by writers of interest to the Company” (<<http://www.mtc.com.au/playdev.htm>>, 20/05/2003). This policy marks a distinct change from Gough’s (1991) earlier assertion that script assessment is a “time consuming but necessary” (p. 23) task for production companies. It also suggests increasing acceptance of the long-held, but publicly unacknowledged, understanding that unsolicited scripts rarely contain the high standards necessary for professional production (Gough 1991, Appendix E:50).

Script development agencies such as Playworks in Sydney, Playlab Inc. in Brisbane, the Australian Writer’s Guild, and the Australian National Playwrights Centre fulfill several important obligations in relation to new work and script assessment. They provide writers with access to the resources necessary for professional development; help promote a writer’s work to theatre companies; and, in some instances, assist in the development of a script for production, although the extent of this work varies depending on funding (Australian Writer’s Guild 1998, p. 47; Gutteridge 1997, p. 20).

Most of these organisations have developed close and productive relationships with theatre companies in order to share resources and responsibilities (Gutteridge 1997, p. 20). Script agencies assist the development of writers regardless of experience, style, or ambitions. Messariti (1998) explains that agencies can tailor their development programs to meet an individual writer’s needs and skills (p. 26). These vary from written assessments, play readings, workshops, professional development seminars or classes, and even personal dramaturgy sessions.

Focusing on process rather than production means that script agencies usually provide writers with more comprehensive assessments than most theatre companies. On the one hand, written assessments are generally based on a standard proforma that provide assessors with guidelines, and writers with more structured responses (Gough1991, Appendix E:41, 43 – 44). On the other, May (1995) argues that script agencies (and companies that provide written assessments) base their development procedures on certain conventional axioms, rather than the individual needs of writers (p.53).

For May, these prevailing beliefs determine what constitutes a 'good' script, and what writers 'need' in order to develop their script to an (unstated or ambiguous) 'acceptable standard' (p. 53). Practical assistance (such a workshop or reading), he continues, is only forthcoming at a particular stage in the writer's process; a stage determined by the organisation, not the writer (p.92). In this way, script agencies and assessments become gatekeepers, influencing (either subtly or directly) the creative terms of the writer's process:

Clearly each of these institutions had assumptions about the playwright's process according to their aims, objectives and financial constraints. None provided (whether they would have liked to or not) services that included collaboration with other theatre workers before the point when they had judged the *artistic unity* of the playscript. Underlying these assumptions are commonly held beliefs concerning the stages through which a playwright's process should proceed (p.39, original emphasis).

The prioritisation of process also means that script development agencies often contribute to over-development. Both Gough (1991, Appendix E:43 - 44, 198 - 203) and the Australian Writer's Guild (1998) suggest that the links between production companies and script agencies are not always strong, or consistent enough to ensure ongoing practical outcomes (p. 47). Cherry (1998) notes that playwrights

can become trapped on a 'development wheel', with no concrete outcomes for their work:

...there is a flip side to script development and it is just as dangerous and destructive as not giving a play proper attention and that is using script development as a means to an end which does not involve the possibility of a production (p. 25).

In addition, script agencies exist on a user-pays system. Some writers can therefore perceive assessments as an unaffordable luxury rather than a necessity.

The standard of services provided by agencies is also affected by the experience of assessors. For example, vastly different, even contradictory, readings can emerge when one script is read by an actor and then a designer. The diverse experience of such practitioners may provide important insights, but their perspectives are not necessarily informed by dramaturgical skills or training. As Brown (1997) points out, "a script assessor is not a dramaturg. A script assessor may be a dramaturg, but being a script assessor does not qualify you as a dramaturg" (p. 23). Consequently, diverse appraisals from a range of different professionals are not necessarily matched by consistently high quality assessments (Gough 1991 Appendix E:6; Pitts 1998, p. 10; May 1995, p. 47 – 53).

Dramaturgs, it can be argued, have the expertise to make such appraisals. Yet there is a danger that they become (or are perceived as) a form of 'quality control' (Grutzner 1991, p. 41; McKone 1996, p. 1). When a script is read by only one person, there is a greater risk of the assessment being affected by personal bias or beliefs (Gough 1991 Appendix E:14, E:47, E:50; Shyer 1978, p. 13; Alper 1978, p. 15; Ballet 1978, p. 42; May 1995, p. 48). This approach also contributes to the idea that dramaturgy itself "is just someone else's opinion" (Balodis in Gough 1991 Appendix E:14).

May (1995) found that conflicting assessments can be detrimental to the (re)writing process, particularly when an assessor's responses are based on his/her *reading* of the text rather than his or her experience of its performance: "The practice of receiving written assessments is questioned... in as far as it does not perceive the text in the form in which it is meant to be received" (p. 53). Assessments are normally based on the reader's experience of performance practices in general. They are not necessarily based on the kinds of intimate knowledge of a writer's processes or intentions that can be developed in dramaturgical relationships. Poor assessments are particularly damaging given that a new script (which can take several years to write) can be destroyed very quickly by an unthinking or inexperienced dramaturg, director or actor (Gough 1991 Appendix E:8, E:15, E:26).

This situation has been exacerbated by the lack of transparent criteria often used to make assessments. For example, some agencies have, until recently, practiced anonymous assessments (May 1995, p. 38; Gough 1992, Appendix E:8). Gough's (1991) research also found that the selection of assessors themselves is often arbitrary, as there usually are few standards to determine the personal and professional qualities necessary to be an effective assessor Appendix E:20; E46 – 47). Gough (1991) notes that the financial and professional efforts spent developing playwrights have not been matched by similar investments in assessors and dramaturgs (Gough 1991 Appendix E:9, E:27, E:66, E:69).

Script development agencies remain an important part of Australia's theatre industry and make significant contributions to the development of writers and new work. These agencies are in a strong position to address the current and future role of dramaturgy and the quality of its practices, yet such action is not consistently taken. Initiatives within one agency are not necessarily picked up and continued by another. Certainly, agencies need to develop methods suitable for writers in their regions, but little is done to investigate ways in which agencies

could form long-term strategic partnerships or share information regarding failures and successes.

Links between agencies and theatre companies have assisted writers to gain a better understanding of individual theatres' aesthetic requirements and their work. One-off projects or partnerships have also afforded some writers important opportunities for production or access to professional workshops and readings. Conversely, limited funding and adherence to outmoded forms of assessment and development have restricted the number of writers receiving these kinds of development opportunities – although agencies and companies may argue that there are few writers who are worth such time-consuming and costly investments. However, if script agencies and production houses are to meet the needs of future writers then more needs to be done to address the role and purpose of dramaturgical processes such as assessment.

1.2.2. Facilitation

Facilitation is perhaps the key function of script dramaturgy yet the skills it requires have rarely been analysed in detail. Dramaturgs use some of the most intangible aspects of their craft in facilitation, such as trust, collaboration, diplomacy and altruistic inquiry. Facilitation also draws together many other dramaturgical functions, including reading, assessing, observation, structural analysis, and the implementation of dramatic forms.

Gough (1991) describes the purpose of facilitation as “the ideal notion of helping writers to realise their vision” (p. 11). The concept that writers need creative guidance has contributed to the (largely mistaken) belief that facilitation is a form of unnecessary interference, rather than mutual exploration. In fact, facilitation ideally involves close collaboration with a playwright in order to discover new

creative avenues, overcome artistic obstacles, and solve text-related problems. Lutterbie (2000) concedes that this kind of partnership is difficult both to establish and sustain, as it contains important issues of ethical responsibility and creative ownership (p. 1). Consequently, facilitation has often been a contentious and divisive subject among performing arts practitioners both in Australia and overseas. Its progress has been hampered by misinformation, poor implementation and ill-considered execution.

Part of this problem stems from the fact that dramaturgs themselves have tended to use poor analogies and vague terms to describe facilitation. Galvin (in Gough 1991), for example, compares a dramaturg in a workshop situation to an (apparently unnecessary) automotive accessory: “their [sic] is a role for the dramaturg as part of the process of workshopping plays as being the sort of fifth wheel on the car” (Appendix E:42). Cattaneo (in Bly 1986) also likens dramaturgy to mechanical assistance. Her description clarifies some of the dramaturgical tasks involved, but these responsibilities still seem to be superfluous:

I often describe the dramaturg’s function using the analogy of a car stalled by the side of the road. A dramaturg’s job is to point out to the driver/playwright the possible ways to fix the car himself [sic]. Does he remember the jack he put in the trunk or the gas station half a mile back? I help analyze the problem, pointing out the forgotten or unrecognized tools and options available for dealing with the problem. Then I step back and let the author do the repairs and get on with the trip (p. 27)

The problem with such analogies is that they are simplistic and inaccurate. Playwrighting is a highly structured, yet creative, process which requires specialised skills, as Daly (1999) describes:

...work that comes from new writers usually requires a constant interaction with other artistic personnel, so that the developing vision of the work is tested and refined. Theatre is both a literary and a physical art. It has physical aspects that desk writing often ignores, but it requires a literary intelligence as rich as the novelist's. It is the tension between these two 'intelligences' that produces memorable work (p. 3).

Dramaturgs themselves mediate between these various contexts, and assist writers to do the same (Gough 1991 Appendix E:4, E:32, E:43 - 44; Ballet in Bly 1986, p. 29; Wager 1978, p. 30; Cherry 1998, p. 24). Facilitation, therefore, is a complex and often subtle process involving more than simply coping with disgruntled writers or sensitive actors.

Facilitation is one of the primary development tools in dramaturgy, and it is used in a range of situations. It can take place between a writer and a dramaturg working on one or more drafts of a script, without a specific production goal. Alternatively, important facilitative work takes place when a writer is commissioned to write for a particular company or production. Facilitation can also include the work carried out in a workshop or reading where a text is developed between a writer, dramaturg, director, performers and even a small audience (Gough 1991, p. 12). This kind of collaborative, interpersonal work requires particular skills that dramaturgical practice strives to hone, such as tact, diplomacy, self-confidence, adaptability, deference, and perceptiveness that may be learnt, but not necessarily taught (Lutterbie 2000, p. 1 - 4).

Unfortunately, this kind of dramaturgical assistance doesn't usually occur until later in the writing process after several written assessments have been received. Yet there are distinct benefits to providing writers with much earlier dramaturgical support (Batchelor and Copeman 1998, p. 14; Gough 1991 Appendix E:42, E:63). The procedural nature of scriptwriting means that it requires strategic support at

each stage in order to progress. Thompson (in Gough 1991) explains that intermittent development is crucial not only throughout the writing period, but from its very inception: “I think it is very important to understand that a drama can never transcend the limitations of its original idea. So what you have got to do is strengthen the original idea” (Appendix E:11). Gorman (1992) also found that conversation could be a crucial part of some practitioners’ initial creativity, and that such “discussions parallel... and cross-feed with the writing of the script” (p. 35).

It is a regrettable fact that dramaturgical facilitation of ongoing development for writers is rarely possible due to the enormous financial commitment required. The lack of ready capital is one of the primary reasons why extensive dramaturgy for numerous playwrights has never been consistently provided in Australian theatre (Gough 1991 Appendix E:25, E:25, E:56, E:64, E:69; Eckersall, Beddie and Monaghan 2003, p. 43). Few writers, production companies, or development organisations have budgets that can accommodate the fees of professional dramaturgs over extended periods of time (Gough 1991 Appendix E:26). While more writers, production companies, and directors now recognise the importance of dramaturgical assistance throughout the writing process (Gough 1991 Appendix E:43, E:35; Winning 1998, p. 10 – 11; Eckersall, Beddie and Monaghan 2003, p. 43), funding levels are not commensurable with their needs.

Gorman (1992) argues that it may be time that performance practitioners overcame their largely unfounded suspicions of dramaturgy, and accepted that both the practice and the word are already an established, if still contentious, part of the Australian arts industry (p. 8). It is not the profession of dramaturgy that needs to be questioned, but its practices:

The function, the impulse, the need, the action has always been there. In other words, we know perfectly well that this critical function is necessary in the theatre and that it has to get accomplished. How it gets accomplished is perhaps our subject (Leverett et. al. 1999, p. 4).

Developing a better understanding of dramaturgical functions and roles within the industry is perhaps more likely to lead to greater acceptance of both the word and the profession. It is particularly important given that there is still “an inherent assumption that we all have a shared understanding of what a dramaturg is and what a dramaturg does” (Gough 1997, p. 9).

Similarly, while facilitation and assessment have been and still are vital aspects of dramaturgical practice, they need to be implemented and conceived in relation to the long and the short term needs of Australian playwrights. This strategy is in keeping with Gorman’s (1992) recommendation: “That the process of script development in Australia be made much more thorough and take place over a much longer period” (p. 111). There are also important issues of transparency and accountability to be addressed when considering who can and should conduct assessments; how assessments are executed; and to what purpose. These issues are directly related to Gough’s (1997) concern that while directors, dramaturgs and development agencies confidently determine a script’s performance potential, the same criteria are rarely extended to other key stakeholders: “We often perceive that the script is not ready, but we rarely ask whether the writer is ready and we rarely ask whether our audiences are ready” (p. 10).

Both facilitation and assessment need to be recognised as specific dramaturgical functions that require the development of certain skills. The functions identified by Gough (1991) have been crucial to establishing a clear understanding of the tasks script dramaturgs can or should perform and the challenges associated with them. However, further investigation is required into the more abstract and

ideological aspects of dramaturgical practice, such as mediation, collaboration, and suggestion. As dramaturgy is used more frequently in the creation of a diverse range of performance texts, it is questions about these issues, rather than specific dramaturgical tasks, that need to be asked.

The following sections will describe the development of contemporary Australian script dramaturgy, and address some of the fundamental issues of current dramaturgical practice.

2. Australian dramaturgy

2.1. Background

Australia's geographical and cultural isolation meant that dramaturgy emerged later than in America or Britain. The origins of Australian dramaturgy are also difficult to pinpoint since, unlike Germany, the United States or Great Britain, dramaturgical practice was not part of the establishment of a national theatre. Gorman (1992) names the playwright Ray Lawler as Australia's first Literary Manager, employed by the Melbourne Theatre Company in the 1960s (p. 12). Gorman (1992) also suggests that rudimentary dramaturgical techniques were first used in 1968 at the P.A.C.T. Performing Arts Co-operative in Sydney (p. 10). However, Spinks (1999) explains that dramaturgical techniques were introduced in the 1970s, while the word itself was not used until almost 1980 (p. 14).

