

Educational Leaders and their Witnesses: An Arts-based Psychoanalytic Inquiry into the
Performance of Ir/rational Administrative Acts

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty of Education

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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An arm plunges to the bottom of a well, retrieving a wet angel. Is it still breathing?

- *Maria Torok*

Abstract

This study endeavors to unsettle the normative assumptions that construct administrative rationality. It uncloaks illusions of control over self and others in educational leadership spaces through a psychoanalytic exploration of the inheritance of intergenerational trauma from one's familial witnesses. The interrogation takes the form of an arts-based method of playwriting to create an encounter with some of the voices and characters that haunt the actors in educational administration. I call forth the concept of the specter with its etymological links to *looking* (del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, 2013) to think about the ways in which one's witnesses bequeath psychological inheritances that wreak havoc with one's capacity to be rational in administrative spaces. The first part of the study poses questions about the psychological conditions that make it possible for the appearance of witnesses. To that end, the study asks, how do one's witnesses influence who one was, who one is and who one wants to become as an educational administrator? In pursuit of these psychoanalytic questions, I wrote a three act play called, *Sincere Liars*. The play explores the relationships between the witnesses who lurk in the unconscious and the pulse of countertransference that beats in many leadership performances. To speak about an administrative hauntology (Derrida, 1994), the third part of the study considers the inheritance of psychological distortions that live in the dreams, memories and the childhood dramas that are sometimes uncritically rehearsed in administrative spaces. Cautions about the practice of memorializing one's capacity to overcome emotionally depleting struggles as a *blessing in disguise* are offered. The study concludes with a provocation to professors of educational administration to problematize the absence of psychoanalytic interpretations of leadership work.

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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisory committee...

Dr. Dawn Wallin,
for your wise counsel as my academic advisor. I am very thankful for every conversation
and for your unwavering support and mentorship over the years.

Kristin Kusanovich MFA,
for your kindness and the insightful feedback. When I think about education as
art, I recognize you as a masterful artist.

Dr. Jerome Cranston,
for your challenging questions. You see the art in leadership and it inspires me to
dream and experiment in my own work.

Dr. Jessica Senehi,
for consistently reminding me that our witnesses can be loving actors in our
individual and collective stories.

In addition, I am grateful for the financial support from the Social Sciences in Humanities
Research Council of Canada for granting me a doctoral fellowship, and the University of
Manitoba for granting me a graduate student fellowship.

To my family...

Vanya, Kirill & Trent,
I love you very much.

A Haunting

This study endeavors to unsettle some of the normative assumptions that construct administrative rationality. The field of educational administration, like all other fields of study, is implicated by a hauntology (Derrida, 1994) in that the meanings of the words, signs, symbols and artefacts that construct leadership and administrative discourses are “haunted by the ghosts of other meanings” (van Eiferen, 2010, p. 286). To that end, this work raises questions about the inheritance of psychological legacies that are buried, excommunicated, fading or invisible (Spooner, 2010). With that in mind, I invite the reader to encounter her/his/their/our/my figurative ghosts for a while, to allow the spectralized ethos of the everyday (del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, 2010) to increase the distance between the repetitive thoughts that limit what one is permitted to think and do in the field of educational administration.

I call forth the concept of the specter with its etymological links to *looking* (del Pilar Blanco & Peeren, 2013) to think about the ways in which one’s witnesses bequeath psychological inheritances that may wreak havoc with one’s capacity to be rational in administrative spaces. The study poses questions about the psychological conditions that make it possible for the appearance of witnesses. To that end, the study asks, how do one’s witnesses influence who one was, who one is and who one wants to become as an educational administrator?

For the purposes of this study, witnesses appear predominantly in three different iterations. The most ethereal witness in this work is the *specter*. The specter is a conceptual metaphor for the administrative significations that shape and contort a discourse. Spectrality makes its presence known most significantly in the third section of the study in which I reflect on the play to provoke questions about order, predictability and control in administrative

performances. The most troublesome iteration of the witness in this work is the *phantom*. These witnesses are part of the cast of one's intimate dead or relatives who have died and reappear in one's mind to ensure their secrets are kept (Abraham & Torok, 1971; 1972). Although they may be conceived of as merely the vestiges of unprocessed trauma, they are skilled liars and tricksters and manifest in this study as the dead characters (Carly, Connie and Officer Dylan) in the play. Phantoms appear to interrogate the ways that one's inherited representations of traumatic experiences and familial distortions may infuse administrative performances. The third conceptualization of the witness in this study is the *relational analyst*. This witness is an embodiment of the capacity to listen in-between gestures, words and images to help a fellow sufferer revise the meaning of her or his traumatic memories in hopes that both people can live a more thoughtful and compassionate existence at work and at home.

To disorient some of the rational discourses that haunt educational administration I wrote a 3 act play. The title of the play is *Sincere Liars*. It is an uncanny (Freud, 1919) journey into the mind of one school administrator in that it makes some of the familiar aspects of school leadership strange or even frightful. The play oversteps the bounds of possibility (Freud, 1919) because "If it- learning to live –remains to be done, it can happen only between life and death. Neither in life nor in death alone. What happens between two, and between all the "two's' one likes, such as between life and death, can only maintain itself with some ghost, can only talk with or about some ghost" (Derrida, 1994, Exordium, location 152). The play intentionally disrupts some of the twos, most poignantly in the 'aliveness' of the dead characters who take the stage.

Sincere Liars centres on the inheritance of traumatic experiences. I stand on the shoulders of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok and their work (1971, 1972) on transgenerational haunting to imagine the psychic implications for an administrator when his or her lost object is "swallowed and

preserved” (Abraham, 1968, p. 85). Abraham and Torok built upon Sándor Ferenczi’s work on introjection to theorize about nescience or the gap in knowledge where trauma remains hidden from the sufferer’s conscious awareness. Ferenczi understood introjection as: an extension of autoerotic interests, the broadening of the ego through the removal of repression and the inclusion of the object in the ego (Torok, 1968, p. 112). They use his preliminary work on ego expansion to demarcate between introjection and incorporation.

Introjection is used to describe psychic assimilation or growth. Something happens to a person and he or she is able to reconcile that happening and make it part of his or her identity and emotional experience. When someone is faced with a traumatic event, one’s ability to spontaneously introject is disrupted. A deformation of spontaneous introjection causes incorporation. Incorporation is the result of losses that are denied as such (Abraham & Torok, 1972) and it is the inability to mourn or give language to mourning that leads to the development of a secret crypt in the psyche. They contend that a child can spend their childhood and adulthood living as a cemetery guard to protect the secrets their parents unknowingly leave to them.

A central psychoanalytic process I work with in this study to disrupt some of the twos in educational administration is *countertransference*. Countertransference, in a therapeutic context, is the redirection of an analyst’s feelings towards an analysand. These are moments when the analyst is triggered by the patient. For the purposes of this study, *trigger* refers to an experience that causes an individual to remember a traumatic memory. Although countertransference is a contested concept within the various iterations of psychoanalytic work, its interpretive power can remind those who work in organizations that one’s passionate interactions with others can open childhood wounds that produce unhealthy emotional entanglements. These emotional

entanglements can be rooted in an over identification with certain followers in the school. It can transpire in the moments when one takes care of others in ways that inhibit their personal or professional growth. It can appear in the attraction a leader feels for someone he or she disciplines.

According to Bertolt Brecht, the great playwright, director and poet, art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it. The study is intended to incite a unique line of inquiry in educational administration research, a line of inquiry that assumes that meaning making is multifaceted and one that reminds us that the unconscious wreaks havoc with rational decision making more than one would care to admit. The study is divided into three major sections. In the first section, I speak to the significance of the study, name some of the significant life experiences that drew me to the topic and then explicate the theoretical and methodological grounding for the play. The middle section contains the play I wrote called *Sincere Liars*, which poses three main questions:

- *What happens if we ignore the witnesses to our lives, the ones who reappear as phantoms?*
- *If we were given the chance to understand how phantoms do their work on us, would it be possible to earn a small reprieve from their seductive whispers?*
- *What are the consequences for school administrators, and those with whom they work, if the intimate dead make their demands known in the light of day?*

The last section of the piece is comprised of a reflection on the play writing process and several provocations for those who study and practice in the field of educational leadership and administration.

Significance of the Work

The heart of the significance of this work is its spectralization of the rationality that frames much of the field of educational administration. It is a unique invitation to those who study and practice in the field of educational administration to consider how one's witnesses, both real and imagined, pass on psychological inheritances that may wreak havoc with one's capacity to be rational in administrative spaces. The study poses questions about the psychological and environmental conditions that make it possible for the appearance of witnesses. Furthermore, the study is significant in that the play intends to provoke self-analysis about the consequences that result from the childhood dramas that one continues to act out in adulthood.

In addition, this study may be considered a unique contribution because it lives in the intersection between educational administration, arts-based research and psychoanalysis. Although there have been a number of excellent arts-based contributions to the theory and practice of educational administration (Bates, 2006; Cranston & Kusanovich, 2012; Popper, 1987; Samier, 2011; Samier, Bates, & Stanley, 2006), there is a paucity of interdisciplinary research that combines educational administration, psychoanalysis and arts-based research. In this case, writing a script created a playground that allowed for psychoanalytic questions in the context of educational leadership to emerge. More specifically, the method created a space where I could climb inside the head of an administrative actor, hear the voices in his head and then allow all of them to do their work on me. Within a space of play, where I could allow myself to be played by the characters, the intertwinement between phantasy and reality (Bonovitz, 2010) opened new lines of inquiry.

As was previously stated, this study interprets aspects of educational administration in psychoanalytic terms. It is important to note that there are many schools of thought within the field of psychoanalysis. The play writing process benefitted from the work on countertransference done by Sándor Ferenczi. One of Sigmund Freud's most gifted followers, he laid the groundwork in the development of relational psychoanalysis (Orange, 2011). Although Freud said very little about the phenomena of countertransference (Gabbard, 2001), Ferenczi discussed countertransference at length and in positive terms (Mészáros, 2015). Most notably, his writing on countertransference framed psychoanalysis as an interactive and relational process. The interaction between the phantoms in the play, which is a manifestation of some of the key elements of countertransference, was inspired by my reading of his work. More concretely, the actions of the live characters, Karen and Martin, are influenced and entangled with their phantoms to such a degree that a third unconscious sphere evolves. This 'third space' is a spectral opening to entertain new disciplinary questions and influences, ones that may be more likely to manifest in the spirit of relational analysis.

Due in part to the painful breakdown of his relationship with Freud, Ferenczi's papers and lectures were disowned and buried for many years. It is only recently that his writing has received significant attention. And in spite of the fact that Ferenczi's work on countertransference existed within a therapeutic context, conceiving of him as an influential ancestor could make a significant contribution to the field of educational administration. As an illustration, there are very few leadership studies that use the explanatory power of countertransference to query the ways in which one's interior script becomes entangled with the interior scripts of others.

The Moths

Family stories can be poignant points of departure that orient us to particular people and topics. The following anecdotes, under the umbrella of “The Moths”, are used to illustrate some of the personal experiences that draw me to witnesses, specters and phantoms, and why some of this work is driven by my need to become a more thoughtful and compassionate relational analyst (figuratively speaking) in my life and in others’ lives. More importantly in the context of the study, these personal anecdotes were sources of inspiration for the characters and topics in the play, *Sincere Liars*.

From the time I was a small child, I recall being compelled to listen to a frightful story about a little girl and a moth. It was used year after year to justify, teach and to warn. The smell of clover, the dusking sky, a flicker of the outside lights and abrupt departures would often signal the telling of this story. In some ways, I resent its trappings each time I listen to or retell it, partly because I feel guilty about my complicity in relaying a narrative that raised the hair on the back of the necks of three generations of women in my family.

One evening, when my Nana was a very young child, she lied alone in her pram unable to sleep. The pram was covered in a sheer white net. She would often begin the story by describing what it felt like on her fingers to drag her little hand across its seams. In response to hearing a creak of a floor board, she took notice of a looming figure in the doorway. She began to call out to her mother in response to its slow approach. The candlelight, which was supposed to clear the shadows from the gaze of a worried child, revealed the toothy smirk of her uncle. She remembers the smell of whiskey emanating from his breath as he lifted the net on the pram. With his other hand, he released a large, hairy, black moth and then reattached the net to the pram. As he

slithered into the darkness of the room, the moth tried relentlessly to reach the candle. The child shrieked wildly in response to each shadowy flutter in their shared prison.

As a result of this traumatic childhood experience, my Nana suffered terribly from mottephobia. In the summer it affected her ability to go outside and her relationships with darkness and light. As an example, in her late fifties, she was asked to attend a celebration to receive an award from her beloved Carmichael Art Club. The celebration was to take place in the courtyard at approximately 8:00 p.m. She really wanted to attend the celebration so she steeled herself against all the voices in her mind that were trying to convince her to stay home. From the time she was a little girl, dusk signaled potential danger. After much deliberation, she got in the car with my grandfather and felt proud that she made it to the event. However, while sitting in the second row of chairs, a feather from another art club member's fascinator fell in her lap. In her hyper state of vigilance, she saw the feather as a moth. She leapt off her chair, screamed and knocked over chairs as she tried desperately to reach the safety of the building.

I remember receiving explicit instructions from my Nana and my mother on how to properly respond to the moth threat when she visited in the summer. No windows with torn screens were to be opened under any circumstances. No dillydallying in the doorway. Get in quickly and close the door all the way. Limit how many times one has to be outside after dark. Shut the lights off that are close to the doorways to keep the moths away from the entrances to the house. If you see a moth, you must catch it immediately. A moth is dead only when it is flushed down the toilet. Nana must be able to hear the flush and you must be able to report to her that you saw the moth disappear down the toilet. I was well trained to monitor and manage the anxiety levels of some of the adults in my life.

As a child and an adolescent, I climbed on chairs that were piled up on tables to trap devilish moths in paper towels. These experiences, according to my mother, were formative in what she describes as “the joy I found in being a people pleaser.” After a particularly daring moth h(a)unting mission left me with a split lip and a bump on the head, we both learned something significant about the indebtedness one unquestioningly inherits in the telling and retelling of painful family stories. But as many complex family stories go, this one became saturated and leaked into personal narratives in ways that moved beyond the various tellers’ professed intent.

Moths belong to the order of Lepidoptera. With over one hundred thousand species of moths in the world, many have yet to be classified. I, too, have been unable to conceive of and classify all of my life experiences that are directly and indirectly connected to *Sincere Liars*. First, the unconscious part of my ego makes me an unreliable witness to my own life. Alternatively, I must consciously put limitations around what I can and should share in the context of a study that will be uploaded and publically defended. In my mind, the process cannot and should not *be therapy* although it has been therapeutic in many ways. Additionally, “not all stories are appropriate to tell at all times, and sharing too much can endanger us in many ways” (Senehi, Flaherty, Sanjana Kirupakaran, Kornelson, Matenge, & Skarlato, 2009, p. 91).

I will say that as an adolescent and in my early twenties, I experienced two traumatic incidents that left me psychically bruised, frightened and stuck in a mental scratch. As a result, there are phantoms that continue to haunt some of my doorways at night. Furthermore, because of these traumatic experiences, I would describe myself as a person who remains focused on *tracing the seams* of places, people and discourses to identify potential escape routes. In similar fashion to the character Carly in the play, I obsessively cultivate a spectral heart and mind.

Writing creatively as part of this project presented escape routes or openings that lead to alternative interpretations about the past and present. It is not because education is inherently capable of making this happen but because some of my understandings about the world were troubled. Acting creatively, combined with the art of study, forces me to confront the dissensus I experience (Durkheim, 1897/2006).

