

Article

An Autoethnography of Teaching Drama to Student Teachers in Hong Kong

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Abstract: Schools in Hong Kong are encouraged to engage students in learning activities to strengthen moral and values education. The use of fairy tales in drama teaching—in this case, Mr. Fox—is an approach to learning that can present opportunities to positively engage students in a range of issues, such as moral and value education. The aim of this research was to enhance moral and values education by taking an autoethnographic approach to exploring my experiences of using and adapting a Western fairy tale with local student teachers learning to teach drama as part of their Master of Education degree at a university in Hong Kong. The use of various narrative genres to engage in the process of self-dialogue emerged as an important source for developing understandings of teaching and learning. Through this reflective process, I gained insights into my own teaching and the challenges and benefits of using fairy tales and structured drama in moral and value education. This research also revealed that fairy tales, as cultural treasures passed down through generations, may hold immense value as a resource for personal enjoyment, drama teaching, and academic exploration.

Keywords: Mr. Fox and Bluebeard; applied drama; cultural translation; ethnography; moral and values education



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1. Introduction and Background

In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau suggests that schools should make use of everyday life events to strengthen the coordination of learning activities and enhance the connections between various cross-curricular domains in values education. Drama aligns perfectly with this imperative by incorporating everyday life events to facilitate moral and values education.

The use of fairy tales in drama teaching is an approach to learning that is known to present opportunities to positively engage students in a range of issues, such as moral and values education (Saxby, 2022) [1]. The aim of writing this paper is to enhance moral and values education by using an autoethnography as an approach to explore the author's (i.e., my) experiences of using fairy tales as a vehicle for engaging student teachers in a drama course. This article focuses on the experiences of one university teacher (i.e., me) teaching students in a Master of Education program who were studying drama as a component course of the program. Hereafter, I will use first-person pronouns, as I am using the methodology of autoethnography.

I developed one of the drama lessons in my course by adapting a Western fairy tale for student teachers. Drama in the Curriculum was a course I introduced to the Master of Education program in the then Open University of Hong Kong (now renamed as Hong Kong Metropolitan University). The course was taught by myself and a few part-time Tutors.

This is also a reflective narrated piece concerning my teacher education process in which I use both literary and sociological approaches, as I have touched on multiple disciplines including the analysis of literary texts, the provision of drama education, and the handling of translation. Such hybrids of disciplines are inevitably arranged, in terms of methodology, in a variety of narrative forms.

This reflection is a retrospective account about two similar lessons in a master's program for two cohorts of in-service teachers, one conducted by Mr. Felix Du in 2015 and the other conducted by me in 2016. Over the years, this Mr. Fox lesson plan has been used a few times, and I still remember the interesting responses from my student teachers back in 2016. This does not mean that there were no interesting responses in other cohorts, but in my work with teachers in the context of postgraduate education, it was a significant experience in my teaching. Using Western materials with students in Hong Kong has been a typical teaching method, but it also poses problems, especially in terms of cultural transfer. Therefore, in this paper, I would like to inquire into the journey of my teaching, i.e., choosing and adapting the Mr. Fox material, and then move on to using the material with my students. During this narrative journey, I intend to derive meanings from the choices I made through a self-dialoguing structure—meanings about teaching, translation, social significance, and interactive processes.

The paper starts by explaining the use of autoethnography as a methodology for exploring my experiences of teaching drama to student teachers. With a focus on my personal experiences, I then reflect on my role as a literary and dramatic interpreter of Mr. Fox and Bluebeard. How Jacobs' Mr. Fox was used in two teacher education sessions by my Tutor Felix and myself is then discussed. Drawing on these experiences, the final part of the paper highlights key learnings that emerged from the research.

2. Methodology: Autoethnographical Narrative Inquiry of My Character as a Teacher Educator

In *Essentials of Autoethnography*, Poulos described autoethnography as follows: "...an observational data-driven phenomenological method of narrative research and writing that aims to offer tales of human social and cultural life that are compelling, striking, and evocative (showing or bringing forth strong images, memories, or feelings)" (2021: 5) [2].

Poulos (2021) [2] went on to suggest that there were various methodological tools that could be used for data gathering in autoethnography; these were participant observation, interviews, conversational engagement, focus groups, narrative analysis, artifact analysis, archival research, journaling, field notes, thematic analysis, description, context, interpretation, and storytelling. For this research, autoethnography was my choice of methodology because I combine different tools for data collection to explore my experiences of using fairy tales in my drama teaching to understand how they might contribute to values education. This occurred as I reflected on the choices I made in my teaching. This also involved exploring my feelings towards teaching and social contextualization and the dramatic processes in the lessons that impacted me with memories and strong images.