Spinks (1999) specifically places Australia's first dramaturgical appointment much later – in the mid-nineteen eighties, when academic May-Brit Akerholt was invited to translate a script for the Sydney Theatre Company (p. 14; also: Gough 1991, Appendix E:31). Akerholt's appointment was important, Spinks argues, as it was “the first public acknowledgement a director had clearly chosen an individual, and

associated that individual with himself [sic] and that particular theatre company“ (p. 14). Less equivocally, several commentators agree that the Australian National Playwrights Conference, established in 1973, made significant contributions to the establishment, acceptance, and development of dramaturgical practice (Gorman 1992, p. 11; McKone 1996; Grutzner 1991, p. 41).

What is clear is that throughout the 1970s and up until the mid-1980s most dramaturgs acted as literary managers or production dramaturgs, since this was “a period where dramaturgs were closely associated with classic texts, translations and individual directors“ (Spinks 1999, p. 14). In the mid-nineteen eighties, dramaturgy was further legitimised when academics and educational institutions began using the term (Spinks 1999, p. 14; Gough 1991, Appendix E:31). Fotheringham (1997) suggests that dramaturgy was seen as a way of improving relationships between academia and the theatre industry (p. 8).

Although there was no formal training for dramaturgs, Gough’s (1991) research found that many who entered the profession came from an academic background (Appendix E:2, E:27, E:31, E:57, E:66). Consequently, some dramaturgs understood dramatic theory and history but lacked experience in dramatic practice (Gough 1991, Appendix E:18, E:33, E:66). The combination of inexperience and widespread misunderstanding of dramaturgical principles meant that dramaturgy was often used in haphazard and sometimes even detrimental ways (Gough 1991, Appendix E:6, E:18, E:27, E:45; McKone 1996; Grutzner 1991, p. 41).

Gough (1991) discovered that most successful dramaturgs quickly gained practical experience and made diverse contributions to the development of Australia’s growing theatre culture (Appendix E:2, E:26, E:31). This did not stop dramaturgy as a whole gaining a reputation as a ‘fabricated’ occupation intent on imposing arcane intellectualism on pragmatic artists (Gough 1991, Appendix E:19, E:39, E:66 – 68, E:70). Far from bridging the gap between academia and the theatre industry,

dramaturgy widened it (Gough 1991, Appendix E:28, E:33). This situation was not unique to Australia; rejection of dramaturgy on intellectual grounds is a feature of most English-language theatre (Eustis 1986, p. 12; Gallasch and Baxter 2004, p. 38). Ironically, it was academia that assisted dramaturgy to move into broader and more innovative areas of arts practice.

Spinks (1999) explains that as some dramaturgs were aligned to specific companies, other dramaturgs began to work in a freelance capacity with ensemble groups or individual directors, writers, or actors to create new work (p. 14; also Gough 1991, Appendix E:2). Some of the key dramaturgical work being conducted at this time was the result of collaboration between academics and theatre practitioners interested in exploring classic texts in new ways (Spinks 1999, p. 14; Gough 1991, Appendix E:29). Dramaturgs were also finding a place for themselves in the more collaborative areas of community, youth, feminist and physical theatre (Spinks 1999, p. 15). Spinks (1999) believes that these types of group devised work helped many dramaturgs to develop a wide range of crucial practical skills; and a strong sense of how theatrical structure and space could shape a performance and effect an audience (p. 14).

Gough's (1991) research found that by the early 1990s, many practitioners had begun to recognise that the future of dramaturgy lay in the development of new work. Gorman (1992) also notes that during this time there was an "increasing realisation that too many promising playwrights have been sold short by having their plays produced before they were properly finished" (p. 5). Consequently, dramaturgical relationships began to move away from established texts and directors and towards playwrights instead (Spinks 1999, p. 15; Gough 1991, Appendix E:34).

Initially, script dramaturgs were perceived as a form of 'protection' between a director and a writer (Gough 1991, Appendix E:29, E:66, B:7). This gave credence

to the notion of the dramaturg as the writer's 'friend' (Gough 1991, Appendix D:5, E:3, E:15; Gorman 1992, p. 87). While this concept had positive connotations, Gough (1991) found that it was sometimes taken literally and could contribute to real or perceived factions between writers, directors, and dramaturgs (Appendix E:15, E:66). Gorman (1992) revealed that some practitioners believed that dramaturgs should support a director and not a writer; whilst others opposed this bias, but acknowledged that it did happen (p. 14, p. 16).

Poor training meant that suspicion about dramaturgy was common among theatre practitioners (Gorman 1992, p. 8, p. 110). The lingering image of the dramaturg as script doctor lent further support to these misgivings. One of the earliest functions of production dramaturgy was to cut, edit, adapt, and arrange established texts for contemporary productions (Schechter 1978, p. 58). Part of the industry's aversion to dramaturgy was based on fear of such intervention. Beaton (1997) recalls The Australian Writers Guild summarising the industry's discontent: "The proliferation of dramaturgical advisors is a matter of considerable concern to us all" (p. 4).

It is significant that inexperienced script development was not exclusive to dramaturgy. Gough's (1991) research showed that writers themselves did not always know the best ways to exploit dramaturgical processes (Appendix E:13, E:29, E:39, E:45, EE:66). Directors had also been known to work in ad hoc ways when developing new work (Appendix E:6, E:8, E15, E:66). These findings demonstrate the industry's sporadic approach to script development and dramaturgy.

One of the other key problems for dramaturgy was that its practitioners were often playwrights themselves, and this led to conflicts of interest and impartiality (Gough 1991, Appendix E:21, E:31; Fotheringham 1997, p. 8). Some playwright/dramaturgs tried to write vicariously, while others had an understanding of dramatic structure and the writing process, but were not necessarily skilled

dramaturgs (Gorman 1992, p. 18; Gough 1991, Appendix E:14, E:27). This trend also contributed to the idea that dramaturgy was a transitional occupation filled with 'failed' writers and directors (Gorman 1992, p. 19; Gough 1991, Appendix E:68), who were intent on 'interfering' in writers' processes (Gorman 1992, p. 8, 13 – 14, 17; Gough 1991, Appendix E:33; Mee 1997, p. 6).

Despite these obstacles, dramaturgy has very gradually become a more acceptable and distinct practice within the arts industry since the early 1990's. Dramaturgical subjects, for example, have been taught in some Australian universities: Queensland University of Technology, Griffith University, and the University of Queensland. Major funding bodies, such as the Australia Council for the Arts (2002), now recognise the need for the professional development of dramaturgs and their role in the development of new work. Dramaturgical methods, if not dramaturgs themselves, are now the standard means of script and writer development by major production companies. Yet the future development of dramaturgical practice relies upon the industry's current perception and utilisation of dramaturgs.

2.2. Current and future practice

The unique needs of Australian writers and the theatre industry meant that dramaturgy evolved in specific ways. The hit-and-miss effects of dramaturgy on Australian writers are a reflection of its erratic development. Confusion and misconceptions about its purpose and methods (even among dramaturgs) has had enduring consequences on the development of playwrights and new work. At the same time, Australia's substantially smaller population than England or America has not prevented it from producing a remarkably abundant cultural output.

However some commentators have noted that the international success of Australian novelists, painters, and performers has not been equaled by our playwrights (Thompson in Gough 1991, Appendix E10; Gorman 1992, p. 8). This observation is based largely on the lingering perception in Australia that success is contingent upon international acceptance (Gorman 1992, p. 5, p. 8; Hallett 2002, p. 13; Mead 1999, p. 11). Australian dramaturg Paul Thompson (in Gough 1991) argues that a lack of quality scripts is endemic to many countries but Australia, in particular, has not endowed its playwrights with the necessary self-confidence to compete on the world stage (Appendix E:10). Greenwood (1999) also reports that Australian playwrights do not enjoy the same respect as their British and American counterparts (p. 8). Thompson (in Gough) agrees that there is “a lack of respect for writing and then a lack of support [for playwrights]” (Appendix E:10) in Australia. Dramaturgy could play a key role in restoring this faith and challenging our long-held cultural cringe by advocating, supporting and facilitating the work of Australian playwrights.

In many ways, dramaturgy is an evolving profession in Australia. It can be argued that the lack of innovation in the development of new work is strongly linked to the text-based naturalism that has dominated Australian playwrighting (Grutzner 1991, p. 41; Johns 1998, p. 5). In the past ten years, however, some of the most prolific and innovative work has emerged in non-traditional forms of performance.

Gough (in Johns 1998) has argued that dramaturgy needs to move beyond the limitations of its past by participating in the development and promotion of less conventional performance work: “There is a lack of understanding of theatricality or the performative realm of a text, of the range of tools available. A sense that the only way we communicate is through language” (p. 5). Eckersall, Beddie, and Monaghan (2003) also report that dramaturgical practice has extended beyond the text-based performance and some of the most innovative work is occurring in physical theatre, dance, and hybrid arts (p. 43).

Dramaturgy, they argue, “lies at the cutting edge of creative praxis” (p. 43), and there is a growing need to investigate the political nature of dramaturgy and its contribution to “debates about theatre culture” (p. 43). This perspective is in keeping with Borecca’s (1993) assertion that “dramaturgy is a mode of meta-awareness” that recognises and investigates the complex relations between theatre and politics (p. 59). More recent industry debates have acknowledged dramaturgy’s increasing influence on other disciplines by addressing issues such as the dramaturgy of set, sound, and lighting design (Gallasch and Baxter 2003 - 2004, p. 38 & 41).

However, the lack of transparent dramaturgical practices and professional infrastructure has meant that progress in these areas has been slow and sporadic. In many ways, Gough’s (1991) observation that “Infrastructure around the role of the dramaturg is poor” (p. 10) is still accurate. In Australia, there are still no definitive theoretical or systematic frameworks underpinning dramaturgy. There are no guidelines, models, or clear criteria for dramaturgical practice. It is most often learnt ‘on the floor’ and through trial and error. Techniques and concepts vary extensively from state to state, and dramaturg to dramaturg. Each new working context for a dramaturg forces her or him to redefine her/his position, as Gorman’s (1992) research discovered: “Every time you approach a new script it is a bit like starting from scratch; nothing you have done before, with other scripts, will necessarily be of any value” (p. 34).

Flexibility and adaptability are an intrinsic part of dramaturgy’s creative process, but this versatility does not mean that the profession itself shouldn’t be formalised. Unlike the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas association (LMDA), there is no industry body to provide vital networking, professional development or regulation of dramaturgical practice in Australia. There are numerous organisations that support playwrights and new work and which use dramaturgs and dramaturgy as a significant part of this advocacy. Yet there are no concomitant organisations

for dramaturgs alone. On the one hand, some practitioners might argue that there are not sufficient dramaturgs to support such a move. On the other, a dramaturgical organisation could support the practice of dramaturgy en masse (including directors and playwrights); acknowledge dramaturgy as a discrete practice; establish a framework for formalising acceptable standards; and provide an industry profile that could encourage growth within the sector.

In many ways these professional absences can be attributed to the lack of a cohesive national cultural policy in Australia. Consequently, sections of the arts industry are overlooked or undervalued by funding bodies and colleagues. The perceived cultural significance and value of new work, for example, is not matched by financial frameworks or informed reception. Funds are dispersed in apparently ad hoc ways to a range of competitors – companies, individuals, festivals and support organisations (Taylor 1998b, p. 17). The industry as a whole has rarely examined its artistic past or its future directions.

Neglecting these aspects of dramaturgy has had a detrimental effect on new work. Indecisions and inconsistencies about the development of writers and their texts inevitably affects what and who are selected for development and why they are chosen in the first place. Without a “long term, recognisable, strategic vision... for resourcing, research and development of new works and writers “ (Gough 1997, p. 10), these problems will continue. Beaton (1999) argues that for Australian playwrights to develop, the arts industry and its funding, development, and support organisations need to change:

...great writers emerge not from personal struggle, but from an environment that nurtures quality writing – this nurturing being a pro-active and forward-looking process; its aim to develop a culture which actively seeds and provides opportunities for writer’s [sic] works to be heard (p. 7).

Many of the challenges to dramaturgical practice are challenges to the theatre industry itself. While there is widespread recognition of the importance of new work, funding structures and artistic processes are not necessarily able to support creative innovation. Certainly, increased funding is important, but there are other, equally important and relevant issues of industry practice that funding alone cannot solve, as McPhee (1997) suggests:

What we have at present is a system that cannot possibly meet all needs. Not simply the need for money, but also the need for a wider choice of *forms* of support suited to different stages in an artist's creative life, capable of generating many more commissions and a rather different relationship to audience. These are major shifts that will take time and must be developed alongside public subsidy (p. 13, original emphasis).

Gorman (1992) agrees that "more subsidy cannot be seen as the remedy for the ills of the Australian theatre" (p. 111). Overcoming long-held ideological preconceptions is perhaps a greater challenge to the Australian arts industry than funding limitations. Mellor's (2003) comment that "New work is always high risk and it lacks the glamour of the established classics or the hit from overseas" (p. 1) reflects both the industry's understanding of audience tastes and mainstream theatre's financial and aesthetic limitations.

This situation only makes investment in new work and dramaturgy even more important. As Gorman (1992) argues, decreasing levels of public funding in the arts means that "theatre should take more risks, not fewer" (p. 111). Dramaturgy is one significant tool to facilitate productive risk-taking to enhance our cultural future. Although dramaturgy is gradually becoming a specialised profession, it is still overlooked and underutilised in significant ways. Only by addressing the current models of development and dramaturgical practice can vital and lasting changes be made to dramaturgy and the development of Australian playwrights.

3. Dramaturgical practice – issues and directions

One of the primary issues in contemporary dramaturgy is whether it is a profession, or a collection of skills that can be implemented by anyone with an inclination to learn them. Rosen (1995) argues that “Training in dramaturgy... both practical and theoretical is vital to *everyone* who seeks a life in the theater” (p. 189, original emphasis). Gallasch and Baxter (2003 – 2004) also note that some practitioners believe that “making theatre is a collective dramaturgy” (p. 38). Certainly, theatre is an essentially collaborative medium and the widespread application of dramaturgical skills would have likely benefits to the industry as a whole. However, acknowledging script development as a specific ability means recognising that dramaturgy is not just “a fancy term for dramatic structure” (Rosen 1995, p. 190). Ongoing equivocation and disagreement on these fundamental issues has meant that dramaturgs, particularly in English-language theatre, are often untrained and their contributions (potential and real) have been overlooked or underrated.