Moths evolved long before butterflies but they do not enjoy the symbolic pride of place that butterflies occupy in life's saccharine stories that deal with transformation, change and hope. Moths, too, make miraculous cocoons but, unlike butterflies, they are known as unattractive nuisances who engage in life at night. However, moths can figuratively make room for metamorphosis that is more closely connected to the dissolution of certainty. Butterflies, in my eyes, are helpful to symbolically orient oneself to a visible future or to significations that resonate with well circulated discourses. They make their lives during the day. Conversely, moths, in their syncopated flight towards the light, create dark shadows when they mistake unnatural light for lunar lighting cues. The oddly shaped shadows cast by the moth's wings trouble two's, such as light/dark, natural/unnatural.

It may sound peculiar to the reader that the moth in this context is coloured more positively than the butterfly in light of the story about my Nana in the pram. While in fact it may be peculiar, it is in many ways an acknowledgement of the potential healing power in storytelling. The moth's meaning is too abundant to live inside just one story. Eventually, through a multiplicity of tellings, one can capitalize on the saturation of significations and memorialize them differently. I do this to better understand how the moth story and the play shaped me and I use it as an opportunity to reshape myself (Senehi et al., 2009) through the play.

What follows are three other personal experiences that inspired some of the concepts that infuse *Sincere Liars*.

To become a psychoanalyst, one undergoes psychoanalysis. There have been several moments throughout the study where I have figuratively put myself ‘on the couch’ and thought about the connections between my life-experiences in relation to the play. Although as previously stated, in many ways I am an unreliable witness to my own life, there are a few additional poignant life experiences that I believe have influenced the study. A dislocation from the Catholic faith in adolescence, my experiences as a school improvement consultant early in my teaching career, and the opportunity to participate in the Boalian (1979; 1990; 1995; 1998; 2002; 2006) theatre exercise called Cops in the Head, contributed to a perseveration on ‘the witnesses’ in educational administration.

Catholic Girl

In my early adolescence, I began to question the role of the priest as an intermediary witness in my life. I wondered why God did not trust people to develop and follow their own consciences. This happened as a result of the confessional booth becoming strange to me. I thought about some sins “being in the eyes of the beholder” and I was discomforted by the notion that one could behave very badly towards other people and receive absolution in exchange for the recitation of several prayers. As a result of my significant and long lasting discomfort, I reasoned that some sins should leave a permanent stain upon a person’s life. My inability to reconcile the tension between the rigidity of church doctrines, and what appeared to me to be a quick fix process of absolution, may have left the character Officer Dylan in the play not as a stereotypical villain (he does offer some useful cautions to the other characters), but permanently reviled and stained. In the play, there is no redemption for him. His uniform and behavior may be

symbolic of my distaste for the acute manifestations of institutional power, that in my mind, minimized the two incidents of physical and emotional violence that I experienced in my adolescence and early twenties.

As a young woman, I became outraged about the construction of women's bodies and their restricted leadership responsibilities within the church. Above all else, I experienced an overpowering disillusionment caused by a conscious awakening to the systematic protection of the few perpetrators who sexually abused some of the youngest members of the church. I learned that those who hover closest to the epicenters of power can sometimes operate as 'great agents of reification.'



The First Communicant
Photographer: Jennifer Farrell
Edmonton, Alberta
October, 1982

Consequently, some of the most egregious sins are washed away by the institutionalized diminishment of the 'minor witness'. The intellectual and spiritual self-sacrifice that I perceived I needed to make was too much to ask in exchange for membership. Furthermore, my experiences with the Catholic Church may have nurtured both healthy and unhealthy suspicions

about the relationships between rigid administrative hierarchies and threats to creative thinking. In the play, Martin's drift towards anomic suicidal ideations (Durkheim, 1897/2006) is symbolic of the psychic instability that can be caused from a breakdown of purpose and ideals. Indeed, Martin's loss of faith may be connected to my own.

School Improvement Consultant with Blue Hair

When I was 26 years old I was hired as a school improvement consultant in the school division where I spent three of the first four years of my teaching career. The superintendent who hired me was a thoughtful and kind person who hoped I might have something to contribute to the newly articulated school renewal efforts. My job was to work with him, the high school administrators, and the teacher leadership teams to devise and implement school improvement plans that were connected to the division's priority areas. Just prior to the first divisional high school improvement team meeting, I engaged in an annual ritual. Each spring, from the time I was about 16 years of age, I dyed my hair a vibrant color, and that year I picked blue. When I arrived at the 'meeting before the first meeting', the superintendent took one look at my hair and said, "I'm not sure that's going to do you any favors today." He must have thought I had more than enough to overcome (youth, an underdeveloped filter, and an initial resistance to small 'p' subtext...). Indeed, all of the administrators for whom I was working were men who were in their late 50s or early 60s who had accrued decades of experience in the school division. When I think about the myriad of mistakes I made in my first year in that position, my cheeks flush. My unbridled, and at times misguided enthusiasm for helping them made them justifiably wary.

During the first three-monthly school improvement team meetings, one of the senior administrators would refer to me as "the young lady." He would make a point and then turn to me and ask, "What does the young lady have to say about this?" I felt as if both of us were

perpetually ‘positioned’. As I replay the meetings in my mind, we appear to have operated like moths trapped inside the pram by the netting of our respective positionalities. A close colleague of mine, a new vice-principal in the district, assured me that the issue was not age. She explained, “It’s not because you’re young, it’s because he doesn’t think you’ll be around long enough to learn your name.” Four months into the job I was still “the young lady” and the principals defined my role in terms of organizing professional development events for teachers.

Halfway into our fifth divisional team meeting, I was frustrated by his reference to me as “the young lady,” and I believe I capitalized on that frustration to overcome the fear that prevented me in earlier meetings from disrupting the routine. Subsequent to an animated verbal exchange, we held one another’s gaze for a few seconds longer than the other attendees may have preferred. As a consequence of the encounter, during the break he poured me a coffee and said, “It’s about time kid.”

What I remember as part of the self-analysis I engaged in throughout this study is that I managed to “be around long enough.” Over the years, I have developed some techniques that help me to deal with some of the phantoms that goad me into behaving too well when I am afraid. A number of these strategies were conceived in the intersections between enflamed passions, self-analysis, creative writing, and study. The play is an evolution of this process in that it tries to creatively spectralize some of the categories and significations that inform the stories that others, and society more broadly, write into us. As an illustration, Carly demands that Martin let go of the part she was assigned to play in one of their family’s narratives, one that disavows the inheritance of traumatic experiences across generations.

It would be tempting to try and identify with more certainty the birthplace or the definitive source material for the phantoms that move through the play. However, phantoms lie,

they trick and sometimes one's sleepless nights are the result of the actions driven by another person's inherited phantoms. The entire thrust of this project, is to loosen the certainty that pours into empty signifiers. This is why I call forth the specter. My overall intention in this work is to haunt the signs and symbols that reinforce the rational discourses that frame much of the field. To be sure, the reader will notice at times that I choose one of my preferred two's, sound too sure at times, or fix an interpretation for too long. Nevertheless, this is partly reflective of the trappings of language. One must insert herself or himself in a conversation knowing that he or she will eventually be too hypocritical, too uninformed, or too certain in her or his claims. These particular *places in-text* can signify errors or misunderstandings but they can also signal that one is in the presence of something that has been exiled or turned invisible.

My induction into the role of "school improvement consultant" is connected to the development of this study and to the character called Martin in the play. Over the course of nine years as an educational consultant in Manitoba, the administrators with whom I worked shared a myriad of professional and personal experiences. When I look back at the journals I kept during that time, a number of provocative themes emerge. Sacrifice, power and control were significant verbal motifs, particularly in the memories unearthed from the conversations we had about their school renewal efforts. Further, the stories told by the administrators directed my attention to the environmental factors (living in a perpetual state of urgency, dealing with the impact of repeatedly responding to the most emotionally taxing events in the school...) that may trigger phantoms and cause childhood dramas to be rehearsed in the principal's office. These memories and stories were an invaluable well of inspiration throughout this process and I am grateful for all that I learned during this time.

Battling the Cops in My Head

In 2010, I had the opportunity to attend a week long theatre training session at Headlines Theatre in Vancouver (now called Theatre for Living). The facilitator used several techniques and exercises from Boal's arsenal, called The Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979; 1990; 2006). One of the exercises in which I participated was called Cops in the Head and the experience had a profound emotional impact on me.

Cops in the Head is a theatre exercise that is particularly concerned with the oppressions that have been internalized but remain unconscious to the participant. Cops in the Head requires a participant to conjure a recent situation when he or she was confronted with an incident of oppression and the necessity to make a decision during the confrontation. The theatre facilitator asks him or her to pinpoint and name the exact moment when he or she was forced to make a choice. The rest of the exercise takes place inside that sliver of time.

A critical moment in the Cops in the Head exercise occurs when other participants in the workshop are invited to add missing cops, reshape images, and take one another's place later in the exercise. New injections splinter the story, amplify the shadows of subjectivities, and enact a space where multiple interpretations of the same image or word are brought to fruition. The witnesses pluralize the dilemma; take an active role inside the spectacle, and dynamize their critiques. Not only does the exercise bring the cop's words and actions into view, it allows the original 'actor' to experience another way to dialogue with his or her cops. In the liberating spaces created by the engagement with the cops and the injections by the other actors, the original actor can sometimes relieve some of his or her cops of their duties.

The actors have participated in two different worlds simultaneously; the world that contains the oppressions, and the aesthetic world that contains the images of the oppressions (Boal, 1990). Here, in the in between, the exercise is used to name and modify the (real) world:

Every oppressor produces two different reactions in the oppressed:

subversion and submission. Every oppressed is a submissive

subversive. His submission is his Cop in the Head. But he is also

subversive. Our goal is to render the subversion more dynamic

while making the submission disappear. (p. 38)

Cops in the Head is intended to contest essentialized assumptions. Since the exercise is interpretive, malleable, and agentic, it makes room for thinking about the cops in ways that would not reintroduce descriptive fallacies (Sedgwick, 2003). Cops in the Head *as a method and as a metaphor*, is a potential nexus for psychoanalytic theorizing in educational administration. My own encounter with Boal's Cops in the Head exercise provoked me to think deeply about the real and imagined witnesses that influence the words and deeds of people who occupy positions of power and influence. Furthermore, the experience made me take notice of the ways in which the facilitator took on the role of the lay analyst as the participants interpreted the images and dialogue in each scene. Most importantly, my participation and eventual facilitation of the exercise were my first encounters with something that resembles *relational analysis*. Although the exercise begins with one participant, it begs the question: can the spectralization of one person's story help relieve some of the witnesses who are present for the telling of that story, of some of their internalized cops? Will the reading of the play conjure the audience's cops?

The Difficulty of Playing Analyst

A psychoanalyst within the therapeutic setting listens to and offers unique interpretations of the associations, dreams and fantasies of the patient. He or she examines how the analysand's repressed feelings are expressed verbally and physically in order to unearth the repressed roots of symptoms. In the process of transference and through the excitation of resistance, the analysand's self and social constructions can be momentarily exposed and disrupted. In the play, the analyst Karen selects images from Martin's dreams and words from the tales he tells out of school so he can minimize the force with which he displaces psychic injuries from the past to present day people and situations.

Writing the play was a chance to explore the purpose of the analyst. Karen became a mirror that I could hold up to some of my own wishes and desires, and at other times, she morphed into a muse who subjected some of the routinization of school administration to the wilds of psychoanalysis. More importantly, this particular character demanded that I become clearer about the relationships between analysis and educational leadership. Equally challenging were the ways she tried to claim more and more space on the page. That is to say, throughout the writing process, I struggled to keep her focused on Martin's dilemmas. On several occasions she would take over the keyboard and demand that I take care of her. I managed to resist some of her pleas in order to stay true to my understanding of her as someone who could see the dangers inherent in mutual analysis. My fears about giving Karen too much power constrained the evolution of her character, which proved to be a limitation in the play.

Delimitations

Sincere Liars interrogates how one's professional life is influenced by one's family history and the inheritance of trauma. The play does not interrogate all of the nested oppressions

and privileges that construct the social location of the characters. Although it is problematic that these absences exist, it is also true that most art is limited in this way, constrained by the life script of the artist, as well as the time in which the artist lives. Furthermore, when casting a psychoanalytic gaze, it is assumed that a subject is divided. Part of that division is our troubled concepts of class, race, gender, sexuality and culture. Psychoanalysis cannot promise social or individual transformation. The best psychoanalysis can offer those who engage with/in it, is a more refined attunement to one's psychic legacies and ghosts, or how one projects repressed pain onto others in less than helpful ways. Indeed, this is a loving gift. If one gets one's own psychic house in order so to speak, one may increase his or her chances to live more generously and thoughtfully in the world. To that end, a psychoanalytic theatre would not be the best kind of theatre to enact social justice work. In fact, a psychoanalytic gaze might point towards something like agitprop (of varying degrees) and become self-conscious about birthing new and unhelpful relations of power.

I wrote the play to evoke a visceral response to the influences the voices in one's head exert. It exaggerates expressions of melancholia and anger in much the same way that Ferenczi (1995; Ferenczi & Frank, 2012) used his work on trauma to shed light on the minor emotional injuries that people experience and inflict every day. To that end, the characters in the play are not intended to be realistic but unreliable emissaries. Furthermore, the characters are vestiges of unprocessed traumas that grow from the residue of family dysfunction that often surface in work environments. This impressionistic element of the play is represented by the characters' internal dialogue, and the interactions that occur between the voices inside Martin and Karen's heads; namely Carly, Connie, and Officer Dylan. Henceforth the study does not attempt to authentically

portray the work of school leaders or therapists. Instead, it is a provocation to wonder about how one's witnesses do their work on administrative rationality.

Sincere Liars addresses the difficult topics of depression, suicide and trauma through the dialogue and movements of elemental characters that behave more like demons and angels rather than people from whom one sits across at a department or staff meeting. The topics and the abstract nature of the characters are existential barbs. To put it differently, the play is an invitation to think about how the melancholic aspects of one's psychological legacy manifest in beautiful and odious ways during leadership performances. Consequently, this play poses many more questions about the intangible emotional oddities in leadership than it answers about the concrete practices of educational administrators.

Limitations

The study privileges ambiguity in that the play is a fiction that seeks to open up an imaginative space to trouble some of the normative assumptions about administrative rationality. One of the consequences of the decision to privilege ambiguity, is that the study does not conclude with a series of explicit recommendations. Although this presents a limitation in terms of making concrete recommendations for administrative practice, it opens up the possibility for future playwriting work that builds on this conceptual exploration. For instance, I can foresee the future creation and production of ethnodramas (Saldaña, 2010) that interrogate the interactions between real and imagined witnesses in administrative spaces.

Playwriting as an act is the anticipation of shared conceptual development. Many arts-based inquiries do not presuppose that sets of findings are waiting in the wings to be disseminated by the researcher. *Sincere Liars* is an invitation to bring one's life experiences to a shared dream. Its epistemological assumptions rely heavily on the premise that the actors,

director, costume designer, sound engineer, lighting specialists and the audience will interact with the play and infuse new layers of meaning. As a result, the exegesis that wraps around the play domesticates some of the interpretive possibilities of *Sincere Liars*.

A Distortion in the Educational Administration and Leadership Research Landscape

In any discipline of study, distortions in the literature base are rooted in the telling and transmission of stories about the history of a field. Since the theory movement in educational administration, the demarcation of the important periods in the field's history have muted more radical epistemological fissures in the research landscape. Between 1920 and 1970, the school principal's role was constructed by business literature and conceptualized mainly in terms of management responsibilities (Valentine & Prater, 2011). The 1970s are frequently described as a time when reformers of the Effective Schools Movement resisted the construction of educational leadership as business management, and focused their efforts on conceiving of effective leadership as instructional leadership (Leithwood, 2005; Neumerski, 2012). Between 1980 and 2000, over 125 studies focused on instructional leadership as the means to increase student achievement (Hallinger, 2010). Today, the well circulated power/knowledge (Foucault, 1995) inscriptions of the instructional leadership discourse dominate the field (Tan, 2012) and obfuscate the rationality that colors much of what we are able to think in educational administration.