In this study, I collected and analyzed data, referred to as "field texts" (Clandinin, 2023) [3], by reflecting on how I analyzed the fairy tale and positioned it in the context of moral education and by narrating my observations of the three-dimensional dramatic field texts. This inquiry is characterized by a three-dimensional exploration of temporality, sociality, and place: "The three dimensions in the inquiry space are interconnected and interwoven; temporality is threaded into place and into events and emotions" (Clandinin, 2023: 50) [3]. Methodologically, this perspective of co-constructing life experiences highlights the social interaction of culturally shaped life systems (Roberts, 2002) [4]. It aligns with Clough's notion of inquiry that seeks to establish a connection between the individual's "micro" world and the institutional meanings of the "macro" world they both inhabit and contribute to (2002: 12) [5].

Neelands (2006) [6] described the use of the critical reflective practitioner approach for rethinking habitual methods and operations to create "emancipatory" knowledge concerned with praxis. When the notion of the reflective practitioner is evident, teacher agency comes into view, which means that the teacher's ability or potential to act and the achievement of agency are impacted by three temporal dimensions, namely iterational (impacts of the past), practical-evaluative (engagement with the present), and projective (aspirations

for the future) dimensions (Priestly et al., 2015: 22) [7]. This underscores the importance of employing an autoethnographical method in my research.

The recollection of lesson preparation work follows a chronological sequence. Subsequently, this preparation was followed by human interaction within the classroom space. The lesson culminated in critical debates that evoked various emotions, prompting a deeper exploration of the multiple meanings embedded in human experiences. This exploration encompassed the relationships between individuals and their world, as well as the dynamics of cultural, institutional, and linguistic negotiations (Clandinin, 2023) [3].

Van De Mierop, Clifton, and Schnurr (2022) [8] argued that both big stories and small stories are significant in narrative analysis, particularly when the smaller stories that emerge during daily social practice (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2008) [9] might be overlooked. These smaller stories were embedded in “do[ing] things” such as “blaming, accounting for action, building acceptable moral identities, and so on” (Van De Mierop, Clifton and Schnurr, 2022: 1) [8]. In this paper, I will document these small stories as events and discussions that took place during my drama lesson.

The approach of using narratives from a subjective perspective is akin to recounting the stories of the worlds that the researcher has explored. This type of qualitative research “is the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003: 12) [10]. But the subjective eyes are not totally subjective. Wortham (2001) [11] tried to show how the dialogic approach to interactional positioning works by introducing two Bakhtinian concepts, namely “double voicing” and “ventriloquation”, as tools for interpreting interactional positionings in narratives (Wortham, 2001: 62–63) [11]. This implies that storytellers employ a juxtaposition of different voices from different characters, allowing readers to interpret between the lines. In this narrative, I am attempting to utilize this concept by looking at my own character as a teacher educator—not only creating dialogues and positioning between characters, but also by establishing dialogues between different episodes through the interpretive positionings. I make this shift by borrowing Spence’s (1982) [12] psychoanalytic theory, which says that a narrative piece appropriately chooses unrelated events and makes sense by filling the gaps between these events. Hermans and Hermans-Jansen called this process of creating dialogues with oneself or another person “self-reflection”, and through these dialogues “valuations are organized into a single narratively structured system” (1995: 15) [13].

As a drama educator, I happened to use narrative inquiry largely in my research life for exploration in the field of applied drama, because I have been an avid enthusiast of story-telling (Shu, 2006) [14], and I noticed that narrative inquiry has been a useful methodology in the field of applied drama and theatre (Zatzman, 2006) [15]. As a piece of narrative inquiry, I acknowledge Van De Mierop’s (2021) [16] use of the concept of “narrative genres”, such as canonical narratives and non-canonical narratives. One intriguing aspect to consider is that while I am documenting non-canonical narratives, I am also engaging in discussions about the use of canonical narratives, such as Bluebeard and Mr. Fox. This embrace of canonical narratives, along with their interpretation, initiates an exploration into further blurring the boundaries between literary narratives and non-canonical narratives in the context of narrative genres within narrative inquiry. I propose that this paper also serves as a meta-analysis of narrative genres, shedding light on the interconnectedness and fluidity between different narrative forms.

3. Data Collection Process

There were ten student teachers in the 2015 class and another ten student teachers in the 2016 class who talked with one another and with the teachers, thus interactively creating positionings organized in this paper, which involve discussions about intersubjectivity that echo the discussion of narrative genres below. In the 2016 class, there were about a handful of student teachers who shared experiences about the use of canonical narratives. In Poulos’ (2021) [2] terms again, I am using tools such as storytelling and interpretation in the former half of the reflection, including translating, interpreting, and adapting the fairy

tales; in the latter half, I am using participant observation, focus groups, and journaling with photo-taking, including eliciting feedback from the student teachers about the lesson plan. All through the whole paper, I am using narrative and thematic analysis through the juxtaposition of episodes and positionings.