The studies by Gough (1991) and Gorman (1992) demonstrated the widespread use of dramaturgical techniques in the development of new work, and indicated that dramaturgy was recognised as a fundamental part of contemporary Australian theatre practice. Therefore this section outlines some of the main ideological, political, and aesthetic issues surrounding current dramaturgical practice and how these are being, or should be, addressed to influence a more productive future for Australian dramaturgs and playwrights.

3.1. Training and qualifications

Gough (1991) identified formal education as central to the future of dramaturgy in Australia (p. 28). However, efforts to teach dramaturgy have a significant number of obstacles. Tertiary courses have been confronted with the issue of “teaching the

rules of a vocation in which so few rules exist” (Bly 1986a, p. 6). It is difficult to establish dramaturgy as a profession due to the problems of regulating practitioners with such diverse techniques. As Beaton (1997) points out, there is no standardised form of practice as “It is difficult to codify the precise methodology of a dramaturg” (p. 5).

In many respects, it has proven unfeasible to force conventions upon dramaturgs who share neither common practices nor a “common background” (Akerholt in Gough, 1991, p. 5; Gorman 1992, p. 18). Honegger (in Bly 1986) argues that this indeterminacy is what makes dramaturgy so creative, and yet so difficult to teach: “the moment you start to train people and you say this profession is teachable, you have to organize it and make little rules and regulations, but ultimately dramaturgy is an art, not a science” (p. 34). Gorman (1992) agrees that training for dramaturgs is essential but difficult given the diversity of skills required (p. 42, p. 110). He warns against an over-academic approach which might “drown the thin, pure voice of the artist’s creativity under a suffocating wave of technique and craft” (p. 8).

Part of the problem with formalising dramaturgs’ education, then, is that such a move would reinforce misconceptions of dramaturgs as disassociated intellectuals. Gorman’s comment about the artist’s ‘pure voice’, for example, relies on the fallacy that writers are transcendent, sensitive artists whose creativity would be marred by any form of analysis or theoretical exploration. Moreover, dramaturgy is no less an art than acting or directing or writing, and courses in these disciplines are prevalent at both private and public educational institutions around the country. Some form of training is necessary in order to sustain and improve the quality of dramaturgical services regardless of who provides them.

Important lessons can be drawn from the formal education of dramaturgs in the United States since the 1970s. The American experience has proven that any course in dramaturgy should account for both the practical and theoretical aspects

of the profession (Bly 1986, p. 6; Esslin 1986, p. 19; Gough 1991, Appendix E:31; Rosen 1995, p.189). Attempts to prescribe the qualifications of a dramaturg in Australia have emphasised the need for this balance (Brisbane 1990, p. 5).

Several practitioners have attempted to define the qualifications necessary to be a dramaturg. Katz (1995) and Brisbane (1990) have provided perhaps the most comprehensive lists. Their work has several congruent points – namely, a crucial knowledge of the literary, theoretical, critical, and structural aspects of drama as well as practical skills in understanding, creating, developing and writing about theatre (Brisbane 1990, p. 5; Katz 1995, p. 13 – 16). Additionally, they emphasise that dramaturgs require an in-depth knowledge of the broader social, political, ideological, historical and cultural contexts within which theatre is created (Brisbane 1990, p. 5; Katz 1995, p. 13 – 15). Katz (1995) also addresses less tangible qualities such as diplomacy, tact, and interpersonal skills (p. 14 – 15).

The range of skills required for professional dramaturgy appears extensive. Yet efforts to outline the necessary qualifications tend to exclude more than they include as they are usually based on traditional concepts of dramaturgy and theatre. Knowledge of dramatic literature and history, for example, may be less relevant in relation to physical theatre, hybrid or cross art forms, or theatre practices in different cultural contexts. Intentionally or not, the characteristics considered essential to dramaturgical practice have customarily been grounded within the context of English-language, text-based theatre (Beaton 1997, p. 5).

In fact, 'theatre' and new work now encompass a broad range of written, spoken and physical 'texts' (Gough in Johns 1998, p. 5; Callaghan 1998). Any attempt to qualify the theoretical and practical attributes of contemporary dramaturgy needs to account for the fact that a dramaturg may be required to draw on, or work in, multiple art forms (Bly 1996, p. xx, xxi). These can include: writing, directing, design, performance, puppetry, dance, film and video, and electronic or online web

based art and writing. Script dramaturgy, in particular, requires specific skills that are oriented towards the short term goals of script development and the long term goal of the writer's development. The need for practical experience remains a central issue of dramaturgical training, particularly as dramaturgy is increasingly used in non-text based forms.

The ways that new work is developed have changed significantly over the past forty years due to higher expectations from practitioners, critics and audiences about the 'quality' and marketability of scripts. Beaton (in Gough 1991) points out that it is not good enough simply to write 'Australian plays', "Now the emphasis lies with the writing of 'good' plays: well constructed stories of universal appeal" (p. 25). Dramaturgy does more than simply determine the quality of scripts; it questions the very standards used to measure such quality:

I'm of the opinion that there is a need for us to question what constitutes a "good play" and to explore directions for theatre into the 21st century. It is here the dramaturg can play an enormous role... Dramaturgy, given status within the industry and respected by practitioners, has the potential to explore these new directions essential to our survival (Beaton in Gough 1991, p. 25).

It would appear to be within the best interests of the Australian theatre industry and its funding bodies to invest in the professional development of the practitioners who continue to push the parameters of new work. Formal training opportunities for established or emerging dramaturgs are currently limited to disparate, non-compulsory subjects at select universities. Due to few opportunities, competition for professional development funding is also strong and there are no guarantees of ongoing development processes within funding bodies. These circumstances, along with changes to the types of communication being used by writers and performers in new work, mean that the traditional functions and techniques of dramaturgy must also be re-examined.

3.2. Objectivity/subjectivity

One of the most prevalent assumptions about dramaturgy is that it is a form of 'objective observation' (Copelin 1995, p.19). McKone (1996) states that objectivity is essential "to produce professional standards" (p. 2). Objectivity has traditionally been considered an advantageous dramaturgical quality as it meant practitioners were in a 'better' position to comment on a text (Grutzner 1991, p. 41). Copelin (1995) argues, however, that support for objectivity was also motivated by a desire to keep dramaturgs at arms length from the production process (p. 19). Until recently, many dramaturgs have supported the notion that they should remain as objective as possible (Gough 1991 Appendix E:2, E:4, E:5, E:16, E:32, E:57; Walsh and Pettingill 1978, p. 53, 55; Brownstein 1978, p. 18; Lutterbie 1998, p. 113; Gorman 1992, p. 19) – despite the fact that many of the situations they work in require informed, aesthetic responses.

Part of a dramaturg's role, for example, is to mediate between various artists: the director and the actors; the director and the designer; and the director and the writer or text itself (Grutzner 1991, p. 41; Cattaneo 1978, p. 19). Yet somehow dramaturgs must remain 'outside' of these relationships, as promoted by Eustis (in Bly 1986):

A production dramaturg should not be responsible for the psychological relationships in a rehearsal. The production dramaturg's primary responsibility should remain an objective one. His [sic] responsibility should be to the text and to the conceptualization of the text as worked out between the director and the dramaturg - no matter how confused that gets between the first discussion and the opening. The production dramaturg should be the one person with his eye always on the text...His job is to stay outside those temporal pressures, to keep his eye on the sweep, the overview, the text, the concept (p. 9).

Keeping a sense of the 'big picture' is an important aspect of dramaturgical practice, but it is not solely a dramaturg's responsibility. Mellor (in Gough 1991), for example, questions the idea that the meanings, concept and interpretation of a text can become 'lost' during rehearsals: "I don't know of any director whom I respect actually losing sight of overall themes. That becomes the most important aspect and it is that which preoccupies everybody working on a production" (Appendix E:66, 24 - 30).

Underlying this issue is a fundamental paradox – the recurrent belief that dramaturgs should remain 'objective' observers and the simultaneous complaint that they don't 'do' anything: "There is still an attitude out there that since a production dramaturg doesn't routinely direct or write plays, he [sic] doesn't DO anything" (Bly 1986, p. 10, original emphasis). How, then, is it possible for dramaturgs to negotiate an affective position within the rehearsal room if they are expected to remain psychologically and emotionally removed from the creative process?

Dramaturgs who assume an objective position tend to work through, rather than with, other practitioners. That is, they adjust their position to suit the artistic goals and needs of the director, writer, and actors. Eustis (in Bly 1986) expands on this process:

...the purpose of the first meeting with the director is to define as precisely as possible in objective terms what our intention is in doing this play... I feel that it is often appropriate to mold [sic] my understanding of the text through the director's sensibility. It is not only the most appropriate way for me to work, but also one that tends to minimize [sic] tensions later (p. 11).

Dramaturgs working in these ways have to strike a balance between remaining aloof and being informed enough to provide helpful comments. This balance is extremely difficult to achieve as Vandenbroucke (in Bly) notes:

...I always try to perch on that narrow fulcrum between being in rehearsals enough to know what is being attempted, and being there so much I lose perspective. I've never managed to achieve that precise balance, but I try...No production has been ideal, not in the real producing world at least (p. 15).

The use of objective techniques can also be extremely slow. Dramaturgs must wait 'for the right moment' to make a comment or raise an idea: "Finding the right amount of comment, the proper time at which to comment, and an appropriate way in which to comment is in fact the fine art of production dramaturgy" (Esslin in Bly 1986, p. 23; also: Vandenbroucke in Bly 1986, p. 14). While diplomacy and tact are an inherent part of dramaturgical practice, this kind of dramaturgy places an emphasis on a practitioner's personality rather than his/her skills: "one's manner is important. There's no point in being right if no one listens to you. No playwright, director or producer is going to listen to a pompous sermon" (Vandenbroucke in Bly 1986, p. 15). There is a paradox between the detailed observations required by objective dramaturgy and the supposed isolation necessary to focus on the 'sweep' of the text:

The goal at our theater is to have the dramaturg relate almost exclusively to the dramaturgy and to have an overview that is separate from the rest of the hustle and bustle. I think that's when the production dramaturg is of most service to the director (Eustis in Bly 1986, p. 12).

An objective approach to dramaturgy sustains a traditional theatre hierarchy that places the director at the centre. Dramaturgs act as the director's 'supporter' and

the playwright's 'representative' (Eustis in Bly 1986, p. 11, 12; Hecht in Walsh and Pettingill 1986, p. 55; Brownstein 1978, p. 18).

Paradoxically, this kind of partnership relies heavily on a compatible relationship between the director and the dramaturg. Yet differences in status are more likely to arise under hierarchical, rather than collaborative, circumstances. Eustis (in Bly 1986) also admits that it is often difficult for a dramaturg's voice to be heard under these conditions (p. 10).

Critics of objectivity have argued that it is not only difficult to sustain but futile since it is not possible to remain entirely removed from the interactive processes of theatre. Copelin (1995) suggests that a more viable position is that of "informed subjectivity" (p. 19). Lutterbie (1998) agrees, maintaining that dramaturgs can never be apolitical because "virtually all activity is implicated in the realm of the political" (p. 117). From this perspective, objectivity is impossible since "we are never outside of ideology. There is always a system of institutional beliefs in which we are implicated" (p. 119). Borreca (1995) refers to the dramaturg as a "symbolic interactionist" (p. 160), a concept similar to Copelin's notion of informed subjectivity, in which the dramaturg maintains:

...a usable awareness of the creative process. The dramaturg keeps one eye on the work and the other eye on the process that makes the work, neither interrupting nor making an incursion into the creative process, but gently and persistently posing questions and making observations, with the intent of heightening everyone's (including the dramaturg's own) sense of where the work appears to be heading, what it is becoming and might become, and the various ways it might be perceived by an audience (Borecca 1995, p. 160).

Dramaturgs who assume a collaborative approach to the creative process resist dualisms and perceive job responsibilities as shared tasks. Bly (in Moore 1986), for example, advocates that dramaturgs be regarded as active collaborators, rather than objective observers (p. 47). In a collaborative model the threat of dramaturgs becoming 'unduly influential' is removed. Instead, the dramaturg becomes a valued member of the creative team, particularly in the early stages of development when ideas are being discussed. Rafalowicz (1978) describes this stage as a "a context of thinking", which establishes a "fruitful ground from which ideas sprout" (p. 27).

As part of a group, dramaturgs also shoulder more creative responsibility. Marks (1978) argues that it is only by becoming 'risk takers' alongside other artists that dramaturgs can expect to gain both acceptance and respect for their craft (p. 25). In a collaborative process, it is much more difficult for the perceived 'success' or 'failure' of a production to be attributed to one person. If creative input is not evaluated, then there is room for a range of opinions and ideas. Put simply, there is 'no harm' in a dramaturg's presence as their opinion is neither 'better' nor 'worse' than anyone else's, merely 'different'. Or, as Akerholt (in Gough 1991) puts it: "They can only enhance a production, it [dramaturgy] can never take away from it [the production process]" (Appendix E:32, 104; also: Bly in Moore 1986, p. 47).

Dramaturgy can also play an extremely important part in shaping a performance (Bly 1996, p. xxiii; Spinks 1999, p. 14; Rafalowicz 1978, p. 27; Honegger in Bly 1986, p. 36). As practitioners who focus on dramatic structure and craft, experienced dramaturgs have skills which can help to draw together the many aspects of a production into a cohesive whole. Some theatre practitioners could argue that this is a function already fulfilled by directors.

In a collaborative model, however, no particular job supplants another. Ideally, each practitioner's talents are used in relation to another's, whilst still retaining their area of specialisation as Rafalowicz (1978) describes:

...the different labelled functions in the work merge and overlap. Actors, director, writer(s), invited guests, dramaturg - all contribute to their own ability and skill. The dramaturg contributes to the texture of thought. Together with the questions, we start to establish a vocabulary, a code, a common work-history. A cross-current work is going on between writers, actors, director, dramaturg... (p. 27).