The instructional leadership foci aim to provide evidentiary links between a principal's leadership capacity and student achievement (Brazer & Bauer, 2013; Heck & Hallinger, 2005). Although this link appears intuitively attractive, in actual practice this theoretical framework can sever administrative work from complex social problems in order to assert claims of truth regarding effective leadership behaviors that can be standardized across multiple contexts.

Poverty, violence, and other social issues imbued with power/knowledge relationships are sometimes bracketed out in order to isolate generalizable leadership variables that appear to affect student outcomes. The interiority of individual administrators is also bracketed and minimized. As a consequence, the instructional leadership discourse can lead to the production of prescriptive administrative practices that are severed from the individual and collective struggles in the community in which the administrator serves.

The postmodern turn made claims of objectivity and truth suspect in educational administration and thus made room for a number of scholars to disrupt the dominant theoretical frameworks (Bates, 2012; Eacott, 2013; English, 2008; Samier, 2011) within the managerial dreamscape. These disruptions created some anxiety about *knowing what is real* in educational administration. These scholars, and others, have drawn attention to an absence of the analyses of power relations that construct the bodies and minds of those who perform leadership (English, Papa, Mullen, & Creighton, 2012; Milley, 2006; Oplatka, 2012). This study is an invitation to the field of educational administration research to spend a little time on the couch, engage in self- analysis, to carve out a little space to think about the anxiety produced in the field, post the postmodern turn. I extend this invitation to speak about and possibly transgress the managerial discourses that construct a great deal of educational administration research and practice. I frame my invitation in psychoanalytic terms in part because there have been few intersections between the study of educational administration, leadership and psychoanalytic theory.

Psychoanalysis and the *Enfant Terrible*

The birth of psychoanalysis as a field of study and practice is attributed to Austrian physician Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Freud's profound influence on psychoanalysis, psychology, and psychiatry is undeniable. In spite of Freud's long shadow, there is certainly no

“monolith of agreement” (Jagodzinski, 2010, p. 18) as to what psychoanalysis currently *is*, and since the time of Freud there have been many iterations of psychoanalytic theories (cultural, feminist, intersubjective, Lacanian, relational...) and therapeutic techniques. Despite the bricolage of theoretical approaches, there are some key tenets that continue to permeate the literature on psychoanalysis. A key tenet of psychoanalysis is that human behavior, emotion, experience, perception, and subjectivity are strongly influenced by the unconscious. Experiences people have in childhood can be rehearsed during adulthood if people remain unaware of what drives their symptoms (Bonovitz, 2010; Freud, 1927/2013; Knafo, 2012).

Another essential concept in psychoanalysis is that human behavior is significantly impacted by the conflicts that exist between the conscious and the unconscious states of mind (Chancer, 2013). These conflicts can cause a person to project unacknowledged pain and fears onto others, which negatively impacts the one who projects and the one who receives and interprets the projection. Most importantly, in the context of this study, much of the literature on psychoanalytic theory stresses that human beings can be freed from some of the pain and anxiety in their lives if they are able to bring some of their unconscious emotions, thoughts, and visceral memories to the level of consciousness (Kristeva, 2012).

It can be disconcerting to see others behaving in ways that appear to work against their own interests, health, or professed ideologies. Psychoanalysis is concerned with the ways master signifiers hold assumptions together (Chancer, 2013). It is *deep inquiry* into the relationships that exist between the unexamined disparities between one's words, perceptions, emotions, and deeds or the exploration of why and how people appear to speak and act in contradictions. For Freud (1927/2013), the ego “represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions” (The Ego and the Id). He uses the metaphor of horseback riding to explain

the power of the id (the horse) to exert force upon the ego (rider), in that the horse gets to determine some of where it will go if the rider is to stay on its back. Curiously the rider perceives himself or herself as the one who controls the direction of the ride. Psychoanalysis helps people recognize and accept the presence and the power of the horse's influence on the rider.

Psychoanalytic work is focused on the ways in which people imagine and reinvent the world amidst the multiple interactions that occur between individual actors and groups of actors (Bersani, 2006). In the pre-symbolic realm, the essence of others infuses our unconscious life at a cellular level. This pre-symbolic realm remains a mystery in terms of how the asymbolic filters into symbolic formations or representations that eventually become recognizable at a conscious level. It is this mysterious filtering process that provokes a person using psychoanalytic theory to problematize rationalized understandings of one's interiority and one's perception of others.

Sándor Ferenczi: The Enfant Terrible

Ferenczi (1873-1933) was one of Freud's most talented and controversial disciples. Unlike Freud, he sought to surround himself with cultural innovators in psychology, anthropology and sociology (Haynal & Haynal, 2015). His ability to develop relationships with other cultural critics coupled with his interdisciplinary interests, helped open psychoanalysis to other fields of study. Although Ferenczi thrived within an interdisciplinary social milieu, he did a tremendous amount of work to build and support organizations and networks that focused on the dissemination of theoretical and therapeutic innovations in his own field. For example, he proposed the creation of the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPA) and he was instrumental in the development of the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society (Mészáros, 2015).

Ferenczi was a complicated man. Even though he was a staunch supporter and contributor to organizations like the IPA, he remained suspicious of images and organizations

that were symbolic of expert authority (Ferenczi & Rank, 1925/2012; Mészáros, 2015). Those who were closest to him said he was most passionate about working with and learning from those patients who had been marginalized in society (Haynal & Haynal, 2015). In fact, he is frequently referred to in the literature as the “analyst of last resort.” Not surprisingly, the sessions with one of his most troubled patients, Elizabeth Severn, led to some of his most radical innovations in his practice and to the influential theoretical contributions he made to psychoanalysis (Ferenczi, 1995, p.3).

Ferenczi prized authenticity in the analytic space and he insisted that analysts should be courageous enough to admit their mistakes to their patients. He saw the analyst’s admission of inadequacy as an instrumental part of the healing process because the demeanor of the detached expert can re-traumatize the wounded child inside the adult patient. To reach his most vulnerable patients, Ferenczi maintained a healthy suspicion towards dogmatic theory. In fact, he believed that many of his “technical difficulties arose [also] from the analyst having too much knowledge” (Ferenczi & Rank, 1925/2012, p. 34). His public critique of the pride of place theory occupied, his child analysis in the analysis of adults (Hoffer, 2003) as well as his experiments in mutual analysis damaged his relationship with Freud (Ferenczi, 1995), and subsequently erased him from the collective consciousness of psychoanalysis for many years. We know he was painfully aware of the looming erasure because at a meeting in Vienna to celebrate Freud’s 75th birthday he lamented that he had been painted as the *enfant terrible of psychoanalysis* (Haynal & Haynal, 2015).

Ferenczi’s Contributions to this Study

Sincere Liars is structured around three of Martin and Karen’s therapy sessions. Ferenczi’s deliberations on countertransference and the Clever Baby are embodied in the

characters, and the spirit of his work traverses all three acts. The play and the recommendations that come from the play are indebted to his courageous experimentations in theory and practice.

Countertransference

Freud mentioned countertransference sparingly even though he saw it as a significant barrier to the psychoanalytic process (Gabbard, 2001). The concept was first discussed as the evocation of the unconscious desires, fears and hatreds of the analyst through his or her engagement with the analysand (Berzoff & Kita, 2010). Holmes (2014) studied the historical legacy of countertransference and characterized the treatment of the concept in three different ways: interfering, useful and intersubjective. Freud conceived of countertransference as interfering while Ferenczi found it useful because, in many ways, he saw the interactions between patients and their analysts as mutually beneficial.

Ferenczi's Clinical Diary (1995) paints a portrait of a brilliant experimental analyst who feared the personal and professional consequences of leaving the safety of Freud's inner circle. To his detriment, he chose to tell the truth about what it felt like to sit and listen to his patients day after day. As an illustration, on January 7, 1932, as he reflected on one of his 'active methods', he wrote, "The patients begin to abuse my patience, they permit themselves more and more, create very embarrassing situations for us, and cause us not insignificant trouble. Only when we recognize this trend and openly admit it to the patient does this artificial obstacle, which is of our own creation disappear" (p. 2). In the same diary entry he refers to a female patient who insists that patients ought to have the right to analyze their analysts. During some of his early experiments with mutual analysis, particularly with Elizabeth Severn, he was quite frank with his patients when he found it difficult to actively listen to them when the demons in his own mind competed for his attention. Closer to his death, Ferenczi distanced himself from

his radical experiments with mutual analysis. He cited problems with power and control and he referenced the significant emotional cost of being vulnerable and raw in front of one's patients.

Owing a debt to Ferenczi, in the late twentieth century, countertransference was frequently discussed in relational terms, as a process that the analysand and the analyst constructed together. Countertransference is viewed by many relational psychoanalysts today as having an impact on the unconscious realms of both parties. Analysts who adopt a relational stance make it clear that the analyst can trigger the performance of the analysand's internal scripts in ways that bend to the analyst's wishes, fears, and desires. It is critical to this work that the phenomenon of "relational" countertransference was included because the study is particularly concerned with how the interior worlds of different individuals intersect. As I explored the concept of countertransference in Martin's sessions, I considered how the co-construction of family memories intermingles with the repressed desires that impact the present. In the play, there are some key moments that dramatize the power dynamics that constantly move between the one who tells and the one who asks.

The Clever Baby

Ferenczi released a brief communication in 1923 titled, *The Dream of the Clever Baby*. In the short piece he refers to a dream of a wise infant or small child who treats the dreamer with "deep sayings." Ferenczi suggests that these types of dreams can represent the repression of a child's traumatic experience with an adult. An adult's unpredictable or aggressive behavior may force the child to become a little psychiatrist in order to navigate the confusion caused by the adult's denial and dismissal of the child's pain. When a child's pain is left unacknowledged by the adult, (*You know that's not what I meant! I don't remember it that way. If you would just pick up after yourself, I wouldn't have to get so angry with you!*), the child has no choice but to blame

himself or herself for his or her own situation and prospects. For Ferenczi, the “silence, lies and hypocrisies of the caregivers were the most traumatic aspects of the abuse” (Blum, 2004). These types of silences and hypocrisies are represented most overtly in the dialogue between Carly and Connie in the play.

His work on the Clever Baby is an invitation to reshape the skills and attitudes one develops in order to survive traumatic experiences or to deal with the psychological inheritances one receives as a child. For instance, in response to a traumatic event, the Clever Baby may need to overdevelop his/her/their capacity to be hypervigilant, intuitive, observant, protective, creative, empathetic or driven. Extremes in these areas may cause serious difficulties in childhood and adulthood. However, if they are reshaped and refocused in ways that are healthier, these capacities can be a source of hope and resilience. In other words, old survival skills may assist those who experience or relive trauma to deploy those same skills in more life affirming ways.

Critiques of Psychoanalysis

Ferenczi was suspicious of dogmatic experts and he was very self-critical of his practice and psychoanalytic theory (1995). To honour the contributions of his work, the next section outlines some of the critiques of psychoanalysis. More specifically, I employ Michele Foucault’s work on confession and name some of the perceived historical epistemological incompatibilities between psychoanalysis and educational administration.

The Specter of Foucault: Confession and the Analyst

Foucault (2014) begins his inaugural lecture in a series (April 2, 1981) with a disturbing account from 1840 on “the moral treatment of madness” (p. 11). He recounts an interaction between a psychiatrist by the name of Leuret and his patient. The story begins with a

description of Doctor Leuret standing beside one of his naked patients in a shower stall. The doctor repeatedly asks the patient to admit that what he sees and hears is evidence of madness. The patient avoids the question or tells the psychiatrist that he is not mad. After each nonresponse, or statement of resistance, the psychiatrist douses the patient with ice cold water. The cold water “applications” do not stop until the patient confesses that he is in fact mad. Foucault goes on to question what is really going on when the patient calls himself “mad.”

One of the many significant ideas the story reveals is that a fundamental requirement for an avowal is that a person must tell the truth about who he or she is and maintain allegiance to that truth (Foucault, 2014). The individual must place himself “in a relationship of dependence with regard to another, and modify at the same time his relationship to himself” (p. 17). In this sense, social pathologies are attached to the psyche of individual actors. When people commit acts of madness, a thirst is created to rationalize antisocial behavior. There is a craving to understand motive and to label the psychic pathology that corrupts the individual. The labelling process increases the need for diagnoses and the training of fleets of experts who can do the diagnosing.

Foucault’s work has operated as one of the specters in my head for a number of years in the sense that his work challenges me to look for ways that I and others covet confessions in order to feel knowledgeable, to feel valued, and to feel justified in sitting in judgement. He reminds us that sometimes needing to know has more to do with wanting to possess, to have control over an event, an idea, or another person. In this study, Foucault’s explication on the function of avowal acted as a looming specter to ensure that throughout the study, the methodology was not romanticized, that ‘the analyst’ remained skeptical and nervous about the power inherent in the psychoanalytic construct of interpretation, and that I considered the ways

that ‘therapy’ can mute the critique of systems and structures that normalize social causes of psychic dysfunction.

If one takes seriously Foucault’s explication of the function of avowal in justice, one must be ready to disrupt the inter-psychic or the systemic tattooing of ideological truths to individuals. That is to say, amidst the power relations that incite the marriage between normative constructions of reality and the body, it is difficult to surface the vitality of reflexivity in the individual psyche and increase the likelihood that reflexivity deficits do not permeate the social milieu of the organization. I contend that the spaces occupied by educational administrators provide a rich opportunity to examine and trouble the detrimental effects of the sublimation of reflexive tendencies.

There has been very little engagement with psychoanalytic theory in educational administration. One of the reasons for the estrangement may be due to the way many psychoanalysts employ case-based, interpretive approaches to the generation of new knowledge. Historically, research in educational administration has focused on the study of groups to make claims of truth while psychoanalytic theory has traditionally developed methodologies that construct knowledge by sewing the common elements of individual cases together. It appears as if *research as discourse* developed in both fields in such a way that it became impossible to understand the potential contributions psychoanalysis could make to the study of education. Education administration and psychoanalysis appear as though they do not ‘speak’ the same language/s.

In the 1960s there was an incredible backlash towards psychoanalysis just as the theory movement began to generate focus and support in educational administration. Positivistic approaches to the study of education and social sciences took centre stage. Psychoanalysis

prioritizes the study of emotions and the interiority of individuals. In a research context that overvalues objectivity, psychoanalytic ideas certainly appear inadequate and of little use in the study of educational administration, school improvement, and leadership development. The foci in psychoanalytic explorations have been historically associated with “the feminine” or with epistemologies that privilege the knowledge of the research participant’s lived experiences which may be another significant factor in the continued marginalization of psychoanalytic ideas in educational administration (Chancer, 2013).

Anxiety, joy, melancholia, anger, and jealousy are emotional elements of the human condition that do not avoid ambiguity. They are also examples of phenomena that are considered irrational and resistant to measurement. At a time when the effectiveness of leadership is desirable mainly in terms of its capacity to feed the ends of capitalism, immeasurable outcomes can be perceived as useless or dangerous. Immeasurable ends are constructed as useless because they are time consuming, “inefficient,” and do not promote the consumption of marketable programs that can solve difficult problems in 12 easy steps. The exploration of complex human phenomena like trauma and depression could be construed as dangerous because it could lead to the recognition that some of the sadness and destruction of the human environment is linked to the negative effects of capitalism that people have accepted as inevitable.

In 2012, the journal *Organization Studies* produced a special issue on the contributions of psychoanalytic theory to the study of contemporary organizations. Fotaki, Long, and Schwartz (2012, p. 1108-1109) identified five interconnected trends in this area of research and scholarship:

- The integration of core psychoanalytic concepts to join central debates in the field of management and organizations,

- Linking psychoanalysis to discourses of power and social issues,
- Developing new processes in social research in what is called '*systems psychoanalysis*,'
- Expanding psychosocial inquiry to the study of affect and emotions, and
- Creating fusions between psychoanalysis, feminism, and critical social theory.