4. My Experiences as a Literary and Dramatic Interpreter of Mr. Fox and Bluebeard

In my drama lessons for student teachers in 2015 and 2016, I utilized Winston's lesson plan, which was adapted from Joseph Jacobs' Mr. Fox (1890) [17]. It is worth noting that Jacobs himself acknowledged that his version of the story was a re-written variant of The Robber Bridegroom (1857) collected by the Brothers Grimm. Additionally, the name of the antagonist, Mr. Fox, was derived from Halliwell's murder story titled An Oxford Student (1849) [18]. Fairy tales and folklore often exist in different versions with similar themes or storylines. Fine (1987) [19] observed that Jacobs' most controversial and widely recognized contribution to folklore was his retelling of fairy tales.

4.1. Episode 1: The Curious Teacher That Thinks like a Learner

I remember I came across a Chinese translated version of a revised edition of the Brothers Grimm tales. The book, when translated back to English, was titled Folklores by Brothers Grimm that Frightens, and it was rewritten by two Japanese female writers using the pen name Kiryu Misao. In this book, all the fairy tales were retold in a manner that showcased terrifying characters who would kill or mistreat others. I had a fascination with dark and cruel stories, and I believed that students would also be captivated by them. After all, who does not love such tales?

I also came across various critics who had written extensively about the works of the Brothers Grimm. As a student of literature and translation, I pondered on the idea of examining whether there were any discrepancies between the original source and the interpreted version. It seemed necessary for me to undertake this investigation before proceeding with the translation and adaptation of this secondary source for my own teaching purposes. By doing so, I was able to enhance my confidence in explaining the rationale behind the selection and utilization of teaching materials to my student teachers.

As a drama teacher, I knew that my biggest task was to find out the dramatic moral of the story. First, I noticed how Lady Mary was attracted to Mr. Fox: "No one knew who Mr. Fox was; but he was certainly brave, and surely rich, and of all her lovers, Lady Mary cared for him alone". While bravery could be a stunning quality to Lady Mary, richness was an all-time attraction, not to mention that Mr. Fox lives in a castle. I also noticed that Lady Mary was so curious as to open three castle doors, with the last one having "Be Bold, Be Bold, But Not Too Bold, Lest That Your Heart's Blood Should Run Cold" written on it. I decided that my drama lesson should demonstrate how learners could explore issues like curiosity, risk-taking, and the value of fighting for oneself.

4.2. Positioning 1A: A Drama Teacher Who Grew Up in the Contemporary Era

I studied English Literature in my undergraduate studies. Therefore, I was much alert when I decided to use Winston's lesson plan, which is based on a fairy tale. Reflectively, I was even more alert, because a teacher should first figure out the meanings in the original literary source before going on to understand any adaptation of that source.

I noted that critics like Maria Tatar (2004) [20], Shuli Barzilai (2009) [21], Casie Hermansson (2009) [22], or Jack Zipes (2012) [23] focused on comparing different versions of the story, tending to take Charles Perrault's Bluebeard (1697) [24] as the origin of the serial killer story. Zipes (2008: p.xvii) [25] noted that Perrault's classical tales "tend to reinforce patriarchal and patronizing notions of gender and power", trying to "illustrate what [the female characters'] 'proper' place was in particular situations and how to best act in a civil way". After reading all these critics, I felt a bit relieved because I found that these references did not deviate too much from what I thought I had understood about the story.

As previously indicated, my background as a drama student and practitioner during my second master's degree, PhD, and third master's degree prompted me to undertake a fresh analysis of the two versions from a dramatic standpoint. Remarkably, what captivated my attention the most were the attributes of the female characters and their striking resemblance to women in the contemporary era. These qualities encompassed the pursuit of autonomy, inquisitiveness, courage, intellect, and a commitment to gender equality. As a drama student and teacher, I was happy to derive these themes from the fairy tale.

I experienced an interesting internal struggle between my identities as a literature student and a drama student. The study of literature provided me with a foundation rooted in structured frameworks and classical perspectives on canonical literary works. On the other hand, my engagement with drama fostered a sense of creativity and a readiness to assert my own voice. I found myself deliberating over whether literary critics would endorse the dramatic interpretations I, as a teacher, was inclined to adopt. While the resounding call of an emancipated reflective practitioner resonated within me, urging me to "Be Bold, Be Bold", there was also the subtle whisper of a more conservative voice cautioning, "But Not Too Bold".

4.3. Positioning 1B: My Translator's Mind to Deliberately "Misinterpret" and Transform Existing Narratives for Drama Education

During my first master's degree, I pursued a major in translation. The focus of my thesis revolved around the discourse surrounding the degree of faithfulness a translated text should maintain to the original, particularly when it came to translating cultural meanings. As some translators would disagree, I inclined more to the liberal camp of translators who maintained that a piece of translation should speak to the readers of the translated text and, when this happened, the translator might need to necessarily change the meanings in the original text if the readers were bound to misunderstand if the translated words were too "faithfully" or literally rendered (Shu, 1996) [26]. This positional view perfectly matched my role as a translator of dramatic plays, because the audience simply could not have time to flip the dictionary when they were sitting in the theatre and listening to the lines which embedded some awkward words and phrases as a result of word-to-word translation. Additionally, the extreme view in this camp of translators regarded the translated text as a re-creation of the original text (Shu, 1996) [26].