When all participants are central to the creative process, it is inevitable that they will reach a point of almost total involvement: "By this time none of us participant onlookers are 'objective'. We have to recognize the limitations of our perceptions. We are too involved...we need 'real' outsiders and ask them questions" (Rafalowicz 1978, p. 28). Objectivity, in the conventional sense, is no longer a viable concept. The group must now rely on others to act as an 'outside eye' in order to reposition themselves towards the text.

Yet Rafalowicz (1978) insists that this step does not indicate creative 'failure'. Rather, it is a significant time of re-creation and receptivity: "At this stage we, the non-actors, director, writer, dramaturg have to make a difficult re-adjustment. We have to re-create distance, to re-see, re-examine [...] We have to listen to outsiders' comments, judgements, criticisms" (p. 28). This approach acknowledges that dramaturgs are themselves far from immune to subjectivity. As Bly (in Moore 1986) notes, it is not possible to be one without first being the other:

I do not think you can be truly objective if you haven't been subjective first, or at least exposed to the subjectivity of others. I do not believe a production dramaturg can give doable, useful notes if he or she does not know the source of that work (p. 47).

This collaborative system, however, is difficult to sustain in subsidised theatre that usually has an ingrained financial and artistic hierarchy. Even Bly (in Moore 1986)

admits that he would not attempt to override a director's choice or opinion (p. 47). His decision is not based on superiority, but the recognition that "in theater there are simply 'choices': no 'right' or 'wrong' in a traditional sense. Also, I believe a common mistake that we make as dramaturgs is to think that a director does not realize that he or she has a problem with a particular scene" (p. 47).

Collaboration requires mutual respect for the unique skills of each individual, along with innovative ways to use these skills co-operatively. To be an effective function of dramaturgical practice, observation requires an atmosphere in which these qualities are prioritised. Similarly, neither an objective nor subjective stance is preferred. Rather, each is acknowledged and utilised for the unique qualities it can contribute. Participants in this kind of process remain simultaneously open to possibilities and aware of their limitations (Rafalowicz 1978, p. 28 - 29). Quite simply, it is a situation in which "Receptivity and collaboration are all" (Pettingill in Walsh and Pettingill 1978, p. 54). Working in this way, therefore, requires an appreciation for certain emotional, or less intellectual, qualities.

3.3. Trust and relationships

Many writers and dramaturgs agree that the compatibility and personalities of the people involved in dramaturgy are crucial (Gough 1991 Appendix E:4, E:28, E:32, E:54, Appendix F:2; Winning 1998, p. 11; Batchelor and Copeman 1999, p. 14; Bly 1986, p. 15, p.30, p. 35; Rafalowicz 1978, p. 29; Lutterbie 2000, p. 2; Gorman 1992, p. 15; Gallasch and Baxter 2003 – 2004, p. 41). Gorman (1992) emphasises that "Theatre is a group activity" that requires collective effort (p. 5). Indeed, the unique characteristic of scriptwriting is that it is the product of associations, rather than independence: "New plays arise out of the relations – psychological, emotional, creative, and otherwise – between writer and writing process, writer and project, writer and director, director and play, etc., etc." (Borrecia 1995, p. 160).

Dramaturgs must create an interpersonal position for themselves that will benefit all participants, and thereby necessitating the creation of a sense of trust between those involved in the development process. Lutterbie (2000) argues that this preparation is a key dramaturgical responsibility: "[There is] a considerable burden of proof on the dramaturg, because it is their responsibility to lay the groundwork for a positive working relationship " (p. 2).

Initially the relations in scriptwriting are between the writer and his/her work. Later this affinity must expand to include others – directors, actors and so on (Pitts 1998, p. 12). The close collaboration required for productive script dramaturgy means that the dramaturg and the writer need to establish professional respect for each other, if not personal rapport. Balodis (in Gough 1991) describes this relationship as an arranged 'marriage' which has to account for the specific needs of both parties:

It's like a marriage... it is important to match a dramaturg with a particular playwright and a particular play and then they have to work at it and come to some sort of arrangement and agreement as to what the goals are, what the play is... (Appendix E:13).

Eustis (in Bly 1986) also emphasises the importance of shared artistic goals and 'trust' between a dramaturg and other practitioners in order to achieve the best possible results. Dramaturgs, he insists, must be carefully matched with writers or directors: "I am against the idea that just any good dramaturg can work with just any good director" (p. 10). Gorman (1992) agrees that "Matching a [script] consultant with a writer is vital (p. 33). Rider (in Gorman 1992) also believes that compatible personalities and mutual respect were the "key" to successful dramaturgy (p. 27). Rafalowicz (1978) insists that the importance of relationships in creative development restricts who she chooses to collaborate with:

As a dramaturg I am limited with whom I can work with. I can help make something better, clearer, only when the working relationship is one of mutual respect. Not uniformity of thinking and feeling... but a basis of sympathy. Ideally with everyone involved in the process. So I can really only work with friends. When I run out of friends to work with in theatre I will do something else (1978, p. 29).

However, Balodis (in Gough 1991) disagrees, arguing that dramaturgy requires a degree of constructive criticism that a close friend may not have:

...sometimes what writers do is get their friends to be dramaturgs and I don't think that is particularly good for the friendship and not particularly good for the play... the whole notion of being the writer's friend, I must say, I've never found a particularly useful one" (Appendix E:16 - 17).

While sympathetic understanding is encouraging and important for a writer's self-confidence (May 1995, p. 57), a dramaturg needs to balance this with critical support. Borecca (1995) contends that the significance of relationships for dramaturgical processes means that the first question that should be asked is not 'Who should I be working with?', but 'Should I be working with them?':

...too many dramaturgs assume that all plays need a dramaturg, overlooking the first step in examining the relations among playwright, process, and project: determining whether or not a project needs a dramaturg, especially during the writing process (p. 161).

Borecca (1995) argues in order for dramaturgy to be successful the writer needs first to be "open" to its processes (p. 160). A dramaturg needs to consider three key questions to determine the extent of a writer's receptivity: How can the project benefit from dramaturgy?; What is the writer's own process?; and How does the

writer want to make use of dramaturgy ? (p. 160). An understanding of these issues and their relation to one another can help the dramaturg to decide the best way to proceed and help establish a relationship that is based on mutual trust and respect rather than abstract intimacy. This also means that if conflict does occur, it can have constructive rather than destructive results:

There doesn't need to be a perfect marriage between dramaturg and project. Instead there might be healthy tensions – areas where dramaturgical background and training might bring new ways of thinking to a writer's process (p.163).

Beaton (1997) also argues that comparing dramaturgical relationships to marriage prioritises individual personalities, rather than the work in question (p. 5). Borecca's (1995) methodology is, in many ways, more beneficial and suitable to the kinds of collaborative work processes indicative of contemporary script development. It avoids the hierarchy that characterises traditional theatre relationships. Most importantly, perhaps, the dramaturg as 'symbolic interactionist' opens up not just the possibilities of the text but of the writer as well:

One practical effect of this approach is that it leaves the playwright, at the end of a dramaturgical conference, with a set of options, rather than a set of critical notes on the text, as if it were finished... The dramaturg helps the playwright discover possible paths. The playwright must choose one and go down it, while the dramaturg may wait safely behind, awaiting some word of where the path has led (Borecca 1995, p. 166).

The effects of this dramaturgy are often unseen but no less effective.

3.4. Invisible dramaturgy

For many directors, playwrights and actors it can be difficult to respect or understand something which they cannot see. This has been one of the major problems for script dramaturgy: “One looks at an interpretation of a major work and one sees “Dramaturgy by...” and one thinks well...I can't see any evidence” (Mellor in Gough 1991 Appendix E:66). Consequently, dramaturgs acquire a lower status since they are not seen to be ‘risking’ anything:

The production dramaturg is an unaccountable entity...we are ultimately never individually responsible for the outcome the way a director is. The director is exposed, the playwright is exposed, but the production dramaturg goes into the rehearsal hall as an invulnerable authority. The only way he risks anything is in his relationship with the director, and if he fails, he can blame it on the director and sit there and take no responsibility (Honegger in Bly 1986, p. 35 - 36).

Lutterbie (2000) explains that this perceived unaccountability means, “dramaturgs are invisible... they get neither the credit nor the blame” (p. 4).

Although dramaturgical work is not usually obvious, this does not mean dramaturgs are not jeopardising anything. Like any other practitioner, poor performance will be detrimental to the dramaturg's reputation and the profession itself. This has clearly been demonstrated by early aversions to dramaturgy based on inadequate training and experience. Furthermore, the significance of interpersonal relationships to dramaturgy, and the collaborative nature of theatre, means that dramaturgs risk a great deal if they damage their association with a colleague.

Lutterbie (2000) suggests that invisibility makes dramaturgy more effective “because they are not burdened with the guillotine of success. Without the dread of failure, they are, perhaps, able to see more clearly, to think more strategically and be more open” (p. 4). Davey (in Gallasch and Baxter 2003 – 2004) also believes

that lack of responsibility gives dramaturgs greater creative licence, hence “they can be quite radical in their suggestions” (p. 38). It is contestable that dramaturgs do not necessarily have greater insight than any other participant in a creative process. The idea that a dramaturg is somehow more liberated by his/her apparent lack of responsibility also discounts the significance of diplomacy and tact in dramaturgical practice, and suggests that closeness to a creative process generates more conservative perspectives.

On the contrary, using informed subjectivity and working as a symbolic interactionist means that the effectiveness of dramaturgy lies precisely in a dramaturg’s intense involvement in the creative process and his/her relationship with colleagues. Dramaturgs are ultimately not solely responsible for the final product of a creative process, whether it be a text, a production, or both. Dramaturgical responsibility lies in the ethical and professional relationships they sustain and their facilitation and mediation of creative processes. This approach evokes Proehl’s (1999) notion of “affective” dramaturgy – “unpositioned”, adaptable, and committed to thinking and analysing creativity in accessible ways (p. 2). A dramaturg’s work is (and should be) only visible through the work of others. Indeed, successful dramaturgy is invisible dramaturgy in that only through the quality of the script and the writer’s long-term development is its presence felt. In this sense, leaving no trace of his/her practice is perhaps a dramaturg’s highest achievement.

3.5. Dramaturgical questioning

Establishing strong relationships and maintaining unseen results are key issues in contemporary dramaturgy. One of the important ways of achieving these results is through questioning. Borecca (1995) explains that this technique helps to create the symbolic interactionist position of dramaturgy and subsequently opens up, rather than closes off, possibilities:

In general, options are arrived at by questions, questions, questions, tentative answers, and more questions – that is by an essentially Socratic method designed to help the playwright develop a better sense of what he [sic] is after, and how he might achieve it (p. 166).

Many dramaturgs use questioning as a development process (Rafalowicz 1978, p. 28; Gough 1991, Appendix E:11, E:8; Bly 1986 p. 47; Gorman 1992, p. 24). Beaton (in Gough 1991) notes that she began using the technique when she realised that it yielded long-term results: “Questioning empowers the person you are questioning because they know the answers and that empowers them immediately because it is their answers” (Appendix E:6).

Questioning also helps to create relationships that are mutual rather than hierarchical, “Because it questions and investigates rather than judges... [and] helps the playwright suppress... his [sic] self-critical voice “ (Borecca 1995, p. 167). This process does not interfere with the writer and encourages exploration of possibilities that might not have been considered. Gorman’s (1992) research found that questioning also created an explorative, productive environment by establishing an interactive dialogue between the writer and the dramaturg: “This dialogue contains a dialectic which in time leads to the solution of dramatic problems” (p. 24). This approach is significant as it understands that the “dramaturgical process is, above all, an interaction between two lively and interesting minds” (Gorman 1992, p. 31)

Dramaturgical questioning is of crucial significance to contemporary dramaturgical practice. It resists notions of dramaturgy as a form of interference and assists writers' long-term development by encouraging them to seek their own solutions and develop a better understanding of their work methods and methodologies. Questioning challenges notions of the dramaturg as an 'intellectual', or 'expert' with predetermined 'answers'. Despite these advantages, there has been little in-depth investigation into the precise nature of dramaturgical questioning or its effects, either long or short-term, on writers and their texts.

3.6. Women in dramaturgy

Although dramaturgy, like most professions, was traditionally male dominated, since the late 1970s it has become increasingly popular with women (Schechter 1978, p. 5; Austin 1998, p. 121 – 122; Hay 1995, p. 72). However, little has been done to address feminist issues in the field (Austin 1998, p. 122). The sheer number of women dramaturgs means that an analysis of their impact, or even potential impact, should be analysed in light of contemporary practice.

Austin (1998) suggests that the proportion of female dramaturgs and the profession's relatively low status in the industry are not mutually exclusive. The facilitative, intermediary, transitory and invisible nature of dramaturgy may help to explain why so many women are dramaturgs:

I have heard it said that the majority of production dramaturgs are women because men would never agree to do so much work for so little compensation. They would never allow themselves to be invisible... For some women, work as a dramaturg is probably as close as they can hope to get to professional directing... (p. 122).

However, Hay (1995) argues that the problems experienced by dramaturgs are not gender exclusive: “male dramaturgs are just as frustrated whether they work under female or male leadership, and... the weakness lies with the job rather than the gender “ (p. 72). Hay does concede that women are perhaps more likely to be content with the job than men who often aspire to more powerful positions (p. 72). Proehl (in Austin 1998) agrees that dramaturgy’s intermediary role may prove more attractive to women than men: “the dramaturg... [is a] middle manager, an institutional figure with relatively little power, who relies on the institution for sustenance“ (p. 123).

There are also more positive aspects to a feminist understanding of dramaturgy. Both contemporary dramaturgy and feminism prioritise collaborative approaches (Austin 1998, p. 123; Stanley and Wise 1993, p. 189, 1991, p. 23; 1983 p. 53; Reinharz 1992, p. 240). Feminist research is grounded in practice which aims to instigate (social) change (Reinharz 1992, p. 240). In the same way, dramaturgy cannot be separated from its creative practice. Feminist research is also concerned with collapsing traditional dualisms, particularly those between objectivity and subjectivity. These similarities make feminism ideal for an exploration of contemporary dramaturgical practice, and suggest that both feminism and dramaturgy have much to offer each other by way of methods and methodologies. At the very least, the sheer number of women in dramaturgy and ongoing issues of visibility, accountability, and responsibility in dramaturgy warrant further investigation. Indeed, the appropriateness of a feminist approach to dramaturgy is explored in more detail in Chapter Four, Research Methodology.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated some of the fundamental issues of contemporary dramaturgical practice and explained the development and characteristics of

Australian script dramaturgy. The chapter began with a discussion of the controversy surrounding dramaturgy from its inception and the challenges that have faced the development of the profession. While there is still a lingering reluctance to use the term 'dramaturgy' in some sectors of the arts industry, and the practice itself effectively evades a distinct definition, semantic ambiguity is perhaps less important than refocusing on what dramaturgs do and how they do it. Such changes are particularly vital in relation to the development of new work where dramaturgs and the industry as a whole must address ongoing issues of transparency and accountability. The fact that these issues persist indicates that dramaturgs themselves need to give more thought to describing their craft and the role they can and do play in creative contexts.

