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Mimesis, Drama, and Teaching Creative Writing: *A Postmodern Theory*

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Abstract

In this hybrid essay, through my critical observations, research and analysis as a student of Creative Writing at Cardiff University, I intend to define drama education and its constructive impact on the creative mind. I will then postulate briefly that the classroom can be viewed as a postmodern theatre, utilizing its dramatic elements to create a pedagogy for performance teaching, grounded in reflective theories and acute observation as an academic. Postmodernism is defined as a literary movement that opposes universal truths, narratives and provides a framework for literary production that destabilizes established grammar, structure and themes. While I was studying in Cardiff, the classroom environment created a socio-cultural conflict in terms of how teaching is perceived, which differed from my previous experience in a classroom in India. From these experiences, I imagined the classroom as a theatre, teachers as actors, students as performers and transferred the associations of post-modern dramatic elements into classroom objects to create a model pedagogy for creative arts teaching based on drama performance. The analysis of this experience using scientific theories proved that drama performance improves meta-cognition, helps students with language and speech impairments, develops empathy and memory, and builds better humans.

Keywords: drama performance 1; creative writing 2; postmodernism 3; pedagogy 4; arts and humanities 5; education 6; metacognition 7; creative writing workshop 8; mimesis 9; psychology 10.

1. Introduction

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely player,
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages[1]

When William Shakespeare penned these timeless phrases, he must have meant the space within the boundaries of a classroom, too. During my B.A. English Literature years at the University of Delhi, Dr. Munish Tamang riveted my teaching imagination. Unlike other teachers who traditionally taught the semester, he would barely teach with prepared lessons. In fact, most days, he would remain absent and tell

[1] William Shakespeare, As You Like It, ed. Agnes Latham (London: Methuen, 1975), II.vii.139–140.

us to read on our own. He played the Beatles on his acoustic guitar and taught us Marxism that year. I remember his class on Louis Althusser. I suppose that this remembering had much to contribute to his demeanor, or in plain terms, his performance as a teacher in the class. He did not bring with him piles of notebooks to photocopy neither recommended a hundred books but still left a lasting impression of Marxism as a literary theory, that it shaped my academic career. Dr. Abigail Parry, who teaches Creative Writing at Cardiff University, brought a sheep skull attached to a pole decorated with colorful paper strings for a lecture on Welsh identity. She then incorporated the myth associated with traditional Christmas celebrations and introduced a poetry reading/writing session based on prompts in a playful verbal duel among two groups of students, who were asked to sing and rhyme a response to the Mari Lwyd's verses[2] and created a friendly war-room in the class. Lecturer in Creative Writing, Dr. Ayesha Jahan, taught a lesson on understanding senses through a walk in the woods and hugging a tree. Trinidadian editor and poet Shivanee Ramolochan taught 'the revolution will be lyrical'[3] through performance poetry. Irish author Jane Carson brought a pile of sepia-toned family photographs and asked the students to evaluate the details objectively as a writing prompt.

'Studying is a serious affair, teaching is supposed to be strict,'[4] conforms to a traditional form of teaching that caters to assessment rather than learning. When I was studying for an exam-based model in India, I remember my goal was fixated on achieving grades by blindly following the assessment frameworks provided by schools/colleges/and universities. My academic career became doubly difficult because of my dyslexic traits—which meant despite hard work I could never crack entrance exams. But I liked subjective papers/arts/imaging/photography/poetry—which contained a certain abstraction of things. In Cardiff University, the English language had no boundaries, no grammar or a set of rules, and I was free to write from my passion. I became a writer in nine months and realized the traditional thinking limited my creativity.

[2] Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales, Christmas Traditions: The Mari Lwyd. Available online: https://museum.wales/articles/1187/Christmas-Traditions-The-Mari-Lwyd/ (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[3] Genre Explorations & Pathways: Prose, Poetry, & Drama (SET290 Module 2024/25), Cardiff University Learning Central. Available online: https://learningcentral.cf.ac.uk/ultra/courses/_425846_1/outline/file/_8378604_1 (accessed on 12 May 2025) (private intranet resource).