Having said this, therefore, I was particularly drawn to Carter's translation of Perrault. Zipes pointed out that Carter "definitely had to 'misinterpret' [Perrault] and re-shape his tales so that they could become more earthy, more in tune with Carter's radical vision of aesthetics and the efficacy of storytelling" (2008: xix) [25]. In *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*, Zipes further asserted that "[o]vershadowing, transformation, and remaking are key functional components in a memetic process that enable a particular fairy tale to become popular and classical in Western culture" (2012: 44) [23]. Of course, this position of re-make and interpretive creation will become a central focus of discussion in the remaining sections of this paper.

I believed practitioners and scholars in the field of applied drama and theatre largely held similar views to the idea of active reception and interpretation. In *Drama, Narrative and Moral Education*, Winston drew upon theories offered by Bruner, Goldberg, and Bakhtin, with subjunctivity and dialogism emerging as key concepts, observing that "traditional tales are resistant to these concepts and that debate over their moral significance is characterized by profound disagreement over their didactic purposes", and therefore he proposed that "the [original] narrative form is inappropriate to moral teaching of a straightforward, didactic nature" (1998: 7–8) [27]. He categorized Zipes and Tatar as "revisionists" and post-structuralists who advocated the need to revise fairy tales, and Bettelheim in the opposite camp as the "traditionalist" (1998: 32–35) [27]. Winston's description of Bettelheim's taste was interesting, if not ironic:

There is no ambivalence in the fairy tales favored by Bettelheim: the good win, the bad lose. The use of unambiguous characters and the lack of psychology are important

features of this process. As the good figure is straightforwardly and obviously the hero or heroine, the child will identify with it (1998: 35) [27].

I respectfully question the effectiveness of relying solely on such simplistic categorizations when children begin to grapple with the complexities of human psychology in situations where distinguishing between good and bad is not always clear cut. However, it is worth noting that the Asian perspective may be more receptive to an unequivocal judgment of right and wrong. In Hong Kong, moral education has traditionally been implemented through didactic classroom lectures delivered in an authoritarian and monotonous manner. This approach may not necessarily foster a deep moral commitment in students, as it primarily focuses on instilling and indoctrinating them with “correct” moral values (Cheung and Lee, 2010: 577) [28]. Instead, moral education needs to strip off its authoritarian atmosphere to bring in a liberal, discursive method. Conversely, “the fundamental problem with moral education in general is the lack of educational resources, notably talented moral educators who are skillful to implement the above changes. Apart from conveying didactic content, such educators need to play a crucial role in facilitating moral discussion under a just community context” (Cheung and Lee, 2010: 587) [28].

In Hong Kong, as specified on the Education Bureau website, “Taking cultivation of proper values and attitudes as the direction, schools should make use of everyday life events to strengthen the coordination of learning activities, and enhance the connection, among various cross-curricular domains in values education, including moral education, civic education, national education ..., anti-drug education, life education, sex education, media and information literacy education, education for sustainable development, human rights education under the legal framework, etc. so as to provide students with all-round learning experience conducive to their whole-person development”. (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/sbm/handy-tips/learning-journey-for-SMC-members/curriculum-development/values-education/index.html>; accessed on 4 May 2024) [29].

The method of using drama aligns perfectly with the approach of incorporating everyday life events to facilitate moral and values education. Drama revolves around the study of human actions and reactions in various life situations. When a learner assumes a dramatic role, he/she becomes immersed in the thoughts and emotions of that role within the given circumstances. This compels him/her to contemplate appropriate actions and reactions based on the personal significance and implications of such choices.

While Zipes took a step away from literary formalists to concern audience’s and reader’s subjective interpretations of both written and image texts, I am going to take a further step on the dramatic interpretation as well as creation of personal significance and meanings as a process of learning for children using fairy tales, particularly Mr. Fox, as source texts. Toye and Prendiville (2000) [30] referred to drama as the “putting down the book” method, as opposed to the ordinary storytelling method on the carpet, which took two elements from the story, a character and a particular situation, suggesting that the children should not be locked into the narrative. Instead of just acting out the narrative, the children should turn their attention to key moments, key characters, and dilemmas so as to be “liberated to explore what they understand of the original author’s ideas” and “can embellish, expand, create new ones” and to embark on “journeys of narrative exploration” (2000: 17–18) [30]. Neelands added that “[F]amiliar traditional stories...are not merely entertainment for children in the early years; they are vital sources of knowledge about the world and its ways” (2000: vii) [31]. However, this view was not going to be straightforwardly accepted by my in-service student teachers, who started a debate after experiencing a drama lesson plan I introduced.