Unfortunately, psychoanalytic theory has been used sparingly in educational administration research even though it may hold a great deal of interpretive power to deal with the more dangerous psychic aspects of leadership and management. In many ways it is difficult to understand the disinterest in psychoanalysis in a field that is dominated by the study of the effectiveness of change processes. Change typically involves the disruption of deeply held assumptions and the need to let go of ideas that one once thought were 'true.' When educational leaders, teachers, faculty or students are invited or forced to adopt new practices or policies the resistance can be formidable. Administrators may benefit from treating resistance to change in psychoanalytic terms. In the next section, I turn once more to the field of psychoanalysis to deepen my understanding of the way art may soothe the restless souls who hover around educational leaders.

Melancholia and Art

I spent many hours waiting outside the offices of school administrators. I listened and watched in awe as they sutured broken souls, scratched down names of witnesses, cajoled confessions, and swiveled their office chairs toward every phone call, email, and fax. My memories of waiting for them are a sensory carnival filled with the flushed cheeks of teachers, the smell of old coffee, and the portraits of exhaustion that hung from their faces as they told me about their schools. It was a discombobulating experience to see them *at work*. It is not surprising that when we finally had a few minutes to talk, many of their queries and comments

were coloured with a fragmented longing for a connection between their frenetic work life and the aims of schooling. When I reread the journals I kept those years, I am taken aback by the frequency with which I noted images and metaphors that spoke to exhaustion and to the difficult emotional work in which they were engaged every day. I wondered for a long time, what it is about the work of educational administration that made so many of them appear melancholic amidst the energetic activity that surrounded them? To enhance this line of inquiry, I turned towards the evocative work of Julia Kristeva.

Kristeva (1987; 1989; 2012) has written a substantial body of work in which she links psychic concepts to cultural phenomena. Her work has been very influential on my thinking about the connections between the interior world of administration, social issues, melancholia, and art. For Kristeva, there is no meaning outside of despair (1987). She contends that melancholia originates when children are separated from their mothers. The traumatic loss of the mother, the eternal wound, causes a child to look for her again and again. Like Ferenczi, Kristeva (1989) conceives of melancholia as a common experience of the object loss and the modification of signifying bonds (p. 10). In *Sincere Liars*, the character Martin experiences *the object loss* over and over again in his dealings with his students. In a number of situations, he constructs the students as obstacles to overcome. One illustration of this phenomenon is the way that Martin handles the complaint lodged against one of his teachers by a student.

The repression of the inevitable anger one feels for the one who is lost, forces a person to internalize what Kristeva (1989) calls their own “tyrannical judge.” This judge demeans the melancholic person and all that he or she hopes to expunge from his or her interior life. Kristeva contends that sadness is the “psychic representation of energy displacements caused by external or internal traumas” (p. 21). The psychic displacements cause people to lose their interest in the

symbolic world in order to defend themselves against the psychic segmentation that threatens the integrity of their interiority. Losing her grip on the last few words in her poems, the character Carly retreats from the symbolic world, loses her faith that her pain will subside, and as a result, drifts towards the asymbolic abyss.

Kristeva would suggest that asymbolia is evidence that a melancholic person is controlled by affect. Mistrustful of language, asymbolic echoes of tears, hysterical laughter, or fury become an individual's turbulent linkages to society. Before someone can participate wholly in his/her life again, he or she must establish an affective connection with the symbolic world. Kristeva writes poetically about the capacity of the creative arts to become an intermediary between the asymbolic and symbolic states. In this in-between state, the melancholic artist can see the relationship between herself or himself and the debilitating pathological constructions of social reality. The embodiment of this principle is symbolized in the last minute of the play. I play with multiple realities as if the character Martin has a choice, in that he may opt for a life with the living or retreat to a liminal space with his dead mother. It is Kristeva's (1989) conceptualization of melancholia as a "sad voluptuousness, a despondent intoxication which makes up the humdrum backdrop against which our ideals and euphoria stand out" (p. 6) that begins to situate the melancholic state as a potentially emancipatory space for the individual and society.

Many people are familiar with the terms depression and melancholia but one typically applies these concepts to describe the emotional state of individuals. Kristeva has eloquently discussed the proliferation of melancholia as a cultural phenomenon. A maniacal focus on efficiency and productivity, the scheduling of every aspect of one's life, and the voluntary chaining of one's cell phone to one's body, are examples of the ways contemporary 'Western' society cloaks melancholia and allows it to infect souls at an exponential rate (Miller, 2014).

In order for the melancholic person or society to let go of the lost object, the conditions must be created for imaginative processes that produce allegorical melancholic art (Kristeva, 1987; Miller, 2014). Art should repel us and grip us at the same time. Melancholic art has the potential to create the conditions necessary to disrupt the normative assumptions that construct how human beings live and work together. In Kristeva's work, I find a foothold to explore Martin's tyrannical judge, the lost objects he mourns and the effects of the frenetic pace his work has on the imagined witnesses he projects onto others. I attempted to produce my own creative piece of 'melancholic art' by crawling inside the characters in the play. To do this kind of work required that I learn from others who engage in arts-based research and scholarship.

Arts-based Research: Rhyme and Reason

I wrote a play to explore the intersections between psychoanalytic theory and the interior world of educational administration. I would colour this methodology arts-based because it built a *third space* to engage in creative mindfulness. The use of an arts-based methodology was essential for me in order to be able to think in-between the non-intersecting perimeters of educational administration research. There are several references in the next section to the ways that arts-based methodologies help researchers to un-think common assumptions. This "third space" required a platform and a synthesis of arts-based literature in order to:

1. Build a bridge between arts-based methodologies and educational administration;
2. Situate this work in relation to how arts-based research is currently being constructed in the literature;
3. Produce a series of touchstones from which I could reflect on the process and the product of my creative endeavor;

4. Provide a means to evaluate the worthiness of the creative endeavor in relation to the aims of the study.

The next section outlines the origins of arts-based research, the key elements of arts-based research, the roles of the researcher, and the tenuous relationship with the aesthetic world.

Origins of Arts-based Research

Literature reviews that identify the beginning/s of research epochs are rife with power relations. It makes me uneasy to speak about the beginning/s of arts-based research (ABR) as a methodological innovation because threshold moments are often contested by a myriad of scholars who occupy different social locations. However, I feel compelled to identify a timeline for ABR because of its intersection with the crisis of representation in the social sciences. The crisis resulted from the challenges to several key methodological assumptions in the 1980s (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). These ruptures created new challenges to validity and generalizability in research. One of the most significant ruptures was Geertz's (2000) introduction of the concept of blurred genres. He made the argument that the demarcation between the humanities and social sciences was a seductive fiction. His theoretical work in anthropology created some of the necessary space for ABR to emerge as a methodological genre (Finley, 2011).

There are little references to the arts in research prior to the 1980s (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Eisner, 2008; 2010). Certain conference proceedings, keynote addresses, and papers figure prominently into ABR's origin stories and have garnered a great deal of status in the literature while others have withered in the textual umbra. Eisner's development of educational criticism and Barone's exploration of narrative storytelling as research are cited as key ABR developments in education (Barone, 2010; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Leavy, 2009; Eisner, 2008; 2010; Finley, 2011). One of the most well circulated origin

stories in ABR is the telling of the first ABR institute offered at the 1993 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Eisner, 2010). Eisner and Barone state in their latest publication that it was at this conference where the term arts-based research was coined (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Rolling, 2013).

ABR appeared in the literature amidst the postmodern turn (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010), which has contributed to its epistemological humility (Barone, 2010) and to the recognition of its interpretive possibilities. There are three major strands of ABR in the literature today: research as art (Saldaña, 2008, 2010; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; McNiff, 2011); art as scholarship (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; McNiff, 2011) and a/r/tography (Irwin & Springgay, 2010; Leavy, 2009; Springgay et al., 2008). Each strand has precipitated several methodological innovations across multiple disciplines. Although there are a number of significant elements that unite ABR within each of the strands, the usefulness of the following descriptions lies in its recognition of the emphases put upon aesthetics and form within each of the strands.

Research as art (Saldaña, 2008) is ABR that utilizes various art forms as methods to generate, analyze, and represent data in innovative and powerful ways. These studies often employ mixed methods from the sciences and the arts (McNiff, 2011). Research as art arguably privileges research over aesthetics and form (Finley, 2011). The researcher is a central figure who documents and disseminates what is learned from the research in order to inform and activate audiences from outside and inside the academy (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). This type of ABR is an example of blurred genre (Geertz, 2000) work in which the researcher uses a bricolage of methods and theories that transgress disciplinary boundaries.

Art as scholarship produces art that represents concepts, questions, or findings in an evocative manner (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; McNiff, 2011; Saldaña, 2008, 2010). This research

looks, sounds, and feels like a work of art (Barone & Eisner, 2012). ABR in this domain privileges aesthetics and form throughout the research process. Many researchers who engage in this kind of ABR have extensive training in their field as well as in the social sciences (Eisner, 2008). A great deal of art as scholarship is rooted in social activism (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Finley, 2011) and it often engages research participants in the making and representation of art during various stages of the research process. Research participants, as well as the spectators who encounter the art, are meaningfully involved in the discovery and the representation of the findings.

The ABR methodology *a/r/tography* was developed at the University of British Columbia (Leavy, 2009). It is concerned with the ways in which the identities of artist, teacher, and researcher integrate to form a third space of inquiry (Leavy, 2009; Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008). *A/r/tographers* use a variety of art forms and writing in an interconnected way to discover and enhance meanings throughout the research process. The researcher who works with this methodology is reflexive about the circumstances in which knowing, making, and doing emerge (Irwin & Springgay, 2010). *A/r/tographers* talk about their work as being a way of living in the world (Irwin & Springgay, 2010; Leavy, 2009; Springgay et al., 2008). They discover new conceptual relationships through metaphors and metonyms in order to trouble well-rehearsed subject/object relationships (Irwin & Springgay, 2010). The essence of *a/r/tography* is the self-examination of one's self as artist, researcher, and teacher.

Key Elements of Arts-based Research

ABR is an attempt to make meaning from some of the most difficult existential questions that concern humanity. More concretely, ABR uses the arts as the primary way to understand and examine the experiences of the researcher and the participants (Bagley, 2009; McNiff, 2008) and

the larger social context in which the art/research is located. There are several key assumptions that permeate ABR. The next section will address eight integral elements of ABR. The elements exist simultaneously and in different places on continuums of intensity and emphases across the bricolage of arts-based scholarship. For example, one of the defining characteristics of ABR is the involvement of participants in the generation and representation of data. (Involvement) is contested terrain. A researcher's judgments about who is involved, the relative authenticity of the involvement, and the conditions under which the participant/researcher is involved, are just some of the factors that make this ABR element, and all other ABR elements, discursive.

Concerned with what happens before knowing. ABR is concerned with the contexts in which researchers and participants come to know what they know (Irwin & Springgay, 2010). ABR assumes there are many aspects of knowing that exist between an experience and the articulation of the experience. ABR makes space for the exploration of emotional abstractions that cannot or have yet to be codified within the rules of spoken or written languages. Art forms like dance and music are amenable to the expression of concepts that hover around discourses. ABR incites researchers to make part of their work about the analysis and the enrichment of the experiential store (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010) so that researchers, participants, and audiences can attune their senses towards essential learnings about the human condition that have yet to be named (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Eisner, 2010; Greene, 2001).

Incites disruptions to mental scripts. The inquiry process is organic in this methodological genre. Researchers and participants allow the research process to breathe, devolve, and to go through a series of metamorphoses. ABR's commitment to flexibility and its resistance to rigidity opens spaces for radical ideas to surface. Researchers are able to uncover peculiar relationships between what initially appeared to be disparate phenomena when they

allow themselves to give up control and embrace uncertainty. New pairings elicit fresh questions (Eisner, 2010), and disrupt mental habits (Bharucha, 2011; Eisner, 2008), which cause researchers, participants, and audiences to question some of their most cherished binary relationships (King, 2008). ABR's flexibility, its capacity to uncover new intersections between previously unrelated concepts, and its ability to make absurdities tolerable, put meta-narratives in danger (Barone, 2010; Finley, 2011).

Conceptual inquiry. The necessity to expand or contract one's theoretical position strongly influences what research questions can be sensibly pursued. Structural-functional research is designed to reduce what is observed and measured in order to improve things like outcomes and performance. However, there are ethical, moral, and political questions that cannot be reasonably considered in structural-functional research (Samier, 2006). Epistemologies that savour imagination, sensory perception, and ambiguity are sparse in traditional research. ABR expands the sight lines between the wider social ecosystem and the inner lifeworld of the participants so they may pursue more existential lines of questioning. ABR allows us to use our imaginations and emotions (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2012) to ask questions about important concepts such as love, forgiveness, death, jealousy, loneliness, and hope. ABR refocuses our attention on the dance between non-symbolic and symbolic meaning to form innovative conceptual understandings throughout all phases of the research process (Capous Desyllas, 2013; Gallagher, Freeman, & Wessells, 2010; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010).

Honours the complexity of lived and represented realities. Artistic practices disrupt subjectivities and make space for unsanctioned voices and activities. The disruption occurs because the spectator will generate some kind of meaning from the artistic act. In an ABR paradigm, artistic intersections between symbolic and non-symbolic meanings can render the

complexity of the lived world (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Irwin & Springgay, 2010) because participants, researchers and audiences can see and insert themselves and their struggles in the art/research. ABR's pliable, organic and responsive methods allow competing understandings of the same phenomena to exist at the same time and in the same place.

Facilitates an education of emotions. Over time we accumulate assumptions that desensitize or even deaden our ability to honestly encounter one another in the world. Art is an antidote for desensitization because it evocatively represents and distills the experiences and feelings of others (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2012). Many of us have encountered a painting, play, dance, film, poem or photograph that elicited a strong emotional reaction in our bodies. These visceral responses can build reflective surfaces that provide us with new ways of seeing ourselves in relation to others. At its best, ABR invites participants to encounter each others' lives as works of art (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Eisner, 2008, 2010; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2011). Emotionally laden epiphanies inspired by exquisite poetry or beautiful paintings are not easily measured or predicted but they must not be dismissed as dispensable luxuries. ABR enhances the ways in which our emotions infuse our relationships and representations of the world whilst it resists simplistic demarcations between emotional knowing and research that prizes hyper-rationality.

Socially engaged research. Artists and arts-based researchers use metaphors and metonyms to represent personal and collaborative deconstructions of social issues (Joselit, 2013). The propensity of ABR to challenge meta-narratives, to disrupt power relations, and to problematize normative assumptions, links ABR inextricably to social change (Barone, 2010; Cole & Knowles, 2008; Rydzik, Pritchard, Morgan, & Sedgley, 2013). There are degrees of political activism in ABR (Capous Desyllas, 2013; Finley, 2011). ABR privileges nuance and

complexity over the heavy handedness of agitprop. Excellent ABR makes space for researchers, participants, and audiences to contemplate their subjectivities and examine the social forces that exert influence and power over the construction of subjectivities. Many ABR designs culminate in public performances or exhibitions (Barone, 2010; Irwin & Springgay, 2010). ABR pulses outside the academy. It creates opportunities for participants and audiences to manifest new subjectivities so they may act out differently in the world (Sloane & Wallin, 2013).

Participant involvement. Researchers within a structural-functional research paradigm attempt to mitigate bias by maintaining distance between themselves and the research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Researchers who conduct ABR try to develop meaningful relationships with participants throughout the research process (Capous Desyllas, 2013; Rydzik et al., 2013) and they recognize and value subjectivity. In ABR, participants are often directly involved in multiple ways during the research process. The degree of participant involvement varies substantially across projects. In some ABR, participants work closely with the researcher to design the study, generate (data), and represent the data to a wider audience. Participants in these types of inquiry projects creatively tell their own stories (Capous Desyllas, 2013) in order to engage in transitive dialogue with the researcher and the audience.