[4] Megan Moodie, Teaching as Performance: On Scripts, Preparing for Classes, and Teaching with Passion, Fieldsights. Available online: https://culanth.org/fieldsights/teaching-as-performance-on-scripts-preparing-for-classes-and-teaching-with-passion (accessed on 12 May 2025).

2. Creative Writing is an Entertainment Industry

Lincoln Konkle writes 'that most of us teach creative writing in pretty much the same way. We assign students to read and discuss examples of genre, style, etc (some by famous writers, some by not-so-famous, some by students).'[5] Dianne Donelly (2010) in her edited collection Does the Writing Workshop Still Work? found that only 10% define their model to be markedly different from the traditional workshop meaning that creative writing modules and courses are nearly indistinguishable from the workshop.[6] David Baddiel, author, comedian and broadcaster writes for an interview with The Guardian, 'certainly, I think you can pass on your experience as a writer, and this can be used to develop latent talent'

Author and educator Tim Pears said, 'still, how does one teach writing? It's not a craft. Last weekend I attended a one-day workshop in wooden spoon making, great fun it was, and that was a craft. Or in my case a bodge. Literature is an art form. As Doris Lessing said, There are no laws for the novel. There never have been, nor can there ever be.'[7] — re-invites the perpetual confusion regarding whether creative writing can be taught because the workshop model generally caters to blandishment. Pears defines three steps— a)read b)write c) edit as being critical steps to become a writer but emphasizes that style cannot be taught. British historian Roger Owen, during a lecture on teaching, said, 'we are in the entertainment business.'[8] University of Toronto PhD Noha Fikra echoes:

> teaching is an entertainment business and what we do is perform in class […] Zizo's intense passion, overwhelming presence, and wholesome engagement in class, both with the material and with every student in the room, captivated my entire being.[9]
>
> (Megan Moodie, Teaching as Performance)

If Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines performance as 'the accomplishment or carrying out of something commanded or undertaken; the doing of an action or operation,'[10] then this action protrudes into an act to become a set of unified process — drama. OED defines drama as 'the activity of acting in

[5] Carl Vandermeulen, Negotiating the Personal: Essays on the Practice of Creative Writing (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011).

[6] Ibid.

[7] Derek Neale, "The Confusions of Teaching Creative Writing," Royal Literary Fund, 2020. Available online: https://www.rlf.org.uk/posts/the-confusions-of-teaching-creative-writing/ (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[8] Moodie, 'Teaching as Performance'.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "performance." Available online: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/performance_n?tl=true (accessed on 12 May 2025).

(or producing, directing, etc.) plays or other types of dramatic performance; this as a profession, pastime, or subject of study.[11]

3. Metacognition, Drama, and Intelligence.

American actor Morgan Freeman narrates in The Shawshank Redemption Andy Dufresne's escape from prison as follows:

> Andy crawled to freedom through five hundred yards of shit-smelling foulness I can't even imagine, or maybe I just don't want to. Five hundred yards... that's the length of five football fields, just shy of half a mile. (pause) Andy Dufresne—who crawled through a river of shit and came out clean on the other side.[12]
>
> (The Shawshank Redemption, 1994)

This phrase would be more believable to you, if you had seen Andy crawl through freedom rather than reading on your digital device. American philosopher Kendell L Wanton affirms when he says:

> He drinks from a cup; we know some facts about a person and his actions with a cup. But when we watch an improviser drinking from an imagined cup, we know some mundane facts about the player and his actions with an imagined cup; we believe that a character is engaged in some actions with a cup in a fictional context; and we know and believe these things at the same time.'[13]
>
> (Kendall L. Walton 1990, Mimesis as Make-Believe)

This understanding of the difference between 'knowing' and 'believing' can be used to build confidence in the student's psyche, and conforms to psychologist Richard Courtney's words, 'the kind of meaning

[11] Oxford English Dictionary Online, s.v. "drama." Available online: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/drama_n (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[12] The Shawshank Redemption (Columbia Pictures, 1994). Available online: https://www.netflix.com (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[13] Kendall L. Walton, Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 35.

we obtain from the performance can be more significant than the meaning obtained from a mundane event.'[14]