A note on autoethnographical observation: I am glad to see that I was achieving agency by going through two temporal stages—iterational and practical—evaluative. First, I was ready to creatively adapt the fairy tale for educational purposes, just like the playscript translator I used to be (as an impact from the past), and to pay attention to the social context of my audience/students (as engagement with the present). But the action I show below unfortunately exposes a lack of sensitivity to my social context.

5. My Adaptation of Mr. Fox as a Learning Medium Encountering Critical Debates

In this section, I will discuss the utilization of Joseph Jacobs' Mr. Fox in two teacher education sessions. These sessions were conducted by my Tutor Mr. Felix Du and myself in two consecutive years. The purpose was to showcase to student teachers how improvisational and participatory drama and theatre can be structured as a creative process in a school setting, specifically targeting young individuals aged 10–14. To provide our students with a convenient reference, we referred to this form of drama education as process-driven dramatic learning, or simply process drama (O'Neill, 1995) [32] or conventions drama (Shu, 2012) [33]. The lesson plan described below was created by Professor Joe Winston and delivered in my drama education course for mainly in-service teachers, with slight adaptations including names of characters, time periods, and contextual elements.

5.1. Episode 2: The Challenged Drama Lesson

When I first heard my Tutor, Felix, say he would like to use Joe's plan, I was more than happy, as he was a teacher in my Warwick studies and has been a long-time friend. I did not directly observe Joe use it. Alternatively, Felix showed the written plan to me, and I became much drawn to it because of its interesting representation of a well-known fairy tale.

I read the fairy tale Mr. Fox to grasp the essence of this lesson plan. I was struck by Lady Mary's proactive strength and cleverness. It instantly reminded me of the powerful women of our era who possess the determination to shape their own destinies. Considering the backdrop of Hong Kong as an international city and financial hub, it is likely that this attribute is influenced by the complexities of modern information dissemination and materialistic culture (as discussed in Positionings 1A and 1B).

Before I go on with my teaching experience, let me write down a step-by-step version of an excerpt from Joe's lesson plan for Mr. Fox written in the University of Warwick in 2004. This version only includes the steps relevant to the content of my discussion.

Step 4: Discuss with the students how many old tales end with a wedding but that this one is different, as it begins with one. Draw attention to the following letter:

Dear friend

I know this letter will surprise you but I wish you to be one of the first to share the happy news. I am to be married! Yes, married, to the most handsome, charming and mysterious of men. And in just one week's time! I have known my future husband for a month but that has been more than long enough for me to realise that he is truly the man of my dreams.

His name is Mr Fox and I met him ... well, there will be time enough to chat when I see you. Suffice it to say for now that he is the most gallant and wealthy of men and of all my many suitors, he alone has captured both my heart and the approval of my brothers—which is just as important of course! They still think of me as a silly young girl without a serious thought in her head, I'm afraid.

When we marry we are to live in his mansion. Oh, he has described it to me on many occasions and I look forward to seeing it for the first time on the day after our wedding.

My brothers have commissioned the most wonderful of presents for us. It is a series of five tapestries to adorn the large hallway of our home. Each illustrates a different happy event in the long life that I know we will share together. Do come and view the present before the wedding. It is now on display in the great banqueting hall of my brothers' castle, where the wedding is soon to take place.

I look forward, dear friend, to seeing you within the next few days. Yours as ever

Lady Mary

Step 5: Discuss with the students what will be illustrated on the tapestries (wedding/christening/children grown?). In groups, students are given one of these subjects to create a tableau of the tapestry image.

Step 6: Teacher in role as Mr. Fox, who views the present alone, making a few comments but insinuating a sinister nature under a superficial charm: “Is that the future they envisage for me, a happy stay-at-home family man? How little they know me!” A gesture such as the crushing of a wedding carnation can be particularly effective.

Step 7: Back to the present. Teacher in role as Lady Mary, who is agitated and calls a meeting with her friends and tells them about her experience at Mr Fox’s mansion the evening before. Halt at the moment Lady Mary opened the door of the chamber. Do not tell students what Lady Mary saw in there but indicate from the way she looks, speaks, etc., that it was something horrific.

Step 8: In groups, students make images of what they imagine to be in the bloody chamber. As a whole class, whisper the phrase “Be Bold, Be Bold, But Not Too Bold Lest Your Heart’s Blood Runs Cold” and then freeze into the images. Perform each in sequence and then have the class scream (as Lady Mary) after the final image. Students can then talk of what they saw in each of the images and perhaps one or two can be looked at and examined in detail.

Both Felix and I used the above letter (translated into Chinese) in Joe’s original plan as an introductory drama activity to start the lesson. I thought it was a clever dramatic input as an introduction of Jacob’s Mr. Fox. Joe’s letter was indeed a smart move to kick-start the lesson with some drama. It totally changed the storyteller’s voice from being distant and impersonal to a more personal and subjective female perspective. And that voice perfectly matched my impression of Lady Mary in the fairy tale—she is bold and in control, especially when it comes to her love life and finding Mr. Right, just like how she carries herself in the letter, I suppose.