Expects a life outside the academy. Much of the work produced by researchers in the academy is consumed within the ranks of the academy. Academe is sometimes criticized for overvaluing competition, individual accomplishments, and the peer review process. Consequently, the knowledge and power that results from research is rarely consumed by the wider public. One of the essential elements of ABR is that it creates dialogical interactions with audiences outside of the academy (Rydzik et al., 2013). The art in ABR calls forth the audience. Audiences beyond the academy are actively involved in knowledge creation and dissemination

as they encounter the art (Barone, 2010; Irwin & Springgay, 2010; Finley, 2011). ABR has the potential to break the fourth wall in research.

I wrote a play to crack the fourth wall in educational administration research. The creative process in which I engaged is reflective of many of the key tenets of ABR. This study was very concerned with *what happens before knowing*. The psychoanalytic theoretical lens provoked an examination of the conscious and unconscious processes that act on educational administrators through the dialogue between the characters and through the reflections of the researcher/artist (RA). The multi-sensory elements in the work were incorporated as an attempt to trigger the echoes of memories about the emotional work of leadership that hovers in the liminal spaces between consciousness and unconsciousness.

Martin's journey into psychoanalysis manufactured a phantasy, and it utilized many other critical psychoanalytic concepts such as interpretation, transference, and countertransference to intentionally *disrupt the mental scripts* of rationality that construct much of what researchers are able to ask and think within the managerial dreamscape of educational administration. The study is a *conceptual inquiry* into the impact that our witnesses have in the lives of educational administrators. The epistemological stance of the work communicates a value for imagination and sensory perceptions. It holds the potential to uncover unique moral dilemmas, perspectives, questions, and emotional learnings that *honor the complexity of the lived realities* of educational administrators. The creative work reveals some of the emotional costs of leadership work and how emotions (Varga & Kruguer, 2013) structure an affective background for deliberation and acting in educational organizations. In this vein, Martin's journey *facilitates an education of emotions*.

The play writing process was reflective of many key elements of ABR. However it remains to be seen what kind of life this work can *expect outside the academy*. I may need to devise opportunities for *Martin* to speak out about the ways that his witnesses exerted their power and influence on him and his colleagues.

Role of the Researcher/Artist in Arts-based Research

Art opens up a state of consciousness that allows people to see connections, absurdities, or disparities that were previously living in the shadows of our minds and literature reviews. In the introduction of Starr's (2015) insightful text on the relationships between the sister arts (music, painting, poetry), the aesthetic experience, and neuroscience, she asks "How is a sonata like a sunset or a beloved face?" Starr's question and others like it are posed by those who claim the positionality of a researcher/artist. I am reluctant to call the play I wrote *art*. However, I am a person who is perpetually drawn to make connections between a sunset and a beloved face. What brought me to this study is my passion for and an ability to notice how creative acts "map emotion on to the world around us into previously uncharted territory" (Starr, 2015, p. 26). For the last two decades, several other proponents of arts-based research have endeavored to describe the passions and abilities of arts-based researchers. The next section is a response to the question, what is peculiar or important about the work of researcher/artists?

Researcher/Artists make art that disrupts habitual thinking. Researchers who employ ABR methodologies engage in some similar activities to those who use other methodologies. This next section focuses on the work that is unique to researcher/artists. Art making is an integral part of ABR. The researcher who works with this methodology actualizes the subjectivities of a researcher and an artist. For centuries, artists have described and critiqued the world as they see it and challenged spectators to imagine a better one. An aesthetic

interruption provokes researcher/artists to escape normative thought patterns as they become immersed in experiences that lift them out of the normality that can suffocate the creativity in our lives (Sloane, 2013). For that reason, the researcher/artist carefully selects appropriate art forms that will evocatively provoke and represent the aforementioned interplay (Leggo, 2010). The relationship between form and findings is critical because the art form allows the researcher to pursue more nuanced questions.

Researcher/Artists clearly explain their methodological choices. Researcher/artists are required to describe their processes and products so they are decipherable to other researchers and practitioners (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010; Eisner, 2008; 2010). Eisner is particularly vocal on this matter (Eisner, 2008; 2010). He contends that abstract ABR or ABR that is primarily about the researcher, is self-indulgent. The way to protect the researcher/artist and the audience from self-indulgence, is to ensure there is potential for the research to be useful to those who work in the field (Barone & Eisner, 2012). Leggo (2010) is somewhat apprehensive about the accusation of self-indulgence and suggests that each researcher/artist has something important to share with an audience through the process of echolocation. Even if the research is autobiographical, it is part of a network of stories that allows the researcher and the audience to send out resonances (Leggo, 2010) that move back and forth from the personal to the professional. The personal is worthy of being considered research.

Researcher/Artists are reflexive. In ABR, the reflexive presence of the researcher is public (Cole & Knowles, 2009). A researcher/artist selects an art form to represent a distillation of provocative findings. The play, dance, or poem makes it very clear that a distillation process existed and choices were made by the participants and the researcher. The interpretive possibilities inherent to a play, dance or poem sew important seeds of doubt so the audience

remembers there are other stories that did not make it in to the script, choreography, or stanza. ABR demands that researchers teach others how to be reflexive about representations of the other (Spry, 2011).

Researcher/Artists are competent researchers and creative artists. Researcher/artists are expected to have expertise in the social sciences and to have formal training in their art form (Eisner, 2008; Saldaña, 2010). If the researcher/artist is not formally trained in the art form, it is strongly recommended that he or she work collaboratively with an artist throughout the research process (Eisner, 2008; 2010). There are some arts-based researchers who vehemently disagree with the assertion that a researcher/artist requires vicarious expert status because the privileging of expertise violates the elements of ABR that are grounded in social activism (Finley, 2011). Formal training in the arts is related to one's social privilege. Some researcher/artists maintain that the focus on the aesthetic qualities of ABR are subordinate to the therapeutic (McNiff, 2011), justice oriented (Finley, 2011), emotional (Barone, 2010) and the personal and socially transformative (Greene, 2001) powers of ABR.

Making Judgements about the Quality of Arts-based Research

Arts-based researchers challenge the appropriateness of using terms like rigor, validity, reliability, and generalizability to talk about the quality of arts-based research because these terms are epistemologically incompatible with the essential elements of ABR (Eisner, 2010; Finley, 2011; Leavy 2009). For instance, many ABR sites are intuitively selected (Eisner, 2010; Springgay et al., 2008) and vigour is more relevant than rigour (Leavy, 2009). Validity checks make little sense within a methodology that contorts in response to spontaneous new lines of inquiry. And the recognition of multiple interpretations and subjectivities conflicts with the criteria used to assess reliability in quantitative research. Another dilemma that faces the judges

of ABR, is their lack of expertise in a plethora of art forms. Even some of the most savvy qualitative researchers may have difficulty judging the relative goodness of an ethnodrama if they have little knowledge about the theatre (Saldaña, 2010). Finally, ABR is especially concerned with outliers (Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010), whereas studies that operate within a quantitative paradigm are uncomfortable with numbers, ideas, and individuals who stray too far from the mean. It is not appropriate to make judgements about the relative goodness of ABR using tools that violate its intent, methodology and ethics.

Arts-based research is a relatively new research genre (Rolling, 2013) and it is viewed with some suspicion within the academy (Bates & Eisner, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Eisner, 2008, 2010). ABR is considered an outlier because the criteria used to evaluate the worthiness of quantitative research cannot effectively be used to judge ABR. To further complicate matters, arts-based researchers have been self-critical about the paucity of ABR studies that include detailed dissections of their own inquiry processes (Fraser & al Sayeh, 2011; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010). The next section identifies the prominent themes in the literature about what constitutes excellent ABR.

Exemplary ABR contains clearly articulated methods and methodologies (McNiff, 2008; Meekums & Daniel, 2011). It must be responsive to the unexpected (McNiff, 2011) and, as a corollary, it must include detailed written or represented accounts of the circumstances that contextualized the changes to the inquiry process. ABR should hold theoretical potential (Cole & Knowles, 2008) and demonstrate the researcher/artist's capacity to problematize ABR as a viable and transformative research methodology. Powerful ABR compels audiences to pay attention and it generates new questions and dialogue about important social issues (Barone, 2010; Sloman

2012). Evocative ABR engages diverse audiences and it is accessible and relatable to different audiences (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2010).

ABR is interdisciplinary work, so the contributions that result from these inquiries should enrich the theory and practice of artists as well as the respective social/science field in which the research/art is situated (Eisner, 2010). Cahnmann-Taylor (2010) suggests that navigating five tensions can help researchers assess the ‘validity’ of ABR in their respective disciplines. Effective ABR should dynamically operate between: the specific versus the general, the aesthetics of beauty versus the pursuit of objective truth, posing complicated questions versus offering definitive answers, metaphoric novelty versus pragmatic language, and imagination versus the need to be definitive. A number of other researcher/artists suggest that it is most important to look for consensual validation amongst ABR’s audiences (Knowles & Promislow, 2008; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2008) and amongst artists who are experts in the art form (Bagley, 2009; Kerry-Moran, 2008).

Effective ABR enriches the public discourse/s about significant social concerns (Greene, 2001). ABR amplifies dialogue as it makes space for voices that are sometimes marginalized in communities (Leavy, 2009). Artists have a long history of finding audiences outside of formal galleries and art museums. Many performance artists, visual artists, and applied theatre practitioners, have discovered creative ways to make their art more accessible to the general public. A researcher/artist doing provocative ABR, knows how to use his or her art form to reach new spectators. Effective researcher/artists also understand that an analysis of their social location is integral to the practice of disentangling theoretical assumptions in any research agenda. Gender, sexual orientation, race, language, class, age, and dis/ability are determinants of our social location(s). These determinants are surrounded by indexical signs or fusions between

the signifiers and the signified. ABR must provide written accounts of the researcher's ability to uncouple herself throughout the research process. As we become increasingly reflexive in the research process, we expand our visibility in the larger social ecosystem. It takes time, concentration, curiosity, and love to uncouple, but uncoupling creates something new. The new thing, idea, or theory acts as a cipher before new language is created to describe its relevance to the researcher/artist's work. Excellent ABR presents a researcher/artist's new embodied knowledge in useful signs, symbols, or textual cues. This allows her or him to develop new concepts and metaphors that can describe social and educational issues in radically alternative ways.

There have been conversations about the humanities' connection to the indexical signs, symbols, and texts in leadership development. However, arts-based research continues to struggle to develop a place in the field of educational administration. The struggle has resulted in a lack of multi-sensory research in the literature base. Educational administration certainly does have some roots in the aesthetic world, but as the next section explicates, there is much work to do.

Arts-based Research and Educational Administration

Aesthetic Roots in Educational Administration

Elwood Cubberly and George Strayer were appointed as professors in educational administration in 1905 (Popper, 1987). The appointments are purported to have launched educational administration preparation programs in the United States (Willower & Forsyth, 1999). Cubberly was an extremely well respected force in the field. In fact his textbook, *Public School Administration* went unchallenged for decades and was emblematic of the field's allegiance to scientific management (Popper, 1987). The theory movement that began in the

1950s tempered new discipline insecurities and firmly situated the field's aspirations in the realm of empirical study (Farquhar, 1968). During the theory movement, scholars and leading practitioners sought intellectual enrichment from the behavioral and social sciences (Popper, 1987). In 1956, the University Council for Educational Administration was created as a means to infuse theory in to what was considered a practitioner-oriented discipline (Oplatka, 2012). In a field that sought scientific legitimization, the few who dared to whisper about the 'art of school administration' were easily silenced. However, a few scattered imprints from the humanities are evident in the field's early history.

In 1963, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) struck a task force to explore the potential roles for the humanities in preparation programs (Farquhar, 1968; Popper, 1987). The Humanities Task Force organized a meeting in 1965 at the University of Virginia. At the meeting participants were presented with papers intended to provoke debate and discussion regarding the inclusion of the humanities in preparation programs for administrators (Popper, 1987). Even prior to the UCEA sponsored meeting in 1965, there is evidence of ephemeral appearances of the arts and humanities in the field. Max Weber's writing in 1922 on 'charisma' (Bates, 2006), and Barnard's 1938 edict on 'moral creativeness as a foundational skill for the functional executive' (Popper, 1987) are acknowledgements that "selected content from the humanities may contribute substantially to the improved preparation of personnel, who, through educational leadership, will play a significant role in determining the future of modern society" (Farquhar, 1968, p. 99).

Barnard suggested that administrators need to develop the capacity to define and inspire allegiance to an organizational purpose. This particular skill set separated mere managers from institutional leaders. He insisted that "moral creativeness" should precede technical proficiency

(Popper, 1987) but that it was fundamentally dependent on an administrator's technical abilities. The formal leader's task was to code switch in order to translate bureaucratic instrumental rules and policies in to more socially humane goals and words. After World War II, a burgeoning sociological wave, coupled with the theory movement, provided additional opportunities for administrators to be able to move beyond the "beans-budgets-bricks" model of training (Popper, 1987, p. 72).

In 1968, Farquhar articulated three possible foci for the humanities in educational administration preparation programs: (1) A focus on the general liberalization of the administrator; (2) A focus on the values and purpose defining skills of the administrator; and (3) A focus on the creative and analytical skills of the administrator. The three foci were not intended to privilege the aesthetic over positivistic research but to make the case that administrators would be more successful if they could effectively communicate organizational values in relation to ideographic concerns and ethical imperatives. Just as the artist is able to navigate and utilize the beauty and pain evoked by harmonious and discordant observations, the competent administrator also needs to demonstrate these artistic skills. He claimed the aims of the organization would be better served if formal leaders intermittently adopted the persona of an artist to more efficiently and humanely achieve both the technocratic and social aims of the organization's work.

Farquhar (1968) references the injection of the liberal arts in many business administration courses in the 1950s to build his case. These injections were designed to "breed statesmen" who would feel great responsibility for the communities in which they made their profits. In turn, Farquhar offers some possibilities for the inclusion of the humanities in preparation courses to firmly link the work of the school administrator to social responsibility.

The study of the classic structure of drama, with special attention paid to decision making and critical incidents, as well as the inclusion of humanities scholars in educational administration instructional teams, are two of the major entry points he proposed to make space for the humanities in preparation programs. He noted past attempts to include the humanities in the field experienced limited success. Farquhar attributed the sparse use of the humanities content in preparation programs to the field's practical and scientific preoccupations and the risks associated with being able to evaluate the impact of humanities courses on the work of school administrators. Almost twenty years later UCEA published a book that echoed Farquhar's challenge.

The former Executive Director of UCEA, Patrick Forsyth, sanctioned another call to the humanities in the publisher's note he drafted for Samuel Popper's *Pathways to the Humanities in Educational Administration* (1987). Forsyth states, "Educational administrators have tended to see their mission, bringing up children, as a sacred one. The mechanical and sociological models used to explain and understand life in school organizations were never perceived as wholly adequate. It is at this juncture that Professor Popper's efforts are vital" (Popper, 1987, p. iv). Popper's explication of the role art plays in capturing the spirit of a period (zeitgeist) and his treatment of "imaginative beholding" as an inoculative effect against the fetishizing of functionalism are notable aesthetic roots in educational administration.

The term 'zeitgeist' originated in the philosophical tradition of German idealism (Popper, 1987). One might describe zeitgeist as the political or spiritual ethos during a specific period in time in a particular social context. An artist is most suited to identify or capture a changing ethos through her or his "imagistic creations of meaning" (Popper, 1987, p. 58). An artist uses her or his third eye to make an observation about the human condition so that she or he can bring the

observation to life inside of a sculpture, painting, novel, play or song. The artist creates an image and in the making of the image she or he identifies social pathologies and renews the social ecosystem. In more practical terms, viewing the image protects the administrator from:

“(1) entrapment in the egocentric predicament; an inability to see the world except through one’s eyes; (2) the acquisition of a trained incapacity for empathy; a skill which enables one to comprehend what others feel under stress and (3) the all too familiar spiritual ‘burn out’ in the administrative role” (Popper, 1987, p. 65).