> Drama in education refers to the use of drama techniques to support learning in the classroom. Sometimes used interchangeably with the term's developmental drama (Cook, 1917), creative dramatics (Ward, 1930), educational drama (Way, 1967), mantle of the expert (Bolton, 1985, Heathcote & Herbert, 1985), informal drama (Wagner, 1998), process drama (O'Neill, 1995), and framed expertise (Warner, in press) —drama in education differs from theatre that is performed as scripted dialogue on a set-in front of an audience.[15]
>
> (Richard Courtney 1990, Drama and Intelligence: A Cognitive Theory)

It is deep-rooted in teacher-student participation; so, when author and educator Jane Carson, asks her students to leave their respective seats one-by-one and collect portraits/landscapes placed on a desk; students interact and perform through an exercise of observing strangers and pretending to get-to-know them like their family, thereby creating a stream of consciousness through associations, and a rigorous repetition of this exercise is likely to improve the aspiring writer's objectivity and observation skills—thereby improving their meta-cognition or intelligence.[16]

Theorists Davis and Behm explicate this more fully, defining creative drama as 'an improvisational, non-exhibitioner, process-centered form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect upon human experience.'[17] This metacognitive process of thinking about oneself through active motor actions plays a crucial role in cognitive development, which could foster imagination and creativity in the students.

This metacognitive process of thinking about oneself through active motor actions plays a crucial role in cognitive development, which could foster imagination and creativity in the students. This research further suggests that early childhood exposure to such creative environments will promote language development associated with improving reading difficulties throughout the primary grades, which, in turn, are

[14] Richard Courtney, Drama and Intelligence: A Cognitive Theory (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).

[15] Christopher Andersen, "Learning in 'As-If' Worlds: Cognition in Drama in Education," Theory Into Practice 43, no. 4 (2004): 281–86.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Wendy Karen Mages, "Does Creative Drama Promote Language Development in Early Childhood? A Review of the Methods and Measures Employed in the Empirical Literature," Review of Educational Research 78, no. 1 (2008): 124–52. Available online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40071123 (accessed on 12 May 2025).

associated with long-term academic success.[18] Transformation is a dynamic process that enables learning. For instance, for a lesson on 'ahimsa' i.e. non-violence based on Indian freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy, if the students are asked to research about his personality, and then made to act like him, and read chapters from his biography My Experiments with Truth—the students will have to act like Gandhi and this imitation will likely leave a memory of this profound mannerism. This transformation is significant. By acting, students act out old ideas and try out new ones in a reciprocal performance—a creative drama process.

This statement is further supported by Indian Rasa theories that enable emotional intelligence. Rasa (audience catharsis/emotional states) emerges from bhāvas (performer emotional states), transforming the emotional state of both the performer and the audience, occurring through a meticulous study of nine emotional states and a balancing mechanism of self- discipline of emotions attained 'through Vibhāvas (stimuli), Anubhāvas (reactions or expressions) and Vyabhicāribhāvas (transitory state)'[19]. According to G.N. Devy, Natya (drama) 'is depiction and communication pertaining to the emotions of the entire triple world'[20] and is known to create boldness, enthusiasm, comprehension, wisdom, freedom from pain and misery, means of earning wealth, courage by imitating the conduct of the world. This imitation or mimesis is widely adopted philosophy among individuals attempting to learn a craft.

Figure 1. Interior panorama of the Globe Theatre, London. 'The Globe Theatre, Panorama Innenraum, London', Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Globe_Theatre,_Panorama_Innenraum,_London.jpg [accessed 12 May 2025].

4. The Post-Modern Theatre

Theatre has seen a shifting change through the ages defining its historical and the cultural epoch through performance, identity, catharsis, resolution, transforming from sacramental into a medium of

[18] Ibid.

[19] G. N. Devy, Indian Literary Theories: A Critical Introductory Approach (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2021), pp-5-15.

[20] Ibid.

multifarious artistic and social representation. In ancient Greece, classical theatre embraced formality and religious significance, while Roman adaptations emphasized. spectacle.

Theatre, as theorized by Aristotle in Poetics, was grounded in principles of unity, mimesis (imitation), and catharsis. During the medieval period, theatre made parallel with Christian doctrine through morality and mystery plays like Christopher Marlowe's Dr Faustas, often using allegory to instill spiritual lessons.