In the session conducted by myself (in 2016), I changed the name Lady Mary into Rosemary, which is also the name of a Hong Kong young model and singer. Mr. Fox became Mr. Siu the Dude (in Chinese 蕭公子), which is also a typical last name (蕭 Siu), incorporating a way of referring to rich, handsome, womanizing guys (公子, the Dude). This last name actually coincides with the last name of a few Hong Kong male celebrities who possess characteristics such as rich, womanizing, or talented and charismatic. The talk of the town, especially in places like Hong Kong, has always been about the social phenomenon of rich second-generation commercial tycoons getting married or moving in with gorgeous young models and pop stars. It is a topic that is always buzzing and gets people talking. With such adaptation, I decided to further “misinterpret” the story for the students’ discussion of women’s choices in the materialistic world, complicated by the playboy culture, metropolitan rumors, and true love.

To kick off the first activity, I took on the role of Rosemary’s best friend who received the letter via email, so as to achieve a more contemporary taste. She then portrayed Rosemary and read the letter to her fellow friends (portrayed by the learners as they listened). By this little back-and-forth shifting between Rosemary’s perspective and that of her friend’s, I made an effort to channel Rosemary’s subjective voice and transform it into her female friends’ voices, aiming to capture the essence of the broader young female community in Hong Kong.

The second activity developed the dramatic context for Rosemary by asking the students to form sculptures to show what presents were given by Rosemary’s brothers. The presents in Winston’s original plan are tapestries, which are very Western home accessories, but not in Hong Kong. I changed them to sculptures, which is not a very culturally appropriate adaptation for Hong Kong—perhaps paintings could be another choice. The third activity now quickly developed the dramatic action by letting myself play the role of Mr. Siu in order to unveil his monstrous sneer towards the presents while he saw them arrive at his mansion. (I changed “tapestries” and “castle” in the original letter, which were too British, to “sculptures” and “mansion” in my version.) These few steps in the drama process built up the suspense surrounding the female protagonist’s crisis, which revolved around the possibility of domestic violence—a pressing issue in Hong Kong as well. The drama developed until the point when Rosemary decided to open the door on which the curiosity-driving line “Be Bold,

Be Bold, But Not Too Bold, Lest Your Heart's Blood Runs Cold" was written. Different cohorts of students, including Felix's (in 2015) and my own, all confirmed that this moment was equally exciting for both children and adults, when they agitatedly demonstrated acts of murder and the display of body parts from different previous wives, now with an empty bottle expecting to show Lady Mary's lips (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Body parts of previous wives displayed and treasured on the right, creatively presented by student teachers. Another group of student teachers on the left playing Lady Mary opened the bloody chamber door. The Tutor facilitated in the middle.

The wrap-up discussion touched upon the purpose of oral tales and got us all thinking deeply about the morals embedded in this specific story. We explored themes that really struck a chord, like the clash between true love and materialism, and the pitfalls of city life. I gathered some feedback from the student teachers, and one of them excitedly remembered it as the Bluebeard story, picturing a room filled with all sorts of gruesome stuff. But then, a male student teacher, always one to be critical, reminded me of something important I should keep in mind. He challenged with confidence: "In your story we had to imagine a big mansion with doors and staircases, etc., but Hong Kong students might not be able to imagine that situation as, you know, Hong Kong is such a small place. You might need to consider about students' ability and background. Also, a Hong Kong girl will not take the risk of going to such a mansion in order to find out about her dream boy. We needed to consider the entire ecosystem of people in Hong Kong".

I asked myself: Was it also inappropriate to change the name Lady Mary to Rosemary and the letter to an email so that students would be drawn to imagine the contemporary Hong Kong context which could be too close to their real life? Should I forget about the metropolitan changes and just use Joe's original Lady Mary context so that the castle could make better sense for them?

In addition to the male student teacher, there were also some female student teachers who expressed concerns about the plan being "too open", particularly regarding topics of love and sex. Like many teachers in Hong Kong, they appeared to hold more conservative views and may not have been fully prepared for the possibilities and demands that the drama process could present. "Oh no", I thought, "If she is not convinced of the moral worth of the plan, she probably will not use it on her moral education lesson".

As the session neared its conclusion, the critical discussion evolved into a lively debate about the feasibility and importance of cultural translation. Some student teachers proposed simply replacing the Bluebeard element with a Hong Kong film classic featuring a serial killer who uses human flesh to make steamed meat buns. This is referring to a locally produced film in 1993 called *The Untold Story* (《八仙飯店之人肉叉燒包》), literally meaning Steamed Pork Bun with Human Flesh in the Eight Fairies Guesthouse). On the other side of the debate, initiated by a language and literature teacher, there was an argument in favor of using drama as a means to culturally introduce foreign classics like

Shakespeare. All in all, the class ended in a reflection of curriculum objectives and teachers' readiness to make the best use of dramatic methods.