It is evident in the literature that the roots of aesthetic ways of knowing have historically received modest attention. Prior to the 1970s, aesthetic analysis generated a modicum of interest in educational administration, and in the 1970s and the 1980s it served the functional and rational goals of educational administrative theorists and practitioners (Samier, Bates, & Stanley, 2006). Exceptional contributions made by scholars like Farquhar and Popper and the earlier work of the UCEA Humanities Task Force have yielded limited acceptance of an aesthetic ontology or aesthetic methodologies in the field educational administration. Functionalist orientations to art, the opaqueness surrounding practical applications, under developed aesthetic theories, and ontological threats to the dominant technical rationality in the field, were and continue to be, significant barriers to the widespread theoretical and practical applications of aesthetics in the field.

A Fragile Aesthetic Root System

Since the time of Plato, the pursuit of beauty and goodness has factored prominently in western philosophical traditions. It is startling to think that the arts have remained consistently marginalized in the study of educational leadership. In the 1990s a number of organizational theorists experimented with an aesthetic analysis drawn from anthropology and cultural studies.

(Samier et al., 2006) in an attempt to study organizations as aesthetic constructions. This line of humanistic inquiry has remained limited in educational administration.

Dating back to the time of Weber and Barnard, the humanities were contorted to serve the theorists who realized that the culture of organizations impacted the ability of organizations to achieve utilitarian goals. In more recent times (Popper, 1987), humanities advocates suggested that Hamlet and Macbeth could be wielded as warnings to potentially egocentric leaders about the perils of power and solipsistic organizational decision making. Greek tragedies could be served up as fodder for well written case studies to master poetic lesson objectives in experimental leadership programs. By stripping art of all of its emancipatory capacity, this type of artistic dalliance further marginalized the arts in educational administration. Art in this sense would have operated as a mechanism of social control.

Educational administration is often described as an applied field. One of the limitations that has prevented the serious consideration and promotion of aesthetic analyses in leadership preparation programs is the discomfort associated with an inability to measure the direct impact of arts-based methods on the performance of administrators (Farquhar, 1968). The field is heavily focused on practical application. Since epiphanies inspired by poetry or beautiful music cannot be measured or predicted, they are dismissed as dispensable luxuries that interfere with the serious work of managing a school.

The aesthetic blind spot (Heck & Hallinger, 1999) obfuscates more radical and psychoanalytic oriented conceptualizations of school administration. There is a tremendous need and opportunity to develop an educational administrative aesthetics. Weber used the metaphor of the “iron cage” to describe the inevitable pursuit of power and authority as ends in themselves in industrialized societies (Milley, 2006). A significant barrier to the adoption of the aesthetics in

educational administration is the inherent threat the arts pose to the technical rationality that dominates the field (Milley, 2006).

Resistance to the Aesthetic Domain

The field of educational administration continues to be heavily influenced by programs that attempt to generalize leadership behaviors across multiple contexts (Pelletier, 2009). An example of one such ‘program’ is the ISLLC standards (Murphy, 2005). Amidst the wide spread calls for increased quantitative studies and the development of more rigorous statistical analyses in the field, the aesthetics offer little in the way of “improving” educational administration. The focus on school leadership behaviors significantly limits the ability to see the emotional impact of administrative work on school leaders. A compelling mission statement, the intellectual dexterity to notice deficits in student achievement data, the ability to inspire teachers to differentiate their instruction, to become what the literature defines as an *instructional leader*, can leave school administrators feeling as if they are living in the iron cage.

Artistic practices can be dangerous in hierarchical institutions. They disrupt subjectivities and make space for unsanctioned voices and activities. If school administrators deviate from serving the needs of the school system and situate their leadership work within artistic terms, the control mechanisms in school systems might be challenged. This is accomplished because the artist needs to assume equality between herself and the audience (Tanke, 2010). When art is created the artist assumes the spectator can and will generate some kind of meaning from the artistic act. The artist “needs equality as the explicator needs inequality” (Ranciere, 1991).

It is my position that artistic methodological approaches to research and practice in educational administration can provoke the thoughtful exploration of one’s interiority when people experience moral, ethical, and intellectual disequilibrium. When art challenges what we

think we know, the sensible is disrupted (Tanke, 2010). An artistic epistemology can open up space for administrators to name oppressive circumstances; it respects and it encourages human agency and it can create a fantasy rich third space to explore one's interiority.

The limited number of references in the literature is connected to a resistance to an ontology of aesthetics and a dismissal of artistic methodologies in research and preparation programs. Unfortunately the aesthetic roots in the field of educational administration remain sparse. The paucity of aesthetic research is due in large part to the field's functionalist orientations to art, the opaqueness surrounding practical applications, under developed aesthetic theories, and the ontological threats inherent in aesthetic methodologies that challenge the dominant technical rationality in the field.

An aesthetic positioning could create opportunities for administrators to disrupt the sensible. In order for administrators to do this type of complex work, there must be a fundamental shift in how change is defined. If administrators are to embrace an aesthetic arrest (Snowber, 2006) in order to gain a deeper sense of their own interiority, new practices and knowledges must be introduced into the field of educational administration. To extend this idea to actual practice, I argue that a psychoanalytic theoretical positioning combined with a 'psychoanalytic arts-based methodology' can open an emancipatory space to take seriously the impact of witnesses on the emotional work of educational administration.

Psychoanalytic Art

Classical psychoanalysis places a high value on the satisfaction of primitive instincts (Frois, 2010). The exploration of the *affective* was perceived to be in conflict with the primary focus on instinctual drives. However Freud did write extensively about affect and art's relationship to psychoanalysis. According to Jurist (2006, p. 1325), Freud's theory of affect can

be divided into three phases. Phase one describes affects as vestiges of traumatic experiences. If painful experiences are not eliminated, they continue to debilitate the psyche. Phase two describes affect as the “psychical manifestation of drives.” In phase three, Freud explains affect as a series of signals that can be controlled by the ego. Much later in his writing about art, he discussed creativity as a way to generate meaning in the face of loss (Jurist, 2006). Many intersections between psychoanalysis and art are predicated on the assumption that artists must embrace the ego and the id while they manage the brutal criticism of the superego.

Although there are a plethora of studies that describe the cathartic potential of art making, art within a psychoanalytic context can be actualized to make space for individuals to be more thoughtful about how they know what they know. New knowing is possible in a *phantastical third space* because art has the capacity to look beyond the artist’s visuality (Bersani, 2006; Rose, 2007) and embrace emotional and intellectual distortions. The tolerance for ambiguity in psychoanalytic art is immense because psychoanalysis places a high psychic value on interpretation and the movement between the symbolic and the asymbolic states.

A great deal of therapeutic work focuses on an individual’s past, but art made and perceived with a psychoanalytic eye, can produce new assemblages (Walkerdine, 2013). New assemblages may point to alternative ways to think about one’s interiority in relation to the imagined witnesses that are projected on others in the present. New assemblages reorganize patterns of living and working in peculiar ways and export ideas to new territories of thought. ‘Thinking psychoanalytic art’ allows people to invite the *new other* into a metaphorical dialogue about the discourses that infect or inoculate the psychic topography of the collective mindscape.

The Witnesses in the Play of the Play

Witnesses are influential arbiters of personal and social truths. They can provide one with fractured evidence and contested reflections of one's individual and social realities. Witnesses may be present in the flesh or exert a mediated presence even when they are physically absent. Some witnesses take the form of vivid images of phantoms from the past and others are ill-formed social specters that lurk in the unconscious. Witnesses are frequently called forth when individuals enter liminal spaces, during rituals, or when people face significant stressors in their lives. Their conscious and unconscious influences may elicit affirming communal rewards, anxiety, admonishments, or even advice. More importantly in the context of this study, witnesses can be manifestations of repressed desires.

For the purposes of the play, the dead characters are those who acted as significant caregivers to the living characters because caregivers are incredibly influential when one is a child. They are powerful because their testimonies harness the power of ancestral echoes. To feel safe, loved and respected we must believe the words they use to describe who we are and each wink, nod, slap or hug insinuates something about who they think we will become. And when they die, if they become phantoms in one's mind, does their influence become less formidable? Does death enhance their capacity to interfere with one's personal narratives because there is no way to negotiate with shadows?

Relatives hold intimate knowledge about children before they become recognizable subjects in the world. They bestow intergenerational memories and they write their names all over the young to confirm their existence. It is through their eyes that one constructs the part one is given to play in one's historical family drama. "*S/he is just like her/his_____.*" How difficult it can be to make substantial changes to the roles one is assigned in the family.

While sitting across from one's familial witnesses, it is possible, albeit difficult, to more radically reconstruct the reflections of one's identity in the world. Through the communal telling and retelling of family narratives, one can improvise in the face of well-rehearsed performances and complicate reductive dualities. For instance, family rituals open spaces to reconcile the perception of one's personal development. As illustrations...funerals, Sunday dinners, Eid celebrations, birthdays, weddings and graduations are events at which the young are frequently asked to account for themselves in the face of the family's shared dreams for their future. *When are you graduating? Are you seeing anyone? Why don't you visit more often?* Invisible timelines and targets are set against the inheritance of unfilled desires and become corroborating evidence as one deliberates about personal and professional accomplishments.

When these powerful witnesses die, do those who remain, build idols from the vestiges of the dead's words and deeds? Death certainly can inflame and distort one's passion. As the dead's archived observations become more potent during periods of mourning, do living relatives unwittingly become hearsay conduits who unquestioningly continue to live in ways that enact the testimonies of the dead? Here I think about how often the unlikable characteristics of the dead are minimized or erased in the funeral parlor.

Educational administrators are surrounded by flesh and blood witnesses. There have been many excellent studies that focus on the ways a leader's vision, style and instructional leadership capacity impact students, staff and faculty. This study not only asks its audience to think about students, staff and faculty as witnesses to administrative acts, but it asks its audience to conceive of an administrator's intimate dead as witnesses. I use *intimate dead* to refer to an administrator's dead relatives or ancestors who, from time to time, influence his or her leadership performances.

A focus on the dead in the study of educational administration may elicit discomfort, or at the very least, it might sound out of tune in one's ear. I suggest that people often underestimate how much time they spend negotiating with unearthly shadows from their pasts. Furthermore, the dead remind the living of their mortality and they gift us with a space to dwell and learn in times of suffering. In a field that is at times constrained by a cult of presentism and control mechanisms, death may have powerful lessons to teach about legacy, psychological inheritance and losses of control.

Let's Begin...



What brings you here today Martin?

SINCERE LIARS

A Play in Three Acts

by

Alysha Farrell

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by Alysha Farrell

Cast of Characters

<u>Martin Spencer:</u>	A man in his mid-50s; High school principal
<u>Karen Michaels:</u>	A woman in her early 40s; Psychoanalyst
<u>Carly Spencer:</u>	A 16 year old girl; Martin's dead sister
<u>Officer Dylan:</u>	A man in his late 50s; Police officer; Karen's dead father
<u>Connie Spencer:</u>	A woman in her late 30s; Martin's dead mother

Scene

All three acts are set in Karen's office. Karen is a practicing psychoanalyst who operates out of the study in her home. The house is located in a trendy neighborhood just on the outskirts of downtown anywhere. There is a separate entrance on the side of the house for patients.

There are three 'dead' characters in the play; Carly, Officer Dylan, and Connie.

Time

This year.

Stage Direction Acronyms

Upstage Right = UR	Upstage Centre = UC	Upstage Left = UL
Right Centre = RC	Centre = C	Left Centre = LC
Downstage Right = DR	Downstage Centre = DC	Downstage Left=DL
Off Stage = OS		

ACT 1

Scene 1

"Session 6"

SETTING:

The play is set in Karen's office. For the most part, the space is immaculate. There are 3 abstract paintings on the walls. A substantial collection of books is prominently displayed on several bookshelves. The furniture and the area rug are white and modern in design. The room is punctuated with the bright colors in the wall art, book spines, throw pillows and a couple of chic baubles that sit on the shelves and tables. On one side of the room there is a couch RC and a coffee table. On top of the coffee table there is a pitcher of water and three glasses. Across from the coffee table is a white armchair. Next to the arm chair is a small end table. A notepad, pen and watch rest on top of the end table. At the back of the office UL is a large old wooden desk, out of place with the rest of the décor. The top of the desk is a mess of files, books, papers, breakfast bar wrappers, and a few dirty coffee mugs.

Three minutes before the curtain rises, whispers begin roll across the house in waves, crescendos and decrescendos. The words are indecipherable.

AT RISE:

MARTIN loosens his tie and leans forward. He picks up the pitcher, pours himself a tall glass of water. While he pours, he studies KAREN as she picks up the pen and

notepad from the end table. He
spills water on the coffee table.

MARTIN

Jesus Christ, I made a mess.

(MARTIN jumps up and so does KAREN.)

KAREN

(KAREN gets some paper towels that are sitting
on top of the old wooden desk. She mops up
most of the spilled water. MARTIN takes a
towel from her and continues to try and clean
up the spill.)

It's fine Martin, really.

MARTIN

(MARTIN stands staring at the coffee table
and notices that one of the books is wet. He
wipes the water off the cover of the book and
then blots some of the water damaged pages.)

We need to keep them separate so the dry pages won't get wet.

(MARTIN gestures to a pile of things on the
desk.)

What about over here?

(MARTIN crosses UL, picks up a stapler and
lays it across the open book to keep it
open.)

KAREN

Thank you. I'm sure--

MARTIN

The pages are going to wrinkle. I'll just replace the book.
Seriously, I'm quite happy to buy you a new one.

(MARTIN picks up the book and reads the back.)

\$49.99. For such a thin book? Not a problem.

(MARTIN takes a 50 dollar bill from his wallet, smiles and puts it on the coffee table.)

I wouldn't leave that lying around.

KAREN

How was your week?

MARTIN

(MARTIN gestures to the 50 dollar bill.)

KAREN

(KAREN moves the bill to the side table beside her chair.)

MARTIN

The carnival is on the move.

KAREN

The carnival?

MARTIN

Nicer than saying *shit show* don't you think? It's a running joke at our admin team meetings. Every big school in the district gets to be the bearded lady on the front page every few years.

KAREN

So something major happened this week that could bring the carnival to your school?

MARTIN

Well, let's just say I can hear the barker and he's getting louder by the minute.

KAREN

Do you want to tell me about it?

MARTIN

(MARTIN unbuttons one of his sleeves and rolls it up.)

There's a new English teacher at my school. Eats lunch in his classroom everyday so the oddball kids have a place to be. Our newest Saint of Lost Causes. One of the kids in his third period class tells my vice-principal that Mr. Jeffries -

KAREN

The new English teacher?

MARTIN

Yes. The kid tells my VP Allan that Mr. Jeffries made him *uncomfortable*.

KAREN

Uncomfortable how?

MARTIN

According to Allan, the kid says Jeffries sent him a few texts.

KAREN

(KAREN picks up her notebook and begins to write.)

Do you think some boundaries were crossed?

MARTIN

This kid, Marcus, they had to deliver his file to the school in a box. The social worker, school shrink, Child and Family Services, they're all involved. I'd be surprised if he lasts the term.

KAREN

And what does the box tell you about Marcus?

MARTIN

Less than the body glitter and heels... You probably think I'm an asshole.

KAREN

I don't think you're an asshole.

MARTIN

Now we're going to in-services on gender fluidity. I'm cisgender did you know that? But what does he think is going to happen when he shows up in sequins?

KAREN

Does that--

MARTIN

Tell me you've never looked at one of the head cases on this couch and thought to yourself, this guy's doing it to himself.

(MARTIN looks down at his shoes.)