The Renaissance revived humanism through William Shakespeare, typifying psychological depth through usage of dramatic innovations like costumes and trap doors; while neoclassical theatre in France stressed order and etiquette. The Enlightenment era led in sentimental drama that prioritized moral instructions and civility as means to create a
sense of administrative control for the Monarchy. In the 19th century, realism and naturalism emerged, focusing on everyday life and the impact of environment and heredity, as seen in the works of Ibsen and Chekhov.

The 20th century brought shifts again with unconventional movements like expressionism, epic theatre, absurdism, and surrealism — challenging traditionalism by infusing themes of alienation, chaos, and existentialism.

Postmodern theatre, emerging in the late 20th century, dismantled traditional structures once again entirely, favoring fragmentation, intertextuality, and self-reflexivity. It muddled the boundaries between genres, included irony and parody, and questioned the nature of performance and identity. Works by Caryl Churchill and Heiner Müller illustrate how postmodern plays resist definitive interpretation, inviting audiences to co-create meaning.

5. Model of a Classroom based on Postmodern Drama Theory:

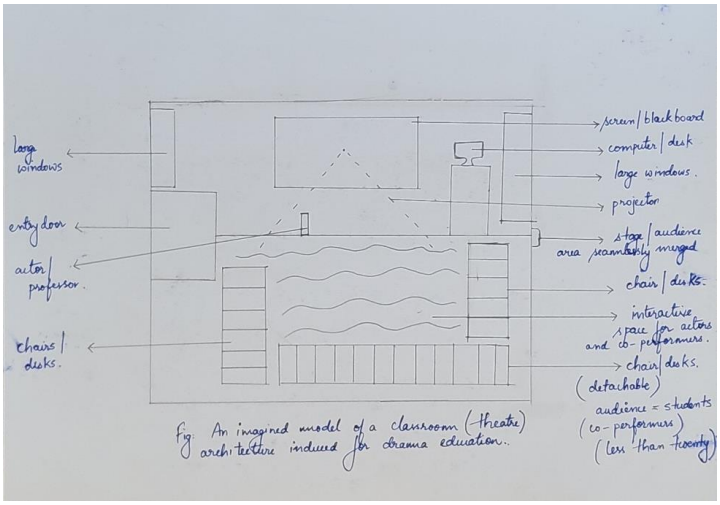

Figure 2 Imagined model of classroom architecture for drama education

Based on the above model of a classroom and using some of the techniques borrowed from the tradition of drama and performance, I intend to formulate a theoretical pedagogy that enables drama education in creative writing classrooms/workshops, and list some of the performance-based activities derived from theatrical techniques:

- *Stage:*

The stage and the audience area are seamlessly merged. I observed that the absence of an elevated platform during my B.A. observation classes allowed for a psychological interaction even before the movement between co-actors and performers had started. In a traditional course/classroom the setting creates an environment that fosters hierarchies in which students imagine teachers as having the power to help or hurt them. An article published on the Cohort of Educators for Essential Learning (CEEL) states:

> But when you are one of those students, the feeling is totally different. You feel the power dynamic much more clearly. The teacher stands; you sit. The teacher talks, you listen. The teacher instructs or hands out an assessment, you take notes or take the test. If we needed to go to the bathroom, we asked for permission. If we needed another pencil during a test, we asked for permission.[21]

[21] Alexis Wiggins, "A Taboo Education Topic: The Power Dynamic Between Teachers and Students," Cohort of Educators for Essential Learning, 29 September 2017. Available online: https://www.ceelcenter.org/blog/a-taboo-education-topic-the-power-dynamic-between-teachers-and-students/ (accessed on 28 November 2025).

Whereas, in a non-traditional classroom the defined construction of a traditional classroom reality is diluted, allowing students to think beyond this fight or flee state, thereby allowing a relaxed environment to process information and interact with peers. The stage is one such construction in which the elevation naturally divides the teacher and the student. During my M.A. Creative Writing classes, especially the ones that were based inside a mansion in Mid-Wales, did not feel like a classroom and it led to better ideas and flow of thoughts.