This chapter has also demonstrated that while script dramaturgy has significantly developed in the last thirty years, progress has often been hampered by adherence to outmoded work methods and preconceptions about dramaturgy among industry practitioners. The standard practices of assessment and facilitation are still the cornerstones of dramaturgical practice, but they require further understanding and investigation in relation to the contemporary needs of playwrights and the future directions of dramaturgy.

Several observers and practitioners identified some important issues to reconsider for the current and future needs of playwrights and dramaturgs: the necessity of early dramaturgical support in the writing process; the significance of collaborative relationships based on mutual respect and trust; increased funding for long-term, sustainable development; more innovative, strategic ways of conceiving, creating, and producing new work; and more rigorous consideration of the current and future forms and purposes of live performance.

Implementing these changes requires a commitment to adaptable and diverse methods of development, as Gough (1991) advises: "support needs to be made

available in several ways to help us develop new works, new writers and the methods of dramaturgical practice“. Dramaturgs themselves need to remain flexible and clear about their methods and methodologies. This adaptability, however, needs to be balanced by the creation of suitable training and standards of practice that can contribute to dramaturgical best practice. Implementing training courses or ongoing forms of professional dramaturgical development would also support Gorman’s (1992) recommendation that dramaturgy be regarded as a distinct profession and a “specialised skill, not as a skill that anyone can necessarily master” (p. 111). Dramaturgs can contribute to their own development by developing greater understanding of techniques such as facilitation and questioning.

Dramaturgy has an important part to play in the future development of live performance arts by recording and questioning current practices. Eckersall, Beddie and Monaghan (2003) believe that dramaturgy can “allow for the essential luxury of contemplation and evaluation of both process and product” (p. 43). However, thinking about and assessing artistic processes and products and the connections between the two should be a necessity rather than a luxury. Gough (1997) has commented on this distinctive situation:

The majority of other industries outside theatre which rely on new product commit time, energy and resources to research and development. Theatre is one of the few areas where this investment is perceived as a luxury rather than essential operation (p. 10).

There is clearly a need to understand dramaturgy in new and innovative ways in order to match the current contexts in which dramaturgy is currently being used, and in order to ensure a vibrant and relevant creative future.

New approaches to dramaturgy are particularly important given that Gough's (1991) research revealed that "Relevance is the factor often lacking" (Appendix B:5) in the development of new work. The following chapters – the Conceptual Framework and Research Methodology – illustrate the unique and particular concepts that have influenced my own dramaturgical practice and which have been used in my research to develop new ways of understanding and investigating dramaturgy.

Chapter Three
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1. Mentoring Relationships	62
1.1. Partnerships	66
1.2. Groups	67
1.3. Women and Mentoring	69
2. Mentoring methods	72
3. Mentoring in the Arts Industry	76
4. Conclusion	82

Chapter Three

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

My research is primarily concerned with investigating dramaturgy as a form of mentoring due to many similarities between the concepts and practices of mentoring and dramaturgy. My research has revealed little or no in-depth comparison of either dramaturgy or mentoring in Australia or overseas – which is surprising given that effective dramaturgy is often perceived to be reliant on a strong interpersonal relationship between a dramaturg and a playwright. However, Crow and Matthews (1998) point out that mentoring is often considered outside of the contexts it is used in: “Discussions of mentoring tend to occur in a theoretical vacuum, ignoring the conceptual foundations that both justify and organize [sic] mentoring” (p. viii). This lack of context at least partially explains why dramaturgy and mentoring have not been rigorously investigated as congruent models of development.

These oversights in dramaturgical knowledge convinced me to reconsider dramaturgy as a mentoring process, thereby substantially questioning current dramaturgical practice and the long-term strategies of professional development for Australian playwrights. Mentoring is also appropriate for my research purposes since it is a process that frequently perceives life experiences as significant educational tools (Shea 1992, p. 11 –12; Kemp 1997, p. 21 - 33). Mentoring and dramaturgy are established, although not widespread, forms of professional development for Australian playwrights. Funding, training, and the implementation of both processes has been inconsistent and largely based on outdated understandings of their methodologies. Mentoring is not a new concept, but its “institutionalisation” is much more recent (Hergenhan 1999, p. 8).

In this chapter these issues are investigated by outlining relevant aspects of mentoring to compare and contrast them with dramaturgical practice. It considers

the ways that mentoring is currently used in the development of Australian playwrights and drama. Mentoring for women is also briefly analysed for its relevance to the specific female contexts of my case studies. However, this analysis is by no means comprehensive, as it is beyond the scope of my research; and source material on this issue is particularly limited.

Although mentoring has become an increasingly popular form of professional development in Australian theatre – especially within funding bodies and youth arts contexts – most theory about mentoring has occurred in educational and corporate fields. Consequently, I have used only those aspects of mentoring theory and practice with the greatest relevance to dramaturgy. The first section of this chapter illustrates the traditional and contemporary features of mentoring relationships. This outline is followed by descriptions of the kinds of mentoring relationships most relevant to my research – partnerships and groups – and their concomitant relevance to dramaturgy. The final sections outline specific mentoring methods and objectives; and past and present ways that mentoring has been and is used in the development of Australian playwrights. These sections will explicitly demonstrate that the role of the dramaturg (as defined in my research) is essentially a mentoring one, and this determination has potentially widespread implications for the current and future forms of playwright development in this country.

1. Mentoring Relationships

Traditionally, mentoring has been based on paternalistic, hierarchical development models in which an older, more accomplished individual directs the professional development of a younger, less experienced protégé or disciple (Shea 1992, p. v,7; Clutterbuck 1991, p. 2; Hergenhan 1999, p. 8).

However, contemporary concepts of mentoring often have a more holistic and reciprocal approach, as Shea (1992) explains:

Mentoring is now seen as a process whereby mentor and mentee work together to discover and develop the mentee's latent abilities. The goal is... the empowerment of the mentee by developing his or her abilities (p. v).

Shea effectively describes the collaborative dynamic of contemporary mentoring: the mentor and mentee 'work together'. He also suggests that this is a simple, unilateral partnership in which only the mentee learns from the mentor; inferring a more traditional, authoritarian relationship.

In contrast, Mitchell (2000) argues that mentors do not necessarily have to be more experienced or have higher status than their mentees. Instead "they can be a peer, a friend, or a family member" ; in short, "A mentor is anyone you can learn from" (p.3). Mitchell's definition challenges the dualisms surrounding conventional mentoring and accounts for the multiple ways that two, or more, people can learn from each other – regardless of age or formal education. It is also compatible with feminist concepts of reciprocal, interactive, and transactive systems of knowledge and understanding. Most significantly, however, it accurately describes my dramaturgical relationship with the WIT members and Margery Forde; that is, as collaborative and constructive friendships built on trust and honesty.

Efficient mentoring relationships, however, are not necessarily based on friendship. Certainly, mentoring is often a personal, intimate, emotionally supportive, and confidential relationship in which trust and honesty play a key role (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 2, 7 & 8; Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 10; Clutterbuck 1991, p. 1 & 2; Mitchell 2000, p. 1 –2). The friendships built during this kind of mentoring are often ongoing and affect both parties long after the mentoring has ended (Clutterbuck 1991, p. 1, p. 36; Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 2; Shea 1992, p. 9; Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 10). Research undertaken by Arizona Leadership

2000 and Beyond (2001), an organisation developing women's leadership skills, showed that participants generally preferred informal and personal mentoring

relationships. Similar methodologies or outlooks, and compatible personalities were also considered advantageous to the mentoring process (p. 7). These aspects were common to my relationships with both the WIT members and Margery. In both cases, I either established or already enjoyed longstanding friendships with the participants and this association was crucial to their perception and reception of dramaturgy.

Yet not all mentoring relationships have to be long-term or personal. Shea (1992) demonstrates that mentoring can take many different forms; for example, it may be short-term and/or formally structured (p. 8 –9). He insists that mentoring (like dramaturgy) should be flexible enough to meet the specific needs of the participants at a given time (p. 13). Furthermore Mitchell (2000) argues that mentor partners do not have to be personally compatible – “Your mentor may... be someone you don’t particularly like” (p. 3). She maintains that personal compatibility may be less important in the partnership if the relationship is based on an “information exchange rather than a nurturing relationship” (p. 3). It may be ideal if participants share “similar values or principles” (p. 3), but Mitchell challenges the assumption that mentor participants have to share similar personalities:

Your mentor doesn’t have to be like you. In fact, it’s better if they are not. A mentor should be someone whose point of difference in work practices or character is your point of discovery (p. 3).

Clutterbuck (1991) also notes that the participants in a mentoring relationship do not have to have similar or even complementary personalities (p. 53). These arguments are based on corporate contexts and private enterprise which are manifestly distinct from much aesthetic practice. Nonetheless, Mitchell and

Clutterbuck’s concepts have relevance for dramaturgical practice as they challenge the perceptions demonstrated in Gough’s (1991) research that

dramaturgs are necessarily a writer's friend, or that dramaturgy is a 'marriage' of the playwright and dramaturg's personalities.

Accordingly, Mitchell's interpretation of mentoring is not unlike Borecca's (1995) description of dramaturgy in which conflict or points of difference are used constructively to discover new knowledge (p. 163). What is important for effective dramaturgy and mentoring is that the partnership is based on equivalent and respectful terms, and that the participants carefully consider the terms of their relationship and how they will proceed. Crow and Matthews' (1998) description of the dangers of groundless mentoring has distinct resonance for dramaturgical practice:

In addition to the lack of a theoretical understanding, the practice of mentoring is typically unintended and unsupported. Mentors are often selected without a great deal of thought and rarely trained (p. viii).

Similarly, Borecca (1995) insists that the first step in a dramaturgical relationship is the dramaturg assessing whether in fact the playwright needs a dramaturg, and then determining the purposes and methods of any subsequent dramaturgical relationship (p. 160 – 161). Batchelor and Copeman (1998) noticed that student dramaturgs and playwrights who were arbitrarily matched in a Queensland tertiary playwrighting course were more likely to encounter problems than those who selected their own partners (p. 10). Their finding supports Borecca's argument that dramaturgs/mentors need to establish their roles, their strategies, responsibilities, and goals with a playwright/mentee before they begin work. As my own case studies demonstrate, this methodology was manifest in my work with Margery, but absent in my work with WIT.

Such disparity partly explains my clearly delineated role and responsibilities with Margery, and my less clearly defined role with WIT.

To understand participants of mentoring as respected team members who make equal yet different contributions implies that mentoring, like dramaturgy, is not a simple process of unilateral exchange. Hergenhan (1999) confirms that mentoring is a more complex, diverse and variable process than simple 'top-down' structures of enlightenment and empowerment (p. 8). Indeed, mentoring relationships can have various forms and goals. I have selected the forms of mentoring that represent my relationships with Margery and WIT – partnerships and groups.

1.1. Partnerships

Contemporary definitions of mentoring often conceive it as a reciprocal partnership “with both parties freely contributing to the discussion as equals working together, based upon mutual respect” (Shea 1992, p. 96). This kind of mentoring is based on a 'circular' model in which participants continuously exchange knowledges and success is measured by the effects of the mentoring relationship on both parties (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 12 & p. 1; Mitchell 2000, p. 4). Clutterbuck (1991) circumstantially argues that mentoring is perhaps the most effective form of professional development due to the mutual benefits for participants (p. 4).

The circular model of mentoring is an accurate description of my dramaturgical relationship with Margery Forde. As Chapter Five demonstrates, mutual learning and development were a crucial part of our relationship and significantly affected the long and short term goals of the dramaturgical process. Our reciprocal questioning, honest responses, mutual support, and general collaborative approach are all indicative of an informal, yet strategic and effective mentoring relationship.

Without such reciprocity, dramaturgy and mentoring are prone to the kinds of real or perceived hazards that have impeded their progress as development models. Crowe and Matthews (1998), for example, explain that mentors may try to use their

partners to fulfill hidden, personal agendas (p. 8). Similarly, the outdated notion of dramaturgy as 'script-doctoring' tends to serve a dramaturg's rather than a playwright's interests. Such opportunism relies on traditional, hierarchical notions of dramaturgy and mentoring.

Crowe and Matthews (1998) emphasise that mentoring is actually an interdependent relationship that should encourage the mentee to take responsibility for her/his own decisions (p. 64). Shea (1992) agrees and states that "the mentor helps – but the mentee does" (p. 69). This description is a simple but effective analogy for dramaturgy as well. It emphasises the individual yet interconnected roles that participants in mentoring/dramaturgy play. Crowe and Matthews (1998) argue that one of the key advantages of mentoring is that it helps prevent the participants from becoming isolated within their workplace or industry, and thereby encourages innovation and progress (p. 9). In the same way, dramaturgs can act as an important link between playwrights and the arts industry, while striving to develop new and original work with playwrights, directors, performers.

Mentoring processes, therefore, are not necessarily limited to only two people. In fact, there are significant comparisons between the processes of group collaboration and mentoring which are particularly relevant for my dramaturgical relationship with WIT.

1.2. Groups

Arizona Leadership (2001) claims that the origins of group mentoring lie in the consciousness raising groups of the Women's Liberation Movement (p. 2).

Consequently, group mentoring prioritises cooperative learning methods. Its goals are not dissimilar to many women's support groups: to share information, learn new skills, provide mutual support and constructive criticism, and create

opportunities for networking (p. 2). The presence of multiple participants also suggests that there are greater opportunities for networking or information sharing in group mentoring than in partnerships. At the very least, group mentoring can provide participants with a broader range of responses and information.