KAREN

This whole enterprise is grounded on the assumption that all of our houses are haunted. And one of the most generous things we can do for ourselves and others is to inspect the house. But yes, I look over at that couch and think, it's our responsibility to address the cracks in the foundation.

MARTIN

(MARTIN pours himself a glass of water.)

KAREN

How does the size of Marcus' file or what he wears change his report to the vice-prin--

MARTIN

(MARTIN looks up quickly.)

Because this isn't the first time the kid has accused a teacher of crossing the line. Jeffries could lose his job.

KAREN

Too great a sacrifice for a lost cause?

MARTIN

Listen, I'm going to end up wearing this thing no matter what. When I walk through those doors the decisions I make affect people.

KAREN

You referred to some of your students as those who can only be tolerated by the saints among us --

(CARLY enters KAREN's office from the audience DR. She crawls on stage and sits behind the couch.)

MARTIN

I didn't say tolerated. That's your word.

KAREN

I apologize. But you said that Marcus would be gone before the end of second term and last week this theme came up when we talked about Carly.

CARLY

(She slithers up to MARTIN's ear.)

I hope you didn't call me a lost cause little brother.

MARTIN

(Looking at KAREN)

I never said that Carly was a lost cause. She had one very regrettable -

MARTIN

CARLY

(Slumping to the floor)

Virginia Woolf episode.

Virginia Woolf episode.

MARTIN

(MARTIN stares into space.)

KAREN

Where did you go Martin?

MARTIN

Every Saturday Carly'd drag me to this moldy bookstore in the exchange district. She'd run her fingers along every book spine in the place with this dreamy look on her face. She told the owner one time...she told him--

CARLY

I think I like people better in text.

MARTIN

The way her face looked when she said it...

KAREN

What do you think she meant by it, that people were better in text?

MARTIN

I wish...

KAREN

What?

MARTIN

Carly would go through these intense phases. When she was 12 she latched on to this poem, "A Better Resurrection." Plath I think.

CARLY

(CARLY walks DC.)

"My heart within me like a stone Is numbed too much for hopes or fears; Look right, look left, I dwell alone;"

MARTIN

What 12 year old kid is obsessed with Sylvia Plath?

KAREN

Maybe a bright girl who found some solace in the words of poets.

CARLY

"I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief No everlasting hills I see..."

MARTIN

For months she'd fixate on some literary depressive and lose herself.

KAREN

What do you mean she'd lose herself?

MARTIN

(MARTIN sighs heavily and stands up. He walks DC and stands behind CARLY - just off to her right.)

CARLY

"I took a deep breath and listened to the old bray of my heart. I am. I am. I am."

MARTIN

It made my mother crazy. Almost every morning she'd ask—

(CARLY is frustrated at MARTIN for bringing it up and so she moves RC behind KAREN.)

CARLY

Carly, honey, must you always dress as if you are in mourning?

(Embarrassed, directed to KAREN)

I spent 4 years getting dressed for my own funeral.

KAREN

Did you dream about her again this week?

MARTIN

Once—

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

You are such a cliché right now.

KAREN

(Directed to MARTIN)

Would you like to tell me about it?

CARLY

(Covers her ears)

MARTIN

(Half-joking)

It's all dreams and penises with you people isn't it? I read a little Freud back in college. Are you surprised?

KAREN

Are you trying to surprise me?

(KAREN holds his gaze.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN rolls up his other sleeve.)

I think your guy Freud will be all over this one...

KAREN

I'm more interested in knowing what you make of it.

MARTIN

(MARTIN shifts in his seat. From the back of the house quiet whispers roll like waves towards the stage. They abruptly stop when MARTIN begins to speak.)

I wake up with a start. I try to get out of bed but my legs and arms are so heavy - like my pyjamas are lined with birdshot or something. I finally make it to the bedroom door. It takes some doing but I bring myself to look around the corner, and I see this dim light at the top of a very long staircase. The closer I get to the top, the drier my mouth gets. I gag and then throw up...

KAREN

Do you get to the top of the stairs?

MARTIN

(From above the audience there are intermittent sounds of snapping branches.)

Yes, and there's this huge wooden door. My hand starts to shake as I turn the knob. After a few seconds, I can't help myself so I look in the room-

CARLY

(Embarrassed, CARLY reluctantly climbs on top of the coffee table.)

Let it be.

KAREN

Please go on.

MARTIN

(Looking at KAREN)

She's looking at me with this awful grin on her face. She asks me to-

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

Come closer.

(She begins to unzip her hoodie as MARTIN describes the dream to the sounds of an opening soft drink can. The sounds of bubbles come from LC of the house.)

MARTIN

(Looking at KAREN)

But I don't want to.

KAREN

What happens next?

MARTIN

She raises her hand to the top of her forehead and starts to unzip her skin. Methodically, she climbs out of herself. Where eyes used to be, there's empty sockets so I force myself to watch her lungs as they swell up and down. Then she turns, moves towards the closet and takes out a different skin suit. As she struggles to put it on I realize it won't fit.

(CARLY's hoodie slides down her body.)

Sagging, deformed, the ass hangs down to her ankles.

(CARLY slithers down the table to sit with MARTIN on the couch.)

She stumbles towards me, I realize she's wearing my face, and then I wake up... You have some clever interpretation I'm sure.

KAREN

I'm just curious what you think the dream says about you?

MARTIN

About me?

CARLY

Finally.

(CARLY gets up and begins to move around the stage, testing her ability to move. The longer she moves, the freer her movements appear to be.)

KAREN

Earlier you mentioned that when you walk through the doors of the school, you wear it all.

MARTIN

What about it?

KAREN

Do you see any connection between the image of crawling inside the skin of someone else in the dream and the persona you wear every day?

MARTIN

You're suggesting I become someone else when I'm at school? You sound like my wife.

KAREN

How does she describe it?

MARTIN

She says I'm a politician.

KAREN

What kind of politician?

MARTIN

When she's feeling generous, someone who works hard to keep people happy.

KAREN

And when she's not?

CARLY

(CARLY rushes to RC to say it close to MARTIN's face.)

I know the answer to this one...

(CARLY rushes to KAREN.)

You let me play this part.

KAREN

(Directed to MARTIN.)

Go on.

CARLY

He's a—

MARTIN

Coward.

CARLY

(Directed to KAREN)

His wife's words are like blackfly bites on the beach. The minor discomforts one has to put up with for such a pretty view.

KAREN

Why would you say that?

MARTIN

I don't, she does. Jesus Karen.

KAREN

Okay. Why do you think she says it?

MARTIN

(MARTIN stands up and walks by CARLY.)

I'm not a mind reader that's for sure, but maybe it's because she can be a real bitch. Are you going to write misogynist in your notebook now?

KAREN

(KAREN writes something in her notebook.)

MARTIN

(He smiles and then falls serious again.)

Maybe she's right. I can't remember the last time I stuck my neck out when it really counted.

KAREN

At home or at school?

CARLY

Both.

MARTIN

When I started out as a teacher I wanted to change things in the community... And I thought it was actually our job to show kids how they were being constructed in the world.

KAREN

Raising consciousness.

(MARTIN laughs.)

Any chance, there's a Bob Dylan song playing in your head right now?

KAREN

"Tolling for the aching ones whose wounds cannot be nursed
For the countless confused, accused, misused, strung-out ones
an' worse..."

MARTIN

Impressive.

KAREN

Thank you.

CARLY

(Directed to KAREN. She mouths the words. The lines are delivered via recording OS. The sound of the voice is like Syrie from the I-phone.)

He's what Daddy affectionately referred to as a champagne socialist.

OFFICER DYLAN

(OFFICER DYLAN enters from the first row of the audience. He stumbles a little bit when he walks on stage. On his way he grabs CARLY and her hoodie. He sits at KAREN'S desk and puts his feet up on top of the desk.)

MARTIN

And now, schools are incubation chambers. A place to kill 6 hours while your device charges.

KAREN

How do students connect now?

MARTIN

They look for recognition memes of themselves in cyber space.

KAREN

What does that mean?

MARTIN

(Lights go black. A spotlight (as square as possible) shines on an audience member DC in the house. Clicking sounds from a key board play on the left side of the house.)

A kid sits alone and watches a You Tube video. It triggers a basal emotional reaction. In a heightened state of arousal she posts a reply and then waits. The anticipation of the response is what's so seductive. Any reply -

(MARTIN directs his comment to the audience member who is lit up.)

Would you please!

(Back to talking with KAREN. The keyboard clicking stops and the lights go back up.)

Any reply to her post is received as an affirmation or as proof that the idiot on the other end of the keyboard must have misunderstood. Or worse, she thinks she knows something new about the content of the video.

KAREN

That's a pretty bleak assessment of your students' perception of school and their agency in the world.

MARTIN

It's true of something. There's something going on.

KAREN

What about the parents? Do they care about what happens in schools?

MARTIN

Oh they care, about math scores.

CARLY

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN.)

I don't think he'd want you to investigate his search histories too closely...

OFFICER DYLAN

(OFFICER DYLAN stands knocking a few items off the desk and shouts.)

Christ! Kids have to know their numbers don't they? I can't tell you how many times some kid at a convenience store gave me the wrong change because he couldn't put 2 and 2 together.

(OFFICER DYLAN pours himself a large shot of Jameson's and slams it down. He pours another shot.)

(He repeats the line 3 times. The line is a recording OS and it sounds as if it is emanating from a police radio.)

Sunshine, I don't know how you stand listening to these whiners all day long.

KAREN

(KAREN clenches and unclenches a fist in rhythm with the police radio stutters.)

MARTIN

And I'm supposed to feel shame because I'm not in the teachers' classrooms all the time to supervise them into being better math instructors. I'm told by the district, to be good, I should be an instructional leader. Hard to do when I spend most of my day soothing bruised egos and trying to keep the peace. And that's just the staff.

KAREN

It must feel disconcerting sometimes to worry about the ways the school operates as a holding tank for the kids.

MARTIN

The scary part? We're not really talking about where the anesthetization is coming from or why we're losing them.

KAREN

My father was a cop and he dealt with a lot of troubled kids after they were pushed out of school. The connections you make with your students, finding some shared purpose is very important.

OFFICER DYLAN

I sure did.

(Sounds of car tires driving on wet streets emanates from the back of the house.)

MARTIN

You used the word pushed. Who is it, exactly, that pushes them out? I'm not sure you understand what I said. The bodies are in the desks. They're just not present. So your dad was a cop? That explains a few things.

KAREN

What exactly do you think the fact that my father was a police officer explains?

MARTIN

If that's not a breeding ground for little psychiatrists, I don't know what is!

CARLY

A Clever Baby.

OFFICER DYLAN

And don't forget
Daddy liked to
drink.

OFFICER DYLAN

(OFFICER DYLAN crouches next to KAREN. He
kisses her on the neck as the
tire sounds fade away.)

KAREN

(KAREN adjusts her skirt.)

MARTIN

You've never disclosed something personal before. We've spent hours and hours in here together and I don't really know a thing about you. Don't you find that odd?

(OFFICER DYLAN tries to get CARLY to put on
her hoodie.)

(MARTIN smirks.)

But now I know when you get pissed off, you put a little shine on the words you use. Dad becomes father. Cop becomes police officer. Is that to create distance or to demonstrate how clever you are? I think I like playing the analyst.

KAREN

(KAREN mumbles something quietly under her breath.)

MARTIN

Pardon?

KAREN

Maybe you'd feel more comfortable in my chair?

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to MARTIN. Said as he's tying CARLY's hoodie tight.)

Maybe Carly can slip that costume on for you in your next dream.

CARLY

(CARLY rips the hoodie off her head.)

Jerk.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to CARLY)

Careful princess mopey.

MARTIN

My apologies if I crossed a line.

KAREN

Earlier I sensed the issue with Marcus and Mr. Jeffries was really worrying you. The image you used was the looming carnival. Maybe we should spend some time on that in the last part of our session?

MARTIN

Nobody enjoys looking at the bearded lady.

KAREN

Like Marcus?

MARTIN

(Walks over and picks up a photo of KAREN's partner off her desk.)

I wouldn't have pegged you for someone who was so judgmental.

KAREN

Earlier you asked, "What should Marcus expect when he showed up at school in sequins?"

MARTIN

Christ. I know what you're thinking.

KAREN

Tell me.

MARTIN

You think me not wanting Marcus to show up at school covered in glitter is evidence that I'm uncomfortable with the way he is...

KAREN

Is it?

MARTIN

My daughter tells me that on Facebook there are 58 gender options. Agender. Cis Male. Two-spirit. Bigender. Pangender. Gender queer. Trans Person--

KAREN

It's obvious you know a lot of the terms.

CARLY

Dad slapped the hell out of Marty one day when he caught him in mom's heels. He was 7 years old. He wet himself on the new area rug, then Dad took off his belt.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to CARLY)

Do you know how many trannies I had to scrape off the street?
Bloodied to a pulp. No father wants his daughter to experience
that kind of --

CARLY

You mean, son. Did you know that Karen--

OFFICER DYLAN

Finish that sentence and I'll bury you, again.

CARLY

Yes, it's a complete mystery why Karen became an analyst...

(CARLY tries to grab OFFICER DYLAN. He gets
away.)

MARTIN

The point is, my daughter seems to think that her generation has
solved the great gender binary equation.

KAREN

And you think they haven't?

(OFFICER DYLAN and CARLY begin to move
around and play cat and mouse. CARLY is the
cat and OFFICER DYLAN is the mouse.)

MARTIN

Just last week I had a parent storm into my office to tell me
she wouldn't stand for her son going to a school that tried to
convert him with subliminal advertising. ROY G. BIV.

KAREN

ROY. G. BIV?

MARTIN

The grade 10 science teacher ran some light refraction
experiments. She posted the students' diagrams on the bulletin
board outside her classroom. Still nothing? Red. Orange. Yellow.

KAREN

Roy.

MARTIN

You bet. The work of the Secret Rainbow Society.

KAREN

But it was the parent, was it not, who made the ridiculous complaint?

MARTIN

Yes, but there's no way her kid grows up and clicks the box that says gender fluid.

KAREN

But your school is doing some in-servicing on gender issues. In fact you mentioned that you recently learned the term cisgender. Can you imagine this boy, this parent's son, having a similar learning experience?

(CARLY catches OFFICER DYLAN DR and drags him DL.)

MARTIN

Last Friday. 3:45. The witching hour in high schools. The secretary runs in shrieking that I've got to get up to the third floor bathrooms. And the way she's looking at me...

KAREN

What happens next?

(CARLY pushes OFFICER DYLAN to the ground.)

(Soft sounds of something moving above and below the surface of water are heard close to the feet of the audience.)

MARTIN

I check my email. Of course I go ripping up to the third floor as fast as my legs will take me.

KAREN

What do you see when you get there?

MARTIN

(CARLY sits on OFFICER DYLAN's chest, facing him, and covers his mouth while he struggles.)

Two seniors have a junior pinned to the floor so their buddy can urinate all over him. The kid who's pinned, his pants are around his ankles. And one the three apes who assaulted him wrote... Fag Queen on his right thigh in magic marker.

KAREN

That must have been a very painful thing to witness.

MARTIN

It took everything in me not to beat the shit out of him.

CARLY

(Imitating OFFICER DYLAN.)

He just lied there, covered in piss, wasn't fighting or anything?

(OFFICER DYLAN stops struggling.)

KAREN

Go on.

MARTIN

So yes, the kids wield a whole new gender vocabulary but I've seen first-hand the way some of these well-dressed monsters react when confronted by an outlier.

KAREN

The language you used today to describe some of your students is stark.

MARTIN

That's what you take from the story I just told you? My words are too potent?

KAREN

You referred to these boys as apes, monsters.

(CARLY gets off OFFICER DYLAN.)

MARTIN

You think I'm losing--

KAREN

Further, you said it was hard for you in the bathroom to control your impulse--

OFFICER DYLAN

(Looking at KAREN.)