- *Diction:*

Students were often required, based on their emotional state, to read poetry and passages from memoirs/essays. These interactions were active performances between the teacher and the students. Whereas I would never read out loud or ask questions to a teacher, I believe the choice to skip the diction sessions without punishment or affecting my assessments or fear of being ridiculed excited me. I asked more questions than anybody else and wanted to read every day because it still felt like a safe environment.

According to Vygotsky's theory of language-mediated thought, language is not just a communication tool but the foundation of higher-order thinking.[22] A printed copy of the lesson was provided to individuals, and reading out loud boosted my confidence and even increased my chances of participation in Q/A sessions with classmates and professors. I started believing in this environment, that although my neurodivergence brought many hurdles to writing, the confidence allowed me to think of this personality trait as means to foster a new identity to my poems.

- *Classroom structure:*

The classroom structure is like the setting of the scene.

The physical configuration of the classroom — Traditional, Roundtable, Horseshoe or Semicircle, Double Horseshoe, Group Pods and Pair Pods determine the quality of engagement in the class. I found the horseshoe structure with fewer than fifteen students to be conducive to openness, broader thinking and allowed for better reception of ideas due to the absence of obstacles/distractions in front of me. During my B.A. classes in 2015, the traditional classroom with more than a hundred students did not foster any kind of student-student dialogue or teacher-student dialogue. 'The horseshoe encourages discussion between students and with the instructor, although this setup tends to encourage more engagement between the instructor and students directly opposite'[23].

[22] Lev Vygotsky, Thought and Language, trans. by Alex Kozulin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986), pp. 94–96.

[23] Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning, "Classroom Seating Arrangements." Available online: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/ClassroomSeatingArrangements (accessed on 12 May 2025).

- *Props/Costumes/Activities:*

Identity formation is crucial to psychosocial development, and alternate selves made using props and costumes enhance confidence, cognition, memory, and happiness of the individual. During my Creative Documentary Photography course at Sri Aurobindo Institute of Arts and Communication (New Delhi) in 2016, a week-long workshop was organized by Indian photographer Anay Mann to teach students the relationship between light, shadow, highlight and direction. The students were paired and made to observe in the natural light and think about exposure. German American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson writes in his essay Identity: Youth and Crisis that cognitive theories have suggested—'an interaction with objects enhances belief and behavior.'[24]

I observed that trying to formulate a lesson plan for beginners (writing students) from a painting exhibition during a museum trip immediately boosted creativity and non-traditional ways of teaching and thinking. I came up with the following prompt: In round one, students would select photographs/paintings/art installations from the exhibition. Students would read about the artist and try to imitate and write one poem motivated from their feelings. In round two, students would be divided randomly into groups of two and would work together to create one poem from the earlier activity. The final stage included further editing and reflection, and a spoken-word performance in the gallery area by the students. The idea behind this workshop was to create observation skills/foster collaboration/confidence—especially in modern times where the fast pace of life neglects stillness, a key trait without which I believe poetry is not creative, but mechanical.

- *Psychological conflict:*

Canadian author Margaret Atwood says, 'creative writing has to do with darkness, and a desire or perhaps a compulsion to enter it, and, with luck, to illuminate it, and to bring something back out to the light.'[25]This place of darkness is the unconscious mind, or what psychologist Carl Jung calls a process of 'creative madness.' Conversations about our past or encouragement to look back into our traumas during a classroom environment transformed into a kind of group therapy, where discussions may or may not motivate students to write from within. During my photography course, I realized the importance of the 'personal.' It immediately changed the themes I had been working on and gave my artistic work a spiritual meaning. Photography for me became a means of creative psychotherapy to heal from traumas and eventually improved my intelligence. Prof. Carl Vandermeulen cited Jen Webb (2003), who wrote in a journal a strange

[24] Erik H. Erikson, Identity: Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968), p. 42

[25] Margaret Atwood, Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing (London: Virago, 2002).

observation of 'the disturbingly large number of her first-year Australian students with documented depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder and mental disabilities.'[26] Vandermeulen observed that students of creative writing were always struggling with traumas—repressed or active.