The specific collaborative processes of groups, however, are possibly more complicated in creative contexts than in corporate sectors. Understanding how the members of a group mentor each other through creative collaboration is essential to understanding my dramaturgical relationship with WIT. More broadly, group mentoring has important implications for the use of dramaturgy beyond writer/dramaturg partnerships.

Simons and Bateman (2000) demonstrate that the notion of individual 'genius' is being increasingly replaced with recognition of creative collaborations in diverse fields of practice (p. 93 – 94). This concept is compatible with feminist arguments that knowledge is a dynamic and social process (Addelson 1993, p. 268 – 269), leading to the conclusion that knowledge is produced by communities rather than individuals (Harding 1993, p. 65; Nelson 1993, p. 123). Likewise, Nelson (1993) does not deny that individuals produce knowledge, but asserts that knowledge is, to a greater or lesser extent, derived from wider social contexts (p. 124). Both communal knowledge and collaborative creativity, therefore, are reliant upon the interdependent and interpersonal relationships between an individual and his/her wider community or group. (Nelson 1993, p. 141 – 142; Simons and Bateman 2000, p. 94).

Interpersonal relations between the WIT members were certainly integral to our creative processes and product. In the WIT interview Elizabeth describes how working together as a group had intangible kinetic results (“making that energy”);

and how certain members 'bounced off' each other (Appendix E:v, 216-217, 220) – a phrase often used in performance contexts to describe the effectiveness of creative relationships. Simons and Bateman (2000) refer to this phenomenon as

'Illumination', which is "similar to what Artaud called 'contagion'. The group suddenly gels when an exciting idea takes hold" (p. 98).

An understanding of collaborative creativity, and the collective generation of knowledge, is crucial to changing preconceived ideas about dramaturgy and mentoring as unilateral, interventionist forms of 'expertise'. The processes of group mentoring may be more complex than partnerships because of the inclusion of multiple voices and perspectives, but its objectives are ultimately the same: to assist others to succeed beyond their expectations (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 2). Achieving this goal requires sustained support and constructive criticism, issues of particular relevance for female playwrights.

1.3. Women and Mentoring

Within the corporate sector, mentoring has assisted women to form more authoritative and equitable relationships with male counterparts in traditionally hierarchical settings (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 6 – 7). Since the late 1980s, changes to funding and programming priorities in Australia have created greater parity for many women in the arts industry (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 61, 63, 124). This situation has been expedited by the significant number of women in positions of authority within the arts, and by women's playwrighting advocacy and support agencies such as Playworks (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 98, 127; Swanson and Wise c. 1994, p. 44 – 46). Indeed, the arbitrary nature of the arts industry means that many of the obstacles facing women are not gender specific (Swanson and Wise c. 1994, p. 2; Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 61).

However, women in the arts can still encounter sexist or gender related assumptions that impede their development. Swanson and Wise's (c.1994) research on women's participation in the arts concluded that the nature of the industry meant that women were "structurally disadvantaged", despite being a "mainstay" of the arts sector (p. 4). Chesterman and Baxter's (1995) survey for

Playworks found that women constituted a large portion of writers working in Theatre in Education, and youth and community theatre, sectors that were simultaneously under-resourced and under-funded (p. 126). Additionally, while major production companies had taken steps to improve the equal representation of women writers in their programming, these developments were relatively minor (p. 126). Some companies claimed that “plays by women are not major works, are too risky to produce and do not please audiences”, but they failed to produce evidence for these claims (p. 126). Baxter and Chesterman (1995) also found that women who wrote certain kinds of plays were more likely to be marginalised than others:

Some respondents believe that their work has been subject to a male judgement about the relevance of its content, theme, form and dramatic impact, particularly if they write from a feminist perspective (p. 121).

These findings suggest that visibility, representation and support are still ongoing concerns for Australian women writers; a situation that has broader implications for the industry itself. Swanson and Wise (c.1994) suggest:

...more *systematic platforms* are necessary for women to develop successful careers in the arts and cultural industries; to provide this , there is a need for better career development in the sector *generally* (p. 3, original emphasis).

Both mentoring and dramaturgy can provide the strategic frameworks necessary for this kind of long-term development. Significantly, research in both the corporate and arts sectors found that women tend to work in ways which are highly amenable to mentoring, but they are less likely than men to receive such support (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 6; Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 127).

Women, for example, considered networking, collaboration, and long-term support to be important forms of professional development (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 127). Chesterman and Baxter (1995) note that this approach recognises theatre

as a “collaborative medium and familiarity with writers and their work is important for directors, designers and all creative personnel” (p. 127).

Additionally, women playwrights are more likely to experience interruptions to their careers due to family commitments, and are more likely to start a writing career after other kinds of work. Consequently, women “take longer to develop reputations as writers than men of an equivalent age” (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 123). Despite these needs, women writers are “offered far fewer mentors and role models than the male writer whose work has been more often performed and studied” (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 123). This situation is compounded by a lack of funding for dramaturgical development (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 46).

As in corporate and educational sectors, dramaturgy/mentoring can provide women in the arts with the necessary self-confidence and industry connections that facilitate professional growth. Self-confidence and professional contacts are particularly important in the arts industry as even experienced playwrights, both male and female, can encounter the same obstacles as less experienced writers when it comes to having their work produced (Chesterman and Baxter 1995, p. 122). Gorman (citing Daly 1992), for example, notes that there is a clear need to ‘foster’ individual playwrights through “confidence boosting and personal development” (p. 15). Significantly, Kemp (1997) and Mitchell (2000) argue that sharing personal experiences is an important part of mentoring for women. Treating dramaturgy as mentoring, therefore, may provide playwrights (particularly women playwrights) with the kinds of interpersonal collaborations vital for personal and professional development.

Perhaps most importantly, treating dramaturgy as mentoring can provide the most effective way of meeting the primary needs of Australian playwrights, regardless of gender differences. Chesterman and Baxter (1995) identify workshops as a way of meeting these needs:

...writers need workshops in how to talk about their work, self-management, employment options, role models, more sophisticated forms of dramaturgy and strategies to develop collaborative relationship [sic] with agents and companies (p. 122).

Workshops, however, may only provide short-term solutions to what are, in effect, ongoing, constantly changing needs; the 'more sophisticated forms of dramaturgy and strategies' can be provided by mentoring. In many ways the processes of mentoring are specifically designed to meet these needs as demonstrated in the following section.

2. Mentoring methods

Mentoring uses a range of methods and methodologies that are compatible with dramaturgy. Crowe and Matthews (1998), for example, emphasise the importance of listening and encouraging the mentee to discover his/her own solutions rather than providing them him/her answers. Their advice to mentors has considerable implications for a collaborative approach to dramaturgy: "Refrain from judgement and offering too much advice. Allow the intern to reflect on options rather than simply offering your own opinions" (p. 64). Mitchell (2000) agrees that mentoring should be constructively influential and assist the mentee to recognise both their strengths and weaknesses through "reflective rather than prescriptive advice" (p. 3). Freire (1997) concludes that this process is the mentor's "liberatory task", encouraging the recipients to "become the owners of their own history" (p. 324).

Dramaturgy as mentoring, therefore, discourages notions of intervention or interference; its purpose is to assist others to succeed. Indeed, for both dramaturgy and mentoring the measure of their intangible success lies in others' achievements. Significantly, mentoring uses a familiar dramaturgical technique – questioning – to achieve this goal. Crow and Matthews (1998) urge mentors to:

Ask insightful questions. Consider the circumstances and then frame questions around those conditions. These circumstances may change in another situation or setting. Ask the intern to consider those other situations (p. 64).

Clutterbuck (1991) agrees that mentoring (like dramaturgy) must remain flexible and adaptable, changing to meet the needs of the participants as they occur (p. 34). This kind of mentoring provides structure and direction through mutual exploration, with participants working together to find alternatives (Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 62; Shea 1992, p. 9). It acknowledges that the mentor's and the mentee's actions and decisions affect each other reciprocally.

Indeed, mentoring emphasises that the mentee plays an active role in his/her own development. Shea (1992) explains that "The mentee can only *experience* the beneficial gifts of mentoring by assuming ownership of what the mentor has offered" (p. 5, original emphasis). Shea's assertion has important implications for dramaturgy, which is often considered most effective as part of a collaborative process, but the responsibility for that collaboration is often left to the dramaturg alone.

Borecca (1995), for example, urges dramaturgs to analyse a writer's receptivity to dramaturgy before working with him/her (p. 160 – 161). Yet the kinds of questions Borecca demands dramaturgs ask themselves – how can the writer benefit from dramaturgy?, for example – are rarely asked of writers themselves. Similarly, Lutterbie (2000) maintains that it is the dramaturg's responsibility to

"lay the groundwork for a positive working relationship" (p. 2). Certainly, dramaturgs wishing to establish effective collaborative relationships have an obligation to explain their methodologies and goals, but writers also need to consider dramaturgy in the same way that Mitchell (2000) encourages participants to approach mentoring:

As a mentoree, accept challenges from your mentor and be committed to act on any suggestions they may make and give them feedback on what has worked and what hasn't worked (p. 3).

The reciprocity that made my dramaturgical relationship with Margery Forde so effective, and which was crucial to WIT's creative collaboration, was largely the result of our personal approaches or work methods rather than a deliberate strategy. One of the primary goals of mentoring is to provide the participants with a better understanding of themselves and their work methods through self-reflective analysis (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 7; Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 11; Mitchell 2000, p. 3). My experiences with Margery and WIT suggest that consciously acknowledging this goal can provide more effective and enduring results.

Mentoring, like dramaturgy, is not always a measurable process. Hergenhan (1999) stresses that mentoring often occurs unconsciously and its effects are not always obvious, immediate, or quantifiable. Shea (1992) explains that: "One person may, without realising it, do or say something which has an important effect on another person" (p. 9). Certainly, Margery and I often impacted on each other in both subtle and explicit ways, and the effects of group dramaturgy within WIT were not distinct until after the production.

Yet the less obvious consequences of mentoring/dramaturgy are just as important as the more prominent ones. Hergenhan (1999) explains that "intuitive" forms of mentoring can help writers to develop the more intangible aspects of their craft: "The mentor is a catalyst as it were, though hardly inert". (p. 9). Shea (1992)

agrees that mentoring is a largely indeterminate process, "part intuition, part feelings and part hunch" (p. 13). Simply because the results of dramaturgy or mentoring are not immediately evident does not mean that they have been ineffective. Hergenhan (1999) argues that imperceptible qualities are precisely what makes mentoring so significant:

...sometimes it is not the specifics of what is said by a mentor, but the spirit of a relationship, that conveys the spark of encouragement and stimulation, strengthening the will or obsession to write that comes from within and that writers often prefer to leave unconscious (p. 9).

Johns (1998) confirms that the potential for dramaturgy to uncover the unconscious aspects of a writer's imagination has a similar significance: "tapping into what the writer has conjured up and what is latent in their subconscious" (p. 5). The fear of interfering with the 'organic' or unconscious aspects of creativity, however, is perhaps partly why there has been such slow acceptance of dramaturgical and mentoring processes as significant forms of professional development for writers. This situation has been exacerbated by persistent beliefs in the supremacy of individual creativity (Hergenhan 1999, p. 9; Copelin 1995, p. 21).

As in dramaturgy, mentoring methodologies and goals are largely intangible and abstract. Mentoring aims to inspire self-confidence, for example, (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 6, 12; Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 11; Clutterbuck 1991, p. 14; Mitchell 2000, p. 2), and thereby encourages participants to achieve beyond their preconceived potential. Freire (1997) refers to this process as "authentic" mentoring (p. 324) which prioritises the recipients' learning and does not perpetuate paternalistic models. Effective mentoring, like dramaturgy, should provide the recipients with access to information they might not otherwise have had – about themselves, their work processes, or more factual information – and helps participants to gain fresh perspectives (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 7).

Ultimately, mentoring is intended to assist participants to advance their careers and develop new or existing skills (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 2; Crow and Matthews 1998, p. 10) through a combination of formal and informal, practical and theoretical, direct and indirect ways. Crow and Matthews (1998) confirm that mentoring uses a range of methods which may simultaneously contradict and reinforce each other (p. 34).

Most importantly, perhaps, mentoring provides participants with the confidence and freedom to fail: “The relationship enables the learning from failures in a safe, nonjudgmental environment” (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 12). The freedom to fail is crucial to the development of writers and their work (Russ 1997, p. 16), but it is rarely the context for the development or production of new work in Australia. An understanding of how the arts industry currently uses mentoring is vital to developing new forms of sustainable dramaturgy.

3. Mentoring in the Arts Industry

In recent years funding bodies, support agencies, and major production companies have introduced various forms of mentorship programs within the arts industry. However, there has been little analysis of the various forms of these mentorships, their implementation, or their outcomes – both long and short term. Indeed, the introduction and application of mentorships, while ongoing, has often been sporadic, short-term, and based on traditional concepts of mentoring relationships.

The Australia Council for the Arts (2003), for example, currently offers mentorship funding in almost all their ‘Skills and Arts Development’ categories. The specific purpose of this funding varies according to the category it applies to (such as Dance or Visual Arts) but its general purpose is the professional development of artsworkers, with the broad intention of fostering ‘excellence’ and ‘innovation’. Significantly, there is no explanation of what exactly constitutes a mentorship

program or relationship, or what the specific outcomes of such development could or should be. Only the Theatre Board briefly explains that funding is available for “mentorships between experienced and emerging theatre workers” (p. 95), which implies an ‘expert/novice’ dichotomy familiar to traditional mentoring. The Literature Board, in contrast, offers mentorships to organisations rather than individuals (p.

57). Playwrights applying for mentoring funding, therefore, appear to be limited in the types of relationships that the Council supports.

Indeed, a significant amount of capital within funding bodies is directed to the development of young and/or emerging arts workers. The Australia Council currently supports a national mentoring program for young artswokers (aged 18 – 26) called ‘Spark’ (email: <debase@mail.com>, 20 May 2003). The purpose of this program is to support various artists, including dramaturgs, “to develop and establish a professional career in the industry” over nine-months (email: <debase@mail.com>, 20 May 2003). This program is similar to Arts Queensland’s Youth Arts Mentoring Scheme (YAM), established in 1997. YAM is open to all artists aged 18 – 25 and provides funding for a six-month partnership (Arts Queensland Grants Handbook 2002, p. 36; Betzien 2000, p. 60).