5.2. Positioning 2A: *Be Theoretically Firm as a Learned Drama Educator and Practitioner*

Despite the awareness of possible metaxis (Boal, 1995) [34] going on in the drama classroom where students were able to exist in both the imaginary dramatic world as characters in the fictional context as well as the realistic world as learners in the school classroom, I have to agree with the critical student teacher regarding the high level of cultural consciousness that he perceived in his students' minds. It could be exactly metaxis that gives the students the ability to separate emotional engagement from rational disbelief. For instance, as the drama unfolds, the students could become fully engaged in the thrilling moments and eagerly immerse themselves in the experience. They might even enjoy physically exploring the grand mansion and pretending to walk down the stairs, just like in a suspenseful thriller story; but after they get out of roles and sit in a circle to discuss the moral of the drama, some safety-conscious girls might refuse to engage again in Rosemary's experience by asking, "How can she be so stupid as to run down the dark staircase—I'd prefer calling my boyfriend to find out what's up instead. After all, I can whatsapp him easily". Her disbelief in the role's perceived stupidity being portrayed by a modern, intelligent Hong Kong girl could be attributed to the negative distancing effect of the historically situated drama. This might hinder her from exploring concepts such as curiosity or materialism further. Or was the distancing too great here? Alternatively, the distance could be slightly shortened, by injecting more character objective with the mentality of a modern Hong Kong girl into the dramatic situation with the additional use of props. A modern girl would not be so stupid as to run down a dark staircase in a big mansion simply because of the "Be Bold" line written on the door. She probably still needs some other things for the curiosity to work. Maybe there is also a bunch of rosemary wrapped with a little key on the top of the staircase, giving her a deceptive lure to some precious or expensive present behind the door downstairs, lovingly prepared for her. The problem was not the big mansion, but the 19th century *mentality* of Lady Mary, who was indeed a replicate of Rosemary. Indeed, it is common sense that wealthy individuals in Hong Kong do reside in large mansions. In conclusion, it is the responsibility of the drama teacher to enhance the dramatic context for their students, and I firmly believe that metaxis can still be effective when the dramatic situation is properly understood and portrayed.

Upon reflection, the discussion experience described in the lesson was truly valuable. The student teachers provided insightful comments on more effective methods of culturally translating teaching materials. They engaged in introspection regarding their teaching objectives and contemplated the use of drama for their specific purposes. I consider such a concluding discussion to be highly meaningful, as it successfully demonstrated the desired outcomes of a lesson for the student teachers.

5.3. Positioning 2B: *Teacher as Ethnographer*

As a teacher, I am used to students' critical comments, which many times inform me to choose the right frame(s) for a dramatic theme. The word "frame", adopted from Goffman and applied by Heathcote to refer to "the viewpoint individuals will have about their circumstances and which helps them to make sense of an event or situation" (Bowell and Heap, 2001: 59) [35], is an essential concept the teacher must consider when planning his/her lesson. To achieve a good grasp on the frames of the participants, the teacher needs to assume a number of roles. It has been discussed that a drama teacher should assume the roles of manager, animateur, facilitator and actor/dramaturge (Neelands, 2004) [36], or co-artist (Taylor and Warner, 2006) [37].

These roles mostly address the qualities of the teacher as an implementer of a lesson. At the lesson-planning stage, I would suggest that the teacher should assume the role of a researcher, specifically an ethnographer. Gallagher suggested that a critical ethnographer should engage in "questions of interpretation and representation of both the social reality

and the drama practices in an education setting” (2003: 64) [38]. In this reflective paper, I have come to the realization that adopting a critical ethnographer’s lens was particularly fitting for narrowing the focus and facilitating a conclusive discussion on the interpretation and adaptation of the fairy tale and drama lesson. Gallagher further commented on this criticality as having two aspects—power relations in the drama classroom participants and Habermas’ notion of emancipatory interest: “How do the dialectics of self and other, of local and global, of democracy and domination play out in drama’s pedagogy? ... There is an intertextual relationship between the fictional roles enacted in the dramas and the so-called real ones of classroom or workshop life” (Gallagher, 2003: 69) [38].

What I discovered in this teacher education session was the very interesting “intertextual relationship” between the fictional roles of Mr. Fox/Siu and Lady Mary/Rosemary and the real classroom social roles of a male and a female student teacher. For example, it was my intended objective (or my emancipatory interest) for student teachers to experience the fictional role of Rosemary and her possible affection towards the rich Mr. Siu, so that they could compare those feelings and thoughts with their cosmopolitan feelings and thoughts of being a woman yearning for a man. But their real social role of an in-service teacher urged them to be critical towards the feasibility of the drama plan (i.e., to exercise their learner’s power and hence to reflect on their authoritative teacher’s role in their own everyday classroom), such as the above critical student’s observation of an adaptation that could address the “entire ecosystem of people in Hong Kong”, the traditional teacher’s view towards the plan’s being too open on issues about love and sex, or the literature teacher’s crunch on its potential learning opportunities of canonical classical stories. This condition is particularly obvious in in-service student teachers, as compared to pre-service student teachers, because the in-service teachers are, to a greater extent, institutionally “framed” in their working contexts.