This revelation has multiple connotations: first, it becomes necessary to create an inclusive environment that can accommodate multiple personal traumas, but at the same time, think of generalized ways to give the students an opportunity to express themselves in the classroom. This public expression of grief and trauma is how creative thinkers become happy, because the environment becomes a stimulus for both refractive and reflective analysis of emotions. The refractive is based on the idea that my grief stumbles on a similar grief of another person and loses its capacity for control, whereas the reflective relies on the fact that shared traumas make us stronger and allow healing. This purgation of emotional conflict, or catharsis, has been proven by testimonials from almost every artist, who speak of this abyss, this darkness, that plunges into the subconscious or even unconscious mind to order emotions.

As much as a writer wants to believe that pain and suffering and this journey into the repressed grief are central to a portrait of an artist as a young person, I believe in art therapy than this catatonic state of perpetual suffering, that once the descent has occurred, the artist must also think of the ascent, which is the transformation. I find it astonishing that artists never speak about the ascent from the darkness, the return journey, which is the core purpose of art, and somehow makes me believe it has to do with generational romanticization of repressed grief.

- *Multimedia:*

The postmodern drama, like the Brechtian theatre, relies heavily on a sense of alienation to comment on the narrative of the bourgeois ideology, against Shakesperean theatre that gains by promoting passive collective catharsis. 'The play itself, therefore, becomes a model of the process of production; it is less a reflection of, than reflection on social reality.'[27] It means in a theatre, the performer and his technique which creates the performance is essential to understanding how the entire play will interact with the audience. And thus, the play itself becomes a process of production and re-production, much like Infrastructure and Superstructure models of Marxist literary theories.

This multimedia incorporation through book recommendations, readings, projections, soundscapes, and digital feed, fosters this fragmentation further, making the creative writing students question what is being

[26] Carl Vandermeulen, Negotiating the Personal: Essays on the Practice of Creative Writing (Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2011), p.19.

[27] Terry Eagleton, 'Art and Commitment', in Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader, ed. by Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 203–210.

taught and how it is being taught, and become tools to alienate. For example, let us consider the poem titled as The Blessed Damozel by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1875-1879), which has a painting by the same artist and same title. It tells the story of a young woman who died and went to heaven, as the couple prays both on earth and in heaven to be united one day. When I read the poem, I felt it in my heart, but I was struck when I tried to read the painting. The painting was divided into two parts enclosed within wodden framework in which the upper portion describes everything about the damozel and her angels, whereas the lower portion shows the man looking at heaven and dreaming of union. The poems structure too is similar because it is also like the painting, divided into two sections. This interaction between the painting and the poem thus formed a new interpretation, allowed scope for critical analysis of meaning, form, and structure, and thus became more stimulating for the reader. Similarly, music can add layers to meanings and interpretation of the poem or a slideshow.

This is also a process that students cannot resist but must resist much like the book/play as an object which possess its whole identity rather than the fragmented identity of performers, because of the Foucauldian 'Knowledge and Power' dynamics, meaning, knowledge enforces authority— which in this case is the teacher who is already an published author and has years of experience of teaching.

Tim Pears writes, 'so I asked a well-known poet for her advice. She said that she worked out who the most talented students were and did everything in her power to dissuade them from the writing life'[28] because they would emerge as her competition. A large part of the process of becoming published relies heavily on reading books, and creative writing teachers who are published authors, always tend to incorporate their readings and biases onto their students.

It is these biases that one needs to negotiate to think unique and be able to write from passion for which the multimedia tools create the scope for ambivalence and surveillance. Indeed, fragmentation causes surveillance of the poem/play/painting, which was seen as a single entity, but from surveillance is to be read critically.

- *Emotional state:*

Indian Rasa theories explain the actor's (teacher) true-self, or the emotional state (rasa) must remain under control, and acting be the process of reaching harmony from mottled emotions.[29] Drama offers this scope to teachers and students in a controlled environment by assuming roles outside of the binary,

[28] Tim Pears, "The Confusions of Teaching Creative Writing," Royal Literary Fund, 2015. Available online: https://www.rlf.org.uk/posts/the-confusions-of-teaching-creative-writing/ (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[29] G. N. Devy, Indian Literary Theory: Theory of a Literary History (New Delhi: Orient BlackSwan, 2010).

thereby, improving emotional-intelligence and social cognition.[30] But the environment must be conducive for such expressions and devoid of destructive criticism. It is like a group therapy session in which purgation of emotions opens creative doors for the writer to imagine and write stories using his stream of consciousness. When this process is controlled using constructive criticism, it has a positive impact on the writer's attitude.