While these kinds of funding programs are important initiatives that assist mainly young and emerging artists, they are not unproblematic. Betzien (2000) argues that the motivation for such funding is youth training and employment without complementary support for infrastructures to sustain such employment over an extended time-period. Programs such as YAM are largely short-term, inexpensive, stop-gap measures rather than long-term, ongoing investments in sustaining young artists’ cultural future:

Formal mentorship programs such as YAM and AWG, compared to actual industry traineeship and paid secondments, are all relatively cheap development schemes with loose time frames, demanding

considerable unpaid involvement on the part of both mentoree and mentor. In essence mentoring schemes are far more economically viable methods of training (p. 61).

Swanson and Wise’s (c. 1994) research also suggests that these issues are more likely to affect young women (18 – 25 year olds), who are more likely to attract

government funding, but simultaneously more likely to have the lowest incomes, “just over 73 per cent earn \$5000 or less” per year for their art work (p. 54). Their finding supports Betzein’s concern that funding for mentoring is insufficient for long-term development. Additionally, Swanson and Wise found that writing had the “lowest likelihood” of attracting government funding of all arts practices (p. 66). Betzein (2000) also noted that no playwrights had participated in the YAM program three years after it was implemented (p. 60).

These findings suggest that establishing a professional, sustainable career in the arts industry takes more than six to nine months and requires significantly greater funding for long-term strategies than is currently provided. They also suggest that there are specific concerns about the low participation of playwrights in mentoring processes.

Insufficient time, funding, and utilisation are particularly problematic issues since mentoring can be a significantly beneficial experience for playwrights. Betzein (2000) describes mentoring experiences as potentially “life-changing” for playwrights (p. 60). Her own mentoring experience within the Queensland Theatre Company has been crucial to her career. Since 1997 she has been mentored by various individuals in the company, including directors and other writers; she has had two professional productions of her work; and spent nine months as the Company’s Writer-in-residence (p. 60). Her professional development was positively influenced as a result:

I feel that, not only did this experience provide me with extended periods of paid employment., it developed my knowledge of craft and gave me invaluable insight into the interior workings of the industry (p. 60).

As the only two fully funded production houses in Queensland, the Queensland Theatre Company and La Boite Theatre have commissioned or developed many

writers through various programs in recent years, but their mentorship models are often based on conventional dichotomies. The Queensland Theatre Company's 2000 Mentorship Scheme, for example, offered support for a "practical working relationship between an established writer associated with the company, and a less experienced Queensland playwright" (available: <http://www.thehub.com.au/site2000/writing.htm>). Their current program, 'The Works', prioritises the development of emerging writers (available: http://www.qldtheatreco.com.au/ad_newWriting.html). Similarly, in 2000, La Boite offered "mentorship in the form of professionals developing emerging writers' scripts" (*qwc news* 1999, p. 10).

These programs imply the same novice/expert dichotomy informing mentorship funding. They do not seem to account for the fact that mentoring offers mutual development; that it can and "should be a career-long experience" (Crow and Matthews 1998, p. ix); and that it can be conducted between peers and groups –or between a writer and a company, as in Betzein's case – rather than just two people (Arizona Leadership 2001, p. 2). While there has been increasing recognition of the benefits of apprenticeships or mentoring for diverse artists, there has been little innovation in the form of these relationships.

For example, Gorman's (1992) research uncovered a discrepancy between practitioners who felt that a dramaturg should be "an older, more experienced professional because the fundamental principles of good script writing do not change", and those who believed that dramaturgs should be "younger, so as to be empathetic to the ideas and ideologies of young people writing today"

(p. 13). Gorman himself recommended that dramaturgs should be older on the grounds that "script development improves with experience" (p. 110).

These views are more recently reflected in Enoch's (cited in Woollard 2003) comment that: "older artists are under-utilised as potential resources in the training of other artists" (p. 4). While it may well be true that dramaturgy, like most crafts,

improves with experience, Gorman does not account for the fact that extensive experience can be gained over a relatively short period of time. Similarly, while many older artists can make crucial contributions to the future development of theatre practice and practitioners, the qualities required for effective training or teaching – such as facilitation, mediation, and adaptability – are not necessarily commensurate with either age or experience.

Adherence to outmoded or conventional forms of development has also meant that some of the mentoring or development programs within companies have been short-term processes such as workshops and/or play readings (*qwc news* 1999, p. 10; <http://www.thehub.com.au/site2000/writing.htm>). The financial and artistic infrastructures of most professional companies means that the kind of intensive, ongoing mentoring necessary for effective playwright development is limited. Perhaps most significantly, there is no apparent connection between any of these mentorship/development programs and dramaturgical processes or practice.

Efforts to connect dramaturgy with forms of mentoring have more often occurred outside of industry contexts. Batchelor and Copeman (1998) for example, conducted a tertiary playwrighting course which matched each student writer with a dramaturg who was considered to be a “peer mentor, with a function similar, perhaps, to that of a sports coach or an editor of fiction, helping the playwright to achieve their ‘personal best’ work” (p. 1). Their dramaturgical process focused on collaboration, constructive criticism, and self-reflective practice.

Significantly, responses to this kind of dramaturgy, both favourable and unfavourable, were based on the nature of the dramaturgical relationship rather than technique. The mostly positive responses from students included: “I have come to depend on her”, and “being critical of another person’s work has helped me be critical of my own” (p. 10). Negative responses to the dramaturgy were all found to be the result of poorly, or hastily matched, partnerships and all were “variations on the theme of: my dramaturg is holding me back” (p. 10). Batchelor

and Copeman's work supports the idea that mentoring partnerships cannot be entered into lightly, and that establishing a reciprocal peer relationship can be just as effective as more conventional models of mentoring or dramaturgy.

More innovative connections between dramaturgy and mentoring also appear to be occurring outside of mainstream theatre contexts. Gallasch (2003), for instance, reports that many non-mainstream artists mentor, and have been mentored by, their peers and groups rather than just older, more experienced performers (p. 14). This approach recognises that "Training is not about skills alone" (p. 14) and considers dramaturgy in relation to broader, less tangible, life experiences: "Artists have to learn the dramaturgy of the ephemeral – how to meet and read the world on a daily basis and how to incorporate that into the way they work" (Gallasch citing Pledger p. 14). Relying on older/younger, experienced/inexperienced models of mentoring can be limited for many reasons, not least because "experienced artists can sometimes be reluctant to share too freely the skills that are their bread and butter" (p. 14).

These experiences demonstrate just some of the ways which mentoring could be used in more innovative and effective ways. Even though interpersonal relationships, lived experiences, and collaborative processes are crucial aspects of the arts industry there is little analysis (especially in theatre) of the effects of long-term mentoring relationships or their connections with dramaturgical practices. Considering dramaturgy as mentoring provides both the long and short term tools necessary to implement and sustain the kinds of relationships, and therefore the kinds of productivity, central to effective theatre practice.

4. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that ingrained assumptions of mentoring, based on traditional models, persist within the arts industry. These assumptions have frequently been the basis for funding models, training, and the implementation of mentoring relationships. The arts industry has too often considered dramaturgy as a short-term relationship with narrow goals, such as the development of a

producible text. Similarly, its perception of mentoring has shown little consideration for what Crow and Matthews (1998) call “passenger benefits” (p. 11). That is, the advantages of a mentoring process for persons beyond the immediate participants.

Within the arts industry, these ‘passengers’ can include tertiary and training institutions, funding bodies, theatre companies, arts service and support agencies, and audiences. The entire infrastructure of the arts industry can potentially benefit from long-term, strategic partnerships that nurture the personal and professional development of specific individuals who create or produce the work central to that industry. Making this change requires financial and ideological commitment to the dynamic connections between process and product in the arts industry.

Sporadic, short-term, unquestioned development processes will inevitably produce the kinds of work the industry has often been characterised by: few ongoing successes; unbalanced career development for playwrights and dramaturgs; and less new work being produced. While not unproblematic, my experiences with Margery Forde and WIT can provide some important details about the sorts of qualities required for effective dramaturgical mentoring; and assist in the reformulation of dramaturgical processes and practice.

Chapter Four RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Feminist Methodologies	87
2. Phenomenology	88
3. Feminist Phenomenology	90
3.1. Experiential Contexts	90
3.1.1. Knowledge	90
3.1.2. Emotion	93
3.1.2.1. Compatibility	94
3.1.2.2. Self-perception	96
3.1.2.3. Mutual Discovery	98
3.2. Collapsed dualisms	100
3.2.1. Experience, theory and practice	101
3.2.2. Subjectivity and Objectivity	103
3.2.2.1. Intersubjectivity in the research	108
3.2.2.2. Dramaturgy as intersubjectivity	110
3.3. Reflexivity: researcher as performer	111
3.4. Diversity: the scope of the research	114
3.5. Transformation	117
4. My intellectual autobiography	119
5. Methods	121
5.1. Data Collection	121
5.2. Data Analysis	124
5.2.1. Reading for narrative	126
5.2.2. Reading for the subject	128
5.2.3. Reading for relationships	129
5.2.4. Reading for contexts	129
5.3. Data Presentation	133
5.3.1. Case Studies	133
5.3.2. Reflective Descriptions	135
6. Conclusion	139

Chapter Four

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methods, methodologies and associated epistemologies used in my research. In developing a methodology, I concentrated on formulating alternative systems of interpretation and understanding that would best meet my theoretical and practical concerns. My research investigates my own dramaturgical practice in two different playwrighting contexts. Each case study describes the personal, and therefore unique, experiences of dramaturgy for the participants – Margery Forde, the members of WIT, and myself.

Australian dramaturgy is a relatively new profession with diverse methods and applications. Unlike German dramaturgy, for example, Australian dramaturgy lacks both a definitive intellectual tradition and a distinct historical development. Analysing my own experiences as an Australian dramaturg, therefore, required the formulation of individualised theories. Consequently, I have employed feminist phenomenography as the primary framework for my research analysis.

Feminism and phenomenology, the philosophical basis of phenomenography, are traditionally distinct ideologies. However, they have a number of similar characteristics which lend them to a complementary investigation of dramaturgy. These shared characteristics include: prioritising lived experience as the basis for theory and knowledge; emphasising the importance of self-reflexivity, interaction, and reciprocity in the research process; rejecting traditional research dualisms such as objectivity and subjectivity; and defining the contexts in which knowledge and theory are produced. Creating a feminist phenomenography involves finding points of convergence between two distinct disciplines, and challenging some of the conventions within each approach to create my own theoretical space.

A quantifiable study of dramaturgy is not integral to my research as my focus is on the nature of dramaturgy, rather than the number of practitioners in Australia or the percentage of dramaturgs who are women, for example. Although there is no

definitive quantifiable analysis of Australian dramaturgy, both Gough's (1991) and Gorman's (1992) studies were comprised of numerous interviews and questionnaires. Their methods were not empirical measures, but Gough's and Gorman's research did indicate the extent of dramaturgical practice in Australia at the time.

In contrast, the purpose of my research is more specific – to analyse my own dramaturgical practice and its effects on select participants in order to explore the similarities between dramaturgy and mentoring. As a qualitative technique, phenomenography is a highly effective way to “examine and analyze the subjective experience of individuals and their constructions of the social world” (Jones 1983, p. 147). My choice of qualitative methodologies does not support the specious connections between feminist theory and qualitative approaches, or masculine theory and quantitative procedures used by early feminist researchers to create distinctly feminist epistemologies and methodologies (Maynard 1994, p. 11; Stanley and Wise 1983, p. 21 – 22). Qualitative methodologies are necessary for a comprehensive examination of the personal experiences of dramaturgy for myself and my research participants.

The use of feminism and phenomenology as qualitative methodologies in my research is based on the feminist understanding that: “We should be free to combine whatever parts of whatever methods we think are promising for our research goals” (Bowles and Klein 1983, p. 96). However the freedom to draw on a range of methods is not exercised uncritically (Stanley and Wise 1983, p. 136). Feminist theory must contend with the ideologies it opposes in order to construct new ways of thinking and acting. Grosz (1990) emphasises the importance and inevitability of this strategy:

It is impossible to maintain or develop a theoretical ‘purity’ untainted by patriarchy for our ideas, values, terminology, repertoire of concepts are all products of patriarchy... A viable feminist methodology must be the

consequence of an active yet critical engagement with patriarchal methods... feminists must use whatever remains worthwhile in patriarchal discourses to create new theories, new methods, and values (p. 60 – 61).

My methodological intention is not to supply definitive answers or solutions, but to raise previously unasked questions about dramaturgy. Reinharz (1992) explains that learning occurs in three ways in feminist research:

1. Person: the researcher learns about themselves;
2. Problem: the researcher and the readers learn about the problem;
3. Method: the researcher learns how to conduct research (p. 194).

These processes do not occur in isolation; feminist phenomenography demonstrates the ways in which interrelations create meanings. Fundamentally, my research practices are based on the feminist understanding that “what you have experienced in your personal life also has political dimension to it and you can use what you know in a way that has social value” (Dworkin 1996, p. 215). Through my research practices I gained a greater understanding of myself as a dramaturg and researcher; the motivations and effects of my dramaturgical processes; and the current form and possible future directions of dramaturgy as a profession. These new knowledges can subsequently transform the context in which they were created and be transferred to new situations, with broader ramifications.

1. Feminist Methodologies

My research accepts the definitions of method, methodology and epistemology as outlined by Harding (1987) and Stanley and Wise (1990). Method constitutes the techniques used for data collection, such as surveys and interviews. Methodology is “a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed” (Harding 1987, p.3); that is, the ideological or conceptual framework for considering the research (Stanley and Wise 1990, p. 26). Underlying both of these concepts are issues of epistemology, or the theory of knowledge – who has knowledge and how is it acquired, established, maintained and exercised (Stanley and Wise, 1990, p. 26).

Feminist research emphasises the associations between methods, methodologies and epistemology (Harding 1987, p. 3), and this can lead to confusion and contention over their definition and application. Misunderstanding of these terms has also been exacerbated by semantic disagreements among feminists (Stanley and Wise 1990, p. 26). For Harding, epistemology is the basis for methods and methodology (Stanley and Wise 1990, p. 26). Stanley and Wise (1983, 1990, 1993) take the debate further, arguing that feminism is more than just a perspective and/or an epistemology; it is an ontology as well, “a way of being in the world” (Stanley 1990, p. 14). For Stanley and Wise, ontology is the basis of epistemology (1993, p. 192), and methodology has been superseded by epistemology (1993, p. 13).