In addition, the power relations are indeed in dialogue with the emancipatory interest in consideration. To find out how this dialogue might possibly develop, I need to further use the notion of an (auto)ethnographer. Of course, Gallagher noted the questions to be asked by the ethnographer who observes the social and dramatic contexts: “What questions, in the context of the drama world, were left unanswered by the participants? And conversely, what observations of the cultural dynamics in the group penetrated the drama constructions/imaginaries?” (Gallagher 2003: 71) [38].

To answer Gallagher’s first question, I would say my student teachers did not indulge in answering the moral inquiries proposed by the story of Mr. Siu, although they were quite happy to take up the dramatic roles and had fun. This was less ideal, as the drama should be evoking thoughts about reflection on human values and human habits, and this should be a core learning outcome in a drama lesson, because if the participants were impressed by the drama and the dilemma of the story, their future possibility of using the drama method and the specific drama plan could be enhanced. To answer Gallagher’s second question, the student teachers were “conversely” more excited when they took back their cultural roles and started to propose suggested changes in the drama construction, such as the use of a Hong Kong serial killer film. They were more conscious of their being teachers, and less immersed in discussing the issues implied by the imaginary dramatic story.

6. Conclusive Discussion: The Narrative Inquirer Who Reflects on the Methodology

The use of autoethnography as a methodology was beneficial for this research. As I highlighted in the first half of this paper, my interpretations of the text Mr. Fox contributed a lot to the formation of my emancipatory interests and hence the framing of the drama teaching plan. The autoethnography also raised my awareness. The students’ learning in my class revealed the cultural capital that individuals possess, such as their educational backgrounds, thinking patterns, and the sociological contexts in which they reside, including social trends, economic practices, religious perspectives, and regional variations. Additionally, the autoethnography enabled an exploration of the institutional factors that impact learning, such as govern-

ment policies, school cultures, student abilities, and parental viewpoints. Lastly, the research methodology of autoethnography that I employed in this paper aligns with my concluding perspective that a teacher should function as an ethnographer of his/her own practice. Therefore, I am introducing the idea of ethnographer as a result of undertaking this autoethnography approach through which I reflected on the benefits I, as a teacher, gained by conducting fieldwork and recording the events and interactions taking place in my everyday teaching activities, so that I can learn more about teaching and learning. Other performance ethnographers may “couch their findings in feminist, post-structuralist, phenomenological or other theoretical approaches” (Bacon, 2006) [39]. I share this sociological and phenomenological approach to ethnography.

In addition to being attuned to their students’ needs and experiences, teachers should also be aware of their own social context, ingrained thoughts, habitual positioning, and the language and linguistic symbols they use, particularly when navigating cultural shifts. It is crucial for teachers to possess self-awareness and sensitivity towards their own role in the educational process. Before I close this discussion, I am asking myself ethnographically: Was I burdened by my academic past and therefore was too much into the minds of a literature and translation student? What contextual needs of my students should I consider when I adapt a piece of teaching material originally designed for students in a foreign culture? As a drama student and teacher, I should know that adaptation, or what I call translation, might not be limited to changing the names of people (such as Rosemary) or objects (such as the letter) only. I should carefully look at the *drama*, which includes the characters’ backgrounds, their situations, their mentality and, of course, their actions. Matching these with the ethnographical needs of students, the dramatic adaptation should be able to work nicely on both levels of metaxis.

Using the method of juxtaposing the dialogues between the narrated events and positioned reflections, I have experienced a combination of narrative genres, including canonical and non-canonical narratives, grand narratives and small stories, and certainly autobiography presented in the form of fictional reality. Yes, parts of the episodes are fictional, and why not? (Clough, 2002) [5]. Indeed, Clough was quite right when he argued for the use of fictionalization in narrating real events, that the “understanding of others” takes place “in an act of imagination driven by profound symbols; the event symbolises in a way which data and analysis could never do” (2002: 17) [5].

Fairy tales, as cultural treasures passed down through generations, hold immense value as resources for both personal enjoyment and academic exploration. Beyond that, they also serve as invaluable educational materials for fostering children’s creativity, logical thinking, and moral judgment. The examples of Perrault’s Bluebeard and Jacobs’ Mr. Fox help to demonstrate the studies on the inevitable metamorphosis of stories for the purpose of cultural influence on gender positioning and life choices. The example of Winston’s Mr. Fox drama lesson plan, along with my reflective ethnographic narratives, serves as a compelling demonstration of how this concept of metamorphosis can be introduced to young individuals who possess a curiosity for stories and are yearning for more engaging learning experiences. Through improvisational participatory drama processes, this learning approach not only captivates the students but also challenges the critical teachers who are eager to receive drama training and are willing to question their own preconceived notions and those of others. It opens up new possibilities and expands the framed worlds of both students and teachers alike.

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