Confidence is key to performance. But when alongside this purgation destructive criticism is achieved, the therapy session instead churns inside the mottled mind of the writer and prohibits creativity. For example, when I was pursuing my writing career in India, I was constantly criticized by peers for being too sophisticated with my language and the emphasis was always on my lack of understanding of rules (grammar). So, instead of trying to write from my heart, I focused more on the rules, form, and structure. Whereas, in Cardiff, the first thing I was taught was to ignore the rules, and experiment. I realized this was the core purpose of teaching Creative Writing, and how writing too like other crafts be taught to aspiring artists.

- *Non-classroom teaching:*

In postmodern drama, the play itself is the stage. The dismantling of the traditional Elizabethan stage is seen to shift the narrative into the current epoch, flooded with technological barriers that limit creativity, like the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media platforms like Instagram. During my M.A. Creative Writing course, Professor Ayesha Jahan conducted a workshop inside a forest in Wales, asking the students to write what they felt from sensory receptions of the surroundings. We were told to hug a tree and think of the human-nature relationships. The forest, unlike the concrete classroom, spoke more to the artist than bricks would. I was tasked to pick a twig or a leaf, observe its details, smell, and think of creating associations, find the tree, and use all sensory feelings available to create a list from my observations. During nighttime, when I sat down to write, those details improved the quality of my poem immediately.

- *Plot:*

The plot of each lesson-plan during my terms were fragmented and non-linear. It never followed a set of basic rules. Sometimes, the lesson plans would be created following brief discussions with students and often included critical theories, poems, videos, book excerpts, soundscapes. In 24/25-SET294 Research & Process in Creative Writing module at Cardiff University, Dr. Abby Parigail introduces a 'weasel' in the classroom to create associations and foster critical thinking. The session ends with an essay — 'Living Like Weasels by Annie Dillard' making us think of writing from the perspective of a weasel but

[30] Courtney, Drama and Intelligence.

never writing about the biology/morphology of the weasel. The non-structed plot gives both the students and teachers alike unlimited flexibility into ways of learning and educating.[31] Since I did not know anything about weasel I had to write about how I did not know anything about a weasel, and it made an interesting note, an interesting practice as a writer, that knowledge is not always necessary to start writing.

- *Social/political meaning:*

Postmodern drama functions as a cultural site for social and political questioning, often marked by the resistance to authority, and disruption of stereotypical norms. Jean-François Lyotard says postmodernism is defined by 'incredulity towards metanarratives' which he argues enables to question dominant ideologies and historical truths.[32]Author Caryl Churchill's Top Girls critiques capitalist feminism by parody of patriarchal historiography, offering 'a carnivalesque revision of women's history' that refuses a singular feminist voice'.[33] During a workshop, poet and educator Shivanee Ramolochan introduced the idea of intellectual rebellion, and how poetry in the 21st century serves as an agency to resist fascism as opposed to Shakespearian sonnets or Spenser's marriage songs on beauty and exhilaration.

I felt the resistance is both inherently personal and capitalist. In Terry Eagleton's words — everything eventually corrodes itself because it is 'business as usual.' During the workshop, we were tasked to write a paragraph by being disobedient, look for roots inside our minds for the first revolt or act of disobedience against subjects that made us either snarl or sing. I wrote a paragraph on how I protested a teacher in my seventh grade. And when Ramolochan asked us to read what we wrote, I decided not to speak, to protest the act of teaching. It made me realize that revolt itself is capitalist, because I must recite to be heard. This resistance in the postmodern drama or creative writing classrooms is achieved by pastiche, parody, dark humor, irony, and sometimes conforming to social media narratives.

4. Conclusions

Let us take the example of Indian Canadian poet and performer Rupi Kaur's Milk and Honey is both: an intellectual resistance to cultural subversions of persons with sexual trauma, and yet the performance is a business strategy to sell concert tickets. A physical copy of her book costs around 3 USD while one premium concert ticket costs 378 USD. Similarly, Creative Writing courses in the Europe and America are a business strategy promising that writers can be made.