I support the assertion that there are no ‘feminist’ methods per se; it is the concepts or theories behind the methods which are significant (Harding 1987; Stanley and Wise 1993). In other words, feminism is the lens through which data is viewed: “Feminism supplies the perspective and the disciplines supply the method” (Reinharz 1992, p. 243). I also accept that working within a feminist context means that epistemology and methodology are interconnected, but I challenge the notion that they are interchangeable.

My research approach maintains that when conceptual issues are put into practice by a researcher, epistemology becomes methodology. These methodologies may retain traces of their epistemological origins but they are changed through practical use in an experiential context.

My position is supported by Maynard's (1994) argument that there is a distinction between the often more abstract theory of epistemological and ontological arguments and the more pragmatic concerns and terminology of methodology (p. 22). I am interested in discovering "how epistemology can be put into practice *methodologically*, as a perspective, and how this in turn relates to the practical use of different research *techniques*" (Stanley and Wise 1990, p. 36, original emphasis). Consequently, this chapter focuses on synthesizing the complex ideologies and philosophies of phenomenology and feminism and defining their practical application to my research.

2. Phenomenology

Phenomenology is fundamentally the study of lived experiences (Andermahr et. al. 1997, p. 199). As a philosophy and ideology it has application for diverse disciplines, including psychology, sociology, ethnography, ethnomethodology and pedagogy. Like feminism, phenomenology privileges subjective experiences as the basis of knowledge and understanding. It considers the ways 'realities' are socially constructed; prioritises (self) reflexive research practices; questions conventional dichotomies such as objectivity and subjectivity; and sustains a questioning, explorative methodology. A feminist intervention in phenomenology also problematises power relations; reconceives intersubjective relations in terms of gender; and draws attention to the emotionally significant aspects of experience. Succinctly, feminism provides phenomenology with a political perspective and direction it otherwise lacks (Levesque-Lopman 1988, p. 153).

All phenomenology is concerned in some way with exploring our meaningful presence in the world. Whether it is Husserl's (1965) 'back to things themselves', Heidegger's (1962) 'Being-in-the-world', Merleau-Ponty's (1962, 1964) 'lived-through world', or Schutz's (in Levesque-Lopman 1988) 'intramundane world', each is concerned with our (subjective) relationship to external contexts. I have chosen Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology as the basis for developing my feminist phenomenography because its emphasis on dynamic, lived experiences and its critique of Cartesian dualisms are compatible with my feminist research approach.

Phenomenology is a systemic study of the world – how it is actually formed and perpetuated through interactions. Phenomenology is not concerned with theoretical analyses of preconceived notions which need to be 'proved' (Van Manen 1990, p. 23). The fundamental project of phenomenology is:

...to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist might be able to provide (Merleau-Ponty 1996, p. 79).

It is a reflective, reflexive, temporal, corporeal, and contextual exploration of active subjects in an interrelational world. It does not consider unclear or open-ended perception as 'intellectual failure' (Hammond et. al. 1991, p. 186 - 187), but embraces ambiguity as a (literally) embodied concept (Spurling 1977, p. 21). Phenomenology's purpose is to uncover the meanings of an actual experience; to bring to light those aspects which we might otherwise take for granted or accept unquestioningly (Van Manen 1990, p. 32).

Phenomenology lacks any structured, (pre)determined methodology. Instead it contains a range of methods and theories that researchers can use to create their own, unique approach (Van Manen 1990, p. 30). This flexibility makes

phenomenology methodologically compatible with both dramaturgy and feminism. In phenomenological research, validity is measured by whether the research proves to be methodologically “rigorous” and “appropriate”, and whether it is experientially “plausible” and “illuminating” (Pollio, Henley and Thompson 1997, p. 53). Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997) note that these dual criteria are interconnected: “The more rigorous and appropriate the methodology, the more plausible and illuminating the results are likely to be” (p. 53).

Phenomenology’s rejection of a codified methodology does not mean that it lacks methods (Van Manen 1990, p. 29). On the contrary, it consistently emphasises the importance of rigorous research techniques (Carter 1985, p. 37; Levesque-Lopman 1988, p. 25; Pollio et. al. 1997, p. 55). The philosophy behind phenomenology acts as a guide to the researcher’s choice of analytical tools (Van Manen 1990, p. 30).

My phenomenological methodology consists of two key, interrelated processes – description and reflection – which constitute the pragmatic concerns of existentialist phenomenology, and provide the framework for my data analysis. My research (re)interprets phenomenological methods and concepts and uses them in conjunction with selected feminist methodologies to define the context of my research, as well as analyse its content.

3. Feminist Phenomenology

3.1. Experiential Contexts

3.1.1. Knowledge

Both phenomenology and feminism assert that knowledges and meanings are interdependent with the external world and our lived experiences. In phenomenology, this relationship is called ‘intentionality’, which forms the basic structure of human existence (Van Manen 1990, p. 181; Pollio et.al. 1997, p. 7;

Kearney and Rainwater 1996, p. 4; Hammond et.al. 1991, p. 97; Spurling 1977, p. 7; Roche 1973, p. 34). Merleau-Ponty's existentialist approach redefined this concept as 'operative intentionality' (Spurling 1977, p.17). Operative intentionality is inescapably reciprocal; it is our continuous and inevitable connection to the external world (Hammond et.al. 1991, p. 97) through which we construct meanings, as Merleau-Ponty (1964) illustrates:

I comprehend the world because for me there is near and far, foreground and horizon, and because it thus spreads out and takes on a meaning for me; that is to say, finally, because I am situated in it and it comprehends me (p. xv).

Merleau-Ponty (1962) believed that the human body is both the context and the conduit for this relationship, "To be a body is to be tied to a certain world... our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it" (p. 148, original emphasis). The intricate and labile connections between the mind, body and experiences mean that there is no act, no object, no experience that is not meaning-full:

...there is not a human word, not a gesture, even one which is the outcome of habit or absent-mindedness, which has not some meaning... everything has meaning and we shall find this same structure of being underlying all relationships" (Merleau-Ponty 1996, p. 89).

Grosz (1994) believes Merleau-Ponty's work has important implications for feminist theory because it considers experience as a fundamental and (inter)active epistemological process: "He renders experience of immediate and direct relevance to... the production of knowledge" (p. 95). Similarly, Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that experience, theory and practice are mutual concepts in feminist research, which are "in a constant and dialectical relationship with each other" (p. 45). Consequently, feminist phenomenography allows me to analyse the experiences in my case studies, and use these same experiences to generate

theories about dramaturgy itself. However this process is not conducted uncritically.

Feminism problematises experience (and consequently knowledge) in ways that traditional phenomenology does not. Grosz (1994) explains that Merleau-Ponty (like other malestream philosophers) omits the question of gender from his analyses: “Merleau-Ponty leaves out – indeed, is unable to address – the question of sexual difference” (p.110). Feminism asserts that experience and knowledge are intersected by fundamental biological, social, political, cultural and ideological constructs such as gender, age, and ethnicity (Stanley and Wise 1983, 1990, p. 39; Maynard 1994, p. 23 – 24; Lennon 1995, p. 136; Bar On 1993, p. 83). As a result, I cannot assume that there is a direct correlation between my personal experiences and the experiences of dramaturgy as they are or might be for others.

My dramaturgical practices are inevitably influenced by my personal and ideological values. Any theoretical conclusions about dramaturgy in my research are informed by specific, personal experiences. The relevance of these conclusions to other arts practitioners does not diminish their epistemological validity, or their broader implications for the field of dramaturgy. While other dramaturgs may disagree with my feminist standpoint, they may also consider the contributions that their own experiences make to the development of theoretical concepts that guide their practice. In dramaturgy, as in feminism, multiple and conflicting views can combine, overlap and coexist (Stanley and Wise 1993, p. 19; 1983, p. 171) to create a diverse discipline that changes and is changed by those who use it.

For the most part, Australian dramaturgy exists outside the more formal discourses of other artistic disciplines such as acting or playwrighting. The absence of accepted methods governing dramaturgy’s development and practice is advantageous for flexible processes, but it means there are divisions between other dramaturgs’ and my definitions of ‘best practice’. This schism is similar to

the feminist assertion that “there is a gap between the ‘experience of the world’... and the theoretical schemes available to think about it in” (Reinharz qting. Smith 1983, p. 166).

Grosz (1994, p. 95) and Maynard (1994, p. 24) state (respectively) that phenomenology and feminism take theory and experience “seriously”. Both approaches emphasise the development of theory from practice through “an interpretive and synthesizing process which *connects* experience to understanding” (Maynard 1994, p. 24, original emphasis). The analyses of my case studies seek to explicate the ways that dramaturgy effected my own and the participants’ understanding of script development and our work through personal experiences.

3.1.2. Emotion

Phenomenology typically assumes that our bodies and minds are a ‘unified self’ “and that this is the precondition for the intelligibility of experience” (Waldby 1995, p. 24 – 25). Heidegger (1962) confirms that “ ‘Being-in-the-world’ stands for a *unitary* phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole” (p. 78, original emphasis). The only exceptions are uncontrollable states of insanity or unconsciousness in which we cease to rationally experience the world (Levesque-Lopman 1988, p. 80; Waldby 1995, p. 24 – 25). Levesque-Lopman (1988) points out that, despite the primacy of interrelations and subjectivity within its ideology, traditional phenomenology is concerned with ‘rational’ psychological and physiological understanding (p. 79 & 150). Spiegelberg (1975) demonstrates this kind of detachment: “Especially in their emotions [research] partners may remain completely uninvolved” (p. 231). Van Manen (1990, p. 64), makes reference to the inclusion of emotion in phenomenological methodology, but this is the exception rather than the rule, and his work does not rigorously account for the effects of emotions on experience either.

Pages 94 to 242 have not been published. These pages are available in the original document which is held in the Griffith University Library.

My research also supports the notion that script assessors, like dramaturgs, need to be carefully selected and trained. There is also room to devise and implement standardised, yet flexible, forms of written assessments and codes of conduct for assessors to ensure that writers receive practicable, high quality responses. Assessment, like dramaturgy, needs to avoid personal opinion or bias and provide writers with informed, detailed responses based on dramaturgical skills and experiences.

These findings have outlined the major changes my research reveals as necessary for the development of dramaturgy based on mentoring principles and objectives. Consequently, I have been able to make some basic recommendations necessary for change. These recommendations are not intended to provide conclusive 'answers' to the current challenges facing the arts industry and the development of new work. Rather, they are intended to provoke further debate and analysis about the fundamental needs of the Australian arts industry.

2. Recommendations

The recommendations are divided into four parts; outlining proposals for those sectors with the most relevance for instigating changes to dramaturgical practice.

2.1. The arts industry

- This research supports Gough's (1991) and Gorman's (1992) recommendations that dramaturgy be considered a distinct profession with specialised skills. However it also suggests that dramaturgy should be reconsidered and treated as a form of mentoring, which requires specific

skills and strategies for implementation. There needs to be an agreed upon/cohesive strategy that provides guidelines for industry implementation, professional standards, and training in dramaturgy.

- My research provides evidence to support the establishment of a national professional support organisation/advocacy service for dramaturgs to set and maintain standards; make recommendations for training and education in and about dramaturgy; provide avenues for professional development and support to dramaturgs; and encourage debate and analyses on dramaturgy and the role of theatre in Australian society.

2.2. Dramaturgs

- My research findings indicate that dramaturgs themselves need to use more concrete and clear definitions to describe the nature of their work and professional objectives. This, in turn requires:
- More in-depth analysis of dramaturgical practice. Dramaturgs need to write about, and talk about their work more often and in accessible ways.

Dramaturgs themselves can play an important part in contributing to the lack of literature about dramaturgy and make important connections between the arts industry and educational and training institutions. The onus is on dramaturgs to ensure that their work remains a highly visible and effective part of the arts industry.

2.3. Educational and training institutions

- This research endorses Gough's (1991) and Gorman's (1992) findings, and recommends that educational institutions recognise dramaturgy as a profession by establishing training courses and qualifications for dramaturgs, along with broad based dramaturgical knowledge for other arts industry practitioners. This change will help raise the standards of dramaturgical practice and help establish codes of conduct and practice.
- The implementation of these courses requires consultation with the arts industry to ensure that courses sustain a balance of practice and theory, provide up-to-date information, and help create avenues of employment for graduates.
- Educational and training institutions also need to form strategic, ongoing partnerships with industry bodies to encourage dramaturgical debate and innovation.

2.4. Funding bodies

- My research has revealed that funding bodies need to re-evaluate the ways in which funding is distributed for the development of new work, and find ways to make room for long-term strategies such as mentoring which require ongoing investment over an extended time period.
- Further funding also needs to be available to encourage forums and avenues for dramaturgical development and industry debate.

This chapter has established the results of my research and made some key recommendations based on my findings. It has also summarised the responses to my original research questions and objectives. In analysing my own

dramaturgical practice, I discovered that there are several issues which are similar or relevant to dramaturgical practice as a whole. However, the personal and individualised nature of dramaturgy also means that other dramaturgs may have contrasting or concurring experiences. Part of the purpose of my research, therefore, is to encourage other practitioners to continue discussing their work in both formal and informal, industry and academic contexts. Debate and analysis is particularly important given that the collaborative, creative processes of development in the arts industry are rarely recorded for future reference. The significance of my own practice to the wider field indicates that all dramaturgs can make important contributions to the development of their own profession.

My research has also clearly established substantial new ways of thinking about and practicing dramaturgy. While dramaturgy as mentoring needs to remain flexible and open to change, the advantages to combining these two methods are substantial and long-term. In doing so, I have also uncovered some of the primary reasons why dramaturgy has been so misunderstood and undervalued in the arts industry. My intention is that by understanding these causes, dramaturgs and other practitioners can continue to develop in positive ways and prevent further regression. A stronger balance between process and product is crucial to the instigation and implementation of ideas, and dramaturgy strives to achieve this equilibrium. Dramaturgy as mentoring has the potential to instigate, manage, and facilitate the strategies necessary for crucial long-term changes.

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