[31] "Course Document," Learning Central, Cardiff University, 2024/25-SET295 Teaching Creative Writing. Available online: https://learningcentral.cf.ac.uk/ultra/courses/_425850_1/outline/file/_8527786_1 (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[32] Jean-François Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).

[33] Elaine Aston, Caryl Churchill (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1997), p. 36.

Anna Davis, author and director of Curtis Brown Creative, the first literary agency to run its creative writing courses says:

> publishers and agents spend a lot of time reading and assessing work, and would probably tell you that material produced on reputable creative writing courses is likely to jump to the top, or near the top, of the pile because it has already been vetted and assessed by writing tutors and refined under their guidance, but taking a creative writing course is no guarantee of publication.[34]

Will Self, author, columnist and broadcaster, says, 'I'm still not convinced creative writing can be taught. Perhaps you can take a mediocre novelist and make them into a slightly better one, but a course can't make someone into a good writer.'[35]

The pedagogy of teaching creative writing has seen the West caught in this conflict because creativity is inherently hereditary or acquired through self-discipline and knowledge. Creativity cannot sustain itself in environments that conform to traditionalism and dullness, both agents dangerous to originality. However, drama education introduces a resolution because creativity is linked with psychology, like in Heathcote and Herbert's (1985) as-if worlds, where 'students learn about the effect of the environment on social behavior. Rather than presenting a traditional lecture over the material, the teacher frames the learners as historians/anthropologists at a field site'[36]—thus, extrapolating identities and personalities.

But it is not without its disadvantages. It is not cost-effective, especially in developing countries like Africa and India, whose literature is yet to be recognized by the West. The classroom requires a trauma-informed design of the classroom. The classroom size cannot often accommodate the population size, and competition becomes a major hurdle, falling back into the loop of capitalism like the Myth of Sisyphus.

Drama educations also require students and teachers to have a certain knowledge about acting or at least the theories of acting, which non-literature students may or may not be aware. Further, the unconscious mind of a student is not a place for experimentation but deep conflict, and classrooms may not be conducive environments, like in India where mental health is still a taboo. In fact, modern therapy inside closed chambers have failed and gone awry despite the depth and experience of the psychologist.

During my Creative Photography Course, the exploration of my identity crisis further worsened my understanding of the self and society. It took me years to realize the science of this psychological process. Further, parents might not be eager to cater to such modules because the environment becomes disorderly and promotes anarchy inside schools and universities. Modern Education is meant to teach self-discipline, restraint, and abstinence, not revolt.

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[34] Vanessa Thorpe, "Creative Writing Courses: The Writer's Choice," The Guardian, May 10, 2011. Available online: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2011/may/10/creative-writing-courses (accessed on 12 May 2025).

[35] Ibid.

[36] Christopher Andersen, "Learning in 'As-If' Worlds: Cognition in Drama in Education," Theory into Practice 43, no. 4 (2004): 281–86. Available online: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3701536 (accessed on 12 May 2025

Drama education is therefore a field of pedagogy that remains wary of such problems but introduces a discourse for new ways of teaching and learning. It is rooted in scientific evidence that drama education fosters metacognition and helps students with language impairments. Perhaps, the most important question is—is education simply a business, or is it learning, and can the administration and facilitators remain empathetic and compassionate with diverse students from across the world? Creative writing courses are the only modules that can pave drama education into normalization because artists are expected to thrive in the 'darkness' that Atwood says is essential to becoming a successful writer. This model of pedagogy attempts to further this discourse with its advantages and its disadvantages.

'All the world's a stage' frames life as an arrangement of performed roles, governed not by fixed identity but by situation and belief. Rather than a stable self, individuals shift behavior depending on social setting: a student may speak formally in class, act defiantly among peers, and comply with this family members—each behavior emergent from the requirements of its milieu. This construction of performance supports drama-in-education, where learners adopt roles to explore different modes of thinking and action. A quiet pupil might display surprising authority when cast as a judge in a mock trial, revealing how role-play activates released potential capacities. Similarly, postmodern theatre foregrounds these shifts, often breaking character mid-performance to expose identity as a construct. In both cases, performance becomes a process of inquiry into the self and society.

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