She's seduced by the edges of people. That's why the misfits are so drawn to her.

KAREN

It must have scared you that your anger--

MARTIN

Want a body, download one. Due process dragging you down, don't think, Tweet your vendettas--

KAREN

Why was the incident in the bathroom shameful for you?

MARTIN

For me?

KAREN

What was it that you witnessed in that bathroom that was shameful?

MARTIN

(MARTIN puts his head down and leans on his hands.)

He just lied there. There was no screaming or banging when I came up the stairs. He just lied there and let some kid piss all over him. And I thought, how exactly is he going to tell his father what happened?

KAREN

Does it remind you of something you had to tell your father?

MARTIN

I didn't tell him. He saw.

CARLY

(CARLY goes and sits by MARTIN on the couch.)

KAREN

What did he see?

MARTIN

(MARTIN gets up and moves DC.)

My mother, she loved to take pictures. There were pictures of Carly and I on every bloody wall of the house. I was so embarrassed when my buddies came over.

KAREN

Because there were so many pictures of you?

MARTIN

No, they were really terrible photos. We're talking out of focus, the framing was usually way off, and I'd say over half of them featured one of my mother's fingers.

CARLY

(Joins MARTIN DC.)

I can't remember her without her camera in her hand anymore.

(Directed to MARTIN.)

Do you think she could see us differently through a lens?

KAREN

She was no Ansel Adams.

MARTIN

No definitely not.

KAREN

Was your dad in many of the photos?

MARTIN

The old man hated having his picture taken... he said my mother spent too much time curating memories instead of making them.

KAREN

Do you agree with his assessment?

(CARLY walks back towards the old desk.)

MARTIN

If it wasn't for my mother, it would have been as if Carly never existed.

CARLY

Dad made sure I died over and over again in that house.

KAREN

Can we go back to the connection you started to make between your mother's photos and what happened in the bathroom at school?

MARTIN

Mom attended every hockey game I ever played. I'm sure she had a snapshot, albeit a blurry one, of every check, goal, and penalty minute. One year, we actually made it to the city finals.

KAREN

How old were you?

MARTIN

(MARTIN heads back to the couch.)

Playing bantam, so maybe 14. She was so excited. She made Dad stop at the drug store on the way to the rink to pick up a few extra rolls of film.

(Sounds of skates scraping the ice come from the right side of the house and move like a wave to the left side of the house.)

CARLY

She loved to watch Marty skate. She said he looked free when he was on the ice.

MARTIN

It's the third period, the game is tied with a few minutes left on the clock. By some miracle, I cherry pick the puck from the other team's defenseman and head out on a breakaway. Out of nowhere

(3 loud crashes of a body into the boards in a hockey game come from 3 different parts of the theatre.)

I'm hit, hard. I'm mean ass over teakettle and then land in a heap in the corner. My head is swimming, but I can hear the old man. "Jesus Christ, Marty! Keep your head up!" He doesn't talk to me the whole ride home. Pulls into the driveway, puts it in park, turns to me and says, "A real fucking embarrassment. You don't let anybody lay you out like that and get away with it..." And then, snap...

KAREN

What made the sound Martin?

MARTIN

Mom's camera.

CARLY

(CARLY touches the side of her face.)

And then her...

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

Honey, I guess I wasn't so bad after all.

KAREN

What happened next?

CARLY

Mom's sister took her to the hospital.

MARTIN

I quit playing hockey. And no one ever spoke of it again.

KAREN

I'm so sorry th-

MARTIN

I wanted to hit him.

KAREN

Your father?

MARTIN

Marcus. Am I like him?

KAREN

It was Marcus who was assaulted in the bathroom?

MARTIN

Yes. No. I mean yes, it was Marcus who was in the bathroom. But do you think I'm like my father?

KAREN

I think what happened in the bathroom exhumed the memory of the interaction between you and your father after the game. But you made a different choice than your father did. You suppressed the impulse to take your anger out on the boys.

(CARLY gestures that she's going to grab
OFFICER DYLAN again and he flinches.)

MARTIN

The incident with Marcus in the bathroom, he's failing Jeffries class, did I tell you that? I'm bleeding from the edges when I'm at school.

OFFICER DYLAN

A lot of responsibility darlin. A school's an awfully large echo chamber for the boss's neuroses.

CARLY

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

He won't let himself get in trouble. Whatever it takes to avoid the sound of mom crying.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

Maybe, but she's never been all that good at seeing around corners.

KAREN

(KAREN looks at her watch.)

MARTIN

It's over?

KAREN

Yes.

KAREN

(KAREN gets up and walks towards the door. She waits there expecting MARTIN to follow. She holds her notebook and her pen across her chest.)

MARTIN

(After 10 or 15 seconds MARTIN gets up and follows KAREN to the door. They stand facing each other for a long time.)

(OFFICER DYLAN goes to sit on the couch and CARLY takes KAREN's chair.)

KAREN

(KAREN moves her notebook to her side.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN taps KAREN's forehead with his finger.)

All our houses are haunted right?

OFFICER DYLAN

(Visibly distraught)

MARTIN

(MARTIN opens the door and leaves.)

CARLY

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

Did any of your buddies on the force know?

KAREN

Times up.

(KAREN's notebook slips from her hand and drops to the floor.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 2

Scene 1

"Session 7"

SETTING: The scene is set in Karen's office. It takes place one week from MARTIN and KAREN's last session.

AT RISE: The lights ebb from very low to black. The lighting should pulse like deep sleep breathing. At first, we barely make out that KAREN is asleep on the couch. Her notebook looks as if it slipped out of her hands when she fell asleep. OFFICER DYLAN sits on one end of the couch and watches her.

OFFICER DYLAN

(OFFICER DYLAN watches her for at least 2 minutes. Then he moves part of the blanket that covers KAREN's legs and begins to touch her leg. Lights go black. OFFICER DYLAN exits the stage.)

(There is a loud bang at KAREN's office door.)

KAREN

(KAREN wakes up with a start.)

I can't...

(KAREN knocks over some books as she gropes for the light switch. Lights up. KAREN unlocks and opens the door.)

MARTIN

Did I get my dates confused? We did have an appointment scheduled for today—

KAREN

(KAREN adjusts her clothes and pulls her hair back in a ponytail.)

Yes, yes, of course. Please come in.

MARTIN

(MARTIN scans the room.)

Do you need to reschedule?

KAREN

(KAREN quickly straightens up the couch and picks up her notebook.)

CONNIE

(The lights fade on stage, almost to black. Then the house lights flicker. CONNIE stands up from her seat in the audience, approximately middle row, middle seat. There's a wide spotlight on her. CONNIE directs her comments and questions to a few of the audience members who sit near her.)

Did Officer Dylan tell you to stay where you are?

(CONNIE starts to move past the audience members in her row towards the aisle. CONNIE takes three or four pictures [with the flash on] of various audience members.)

Was my Marty supposed to help her? Were you?

(CONNIE walks slowly backwards towards the stage and snaps a few pictures of a few more audience members. The lights flicker and light up KAREN's office.)

KAREN

No, really, sit down.

CONNIE

(CONNIE sits down somewhere in the aisle.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN folds the throw blanket and then sits on the couch.)

A fellow workaholic. Although I can't say that I've ever slept in my office.

KAREN

I'm sorry I kept you waiting at the door.

MARTIN

(MARTIN continues to straighten items on the couch as he tells the story.)

There's a design student in Toronto, Raharjo I think, who just invented a hammock you can clamp under your desk. Their motto is "A nap in a snap." Get yourself one of those mini fridges and you never have to leave the office.

(A constellation of coffee machine sounds percolate across the theatre. Drips, hisses, pours etc. Wisps of "steam" begin to escape from 5 different locations in the house.)

Voluntary confinement. I would find it tough to work at home. I mean, hard to free myself from what happens in here when just 10 feet away you toast your morning bagel.

KAREN

That's a very specific image.

MARTIN

I'm not blind.

KAREN

How do you know that?

MARTIN

That I'm not blind?

KAREN

No, that on the other side of that wall is the kitchen.

MARTIN

On my way, I stop and grab a coffee. You never know how long the lineups will be, so sometimes I get here early. I sit in my car and wait until 9, and while I wait, sometimes I catch a glimpse of your morning routine.

KAREN

What do you mean by that Martin?

MARTIN

Coffee with cream, toasted bagel, and a little yogurt with fruit.

KAREN

You said routine. How many times have you watched me before an appointment?

CONNIE

(Directed to KAREN)

Your morning routines ring the school bells for him.

MARTIN

Watch you? I don't get here early to gawk at you from the street. I told you that sometimes the café line moves a little faster so I have to sit out there and wait. God knows you wouldn't be ready for me if I knocked on the door 5 minutes early.

KAREN

It makes me uncomfortable that you're watching me from—

MARTIN

Don't flatter yourself. I spend most of the time swimming through an overflowing email inbox, not gazing at you through the window.

KAREN

My suggestion is that you get here on time.

MARTIN

I can't control—

KAREN

(Forcefully)

You lead a school with a timetable and bells. I'm sure you can figure it out.

(The coffee sounds stop.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN pours himself a glass of water.)

Would you like me to pour you a glass? From the looks of things, you didn't have time for coffee this morning.

KAREN

You're working very hard to facilitate some kind of morning ritual with me, why?

MARTIN

Next time I'll get here at 8:59, relax.

KAREN

You told me that you've seen me eat breakfast from the street on more than one occasion. I think it bothered you that we didn't have coffee together this morning.

MARTIN

I just offered to pour you a glass of water to be polite.

KAREN

When I'm in my kitchen, you're in your car. That didn't happen this morning because I worked late and fell asleep in my office. And I think it bothers you that it didn't work out that way today.

MARTIN

Why don't you have coffee with your partner in the morning?

KAREN

Were there any other disruptions to your routines this week?

MARTIN

I don't like it when you avoid my questions.

KAREN

You told me that one of the reasons you started therapy was because you didn't have anyone to talk to that you could trust. I don't entertain many personal questions because it can muddy the waters, but more importantly, this time is for—

MARTIN

The thing with Jeffries approached the red zone.

KAREN

The red zone?

MARTIN

The kid—

KAREN

Marcus?

MARTIN

He told his pain in the ass social worker that the VP knew about the texts, the lunches and he didn't do anything about it. Then she has the gall to call the board office and demand to speak to the superintendent.

KAREN

I thought it was a few texts?

MARTIN

I told you this kid has mental health issues. It was.

KAREN

How do you know?

MARTIN

Well, for one thing, I asked Jeffries about the lunch dates Marcus gave the VP. The dates and times don't line up. They conflict with Jeffries' hall supervision duties.

KAREN

Last week you told me that Marcus was assaulted in the bathroom. While dealing with a traumatic incident, it's quite conceivable that he mixed up the dates, is it not?

MARTIN

His story is full of holes and if this gets any traction outside my office, this teacher is ruined.

KAREN

In loco parentis.

MARTIN

In our field, you don't come back from this kind of false accusation. I suspend Jeffries during an investigation, and the doubts about him will fester in peoples' minds forever.

KAREN

And if he did cross the line with Marcus - the texts, the lunches, it's classic grooming behavior. And that makes--

MARTIN

What? It makes me what?

KAREN

You tell me.

MARTIN

At minimum, negligent.

KAREN

Worst case?

MARTIN

Negligent is the cardinal sin and, unfortunately, the VP's missteps are now mine too.

CONNIE

(CONNIE gets up and moves towards the stage. She is now about 4 rows back.)

But he told you about this boy coming forward months ago. You really need to do a better job keeping your inbox in order.

KAREN

Meet with your superintendent and tell him everything, what your VP told you, when he told you, and what Jeffries said. You already started your preliminary investigation. You need to let the superintendent know.

MARTIN

Very directive Karen. How unlike you.

KAREN

It's in your control—

MARTIN

You're upset about the fact that I have doubts about Marcus's story even though this is supposed to be a safe space to talk about my feelings. Right? Isn't this some sort of therapeutic sin?

KAREN

I'm worried that you can't see how damaging this issue could be for you personally and professionally.

MARTIN

Oh, I can hear the carnival barker.

KAREN

Since our last session, I've been thinking—

MARTIN

I like hearing that you think about me when I'm not here.

CONNIE

(Directed to an audience member who sits near to where she stands.)

He's honest with her in a way he never was with me. A real connection...

KAREN

Tell me why.

MARTIN

I'm not sure I should say... Most nights I have trouble falling asleep. I've fooled around with Ambian, enjoyed a few cocktails before bed, enjoyed a few cocktails with Ambian. But the one thing that seems to do the trick...

KAREN

Is what?

(The soft sounds of pages turning come from above the audiences head.)

(Long pause)

MARTIN

A daydream. You're there and I seem to have some control over the play button.

KAREN

Can you describe the backdrop?

MARTIN

(MARTIN fidgets for a minute.)

We're out together. There's a moment where you lean against my shoulder. You smile at me and then I feel you take my hand.

KAREN

Where is the daydream?

MARTIN

Where do I think of you? Everywhere. At my desk, as I pour my first cup of coffee in the morning, in bed.

KAREN

Where are we when I lean on your shoulder? The park, at a restaurant?

MARTIN

I'm not sure. I think...

KAREN

What happens the moment before we touch? You said you control the play button...

CONNIE

(CONNIE begins to pace up and down the aisle.)

(The sounds of the turning pages stop.)

MARTIN

I, I...pull a book off the shelf. You tell me you spent years looking for this particular edition. You're so pleased I found

it for you that you take my hand. Please, this is more than a little embarrassing.

KAREN

In our dreams we are free to long for lost objects.

MARTIN

You think I lost something, and you have it?

KAREN

Last week, you made a very powerful connection between the image of Marcus after the assault and the memory of what happened after your hockey game.

MARTIN

My father was not a perfect man but the house functioned after Carly. I know it's your job to be obsessed with how parents fuck up their kids' lives... But it was a blessing he wouldn't let her lie in bed and rot.

CONNIE

(From approximately row 2 in the aisle facing the audience)

I couldn't hear her poems outside of my room. You understand, don't you?

KAREN

You said you felt anger when you saw Marcus lying on bathroom floor.

CONNIE

(Touching her face)

You always had such trouble with forgiveness.

MARTIN

That's rich. No, my anger comes from the fact that three of my students assaulted another student, so am I missing something here?

KAREN

What do you think Marcus needed the most after the assault?

MARTIN

Justice.

KAREN

After you described what happened, you wondered how Marcus was going to bring himself to tell his father. I think the phantasy of you and I in the bookstore reveals something to you about what he needed.

MARTIN

In my dream with you...I feel aroused. There are things I'd like to do with you, to you...

KAREN

Both of you, lying in heaps. Marcus on the bathroom floor, you on the ice.

MARTIN

There is nothing arousing about blood and piss mingling on the bathroom floor.

CONNIE

Watch your tone Martin. I didn't raise you-

MARTIN

(MARTIN looks towards CONNIE, gets up and walks DR to the edge of the stage.)

But you didn't raise- You're upset that I raised this issue, my feelings for you.

KAREN

I'm not upset with you at all. When you described the boys who assaulted Marcus in the bathroom you used the word monster. Do you know what the origin of the word monster is?

MARTIN

I can't say that I do. But please, let's have a grammar lesson. Why should we talk about the fact that I just told you I was attracted to you?

KAREN

(KAREN clears her throat.)

Monere. It's Latin. It means to warn.

MARTIN

Is this your way of telling me my daydream makes you uncomfortable?

(MARTIN goes back to the coffee table and pours a glass of water. MARTIN walks it over to KAREN and holds it out to her. KAREN doesn't take the glass. MARTIN places the glass of water on top of her notebook that sits on the side table beside her chair.)

CARLY

(CARLY stands up approximately 10 rows back in the audience.)

If you don't try this time Marty, you're going to make mom very upset with you.

MARTIN

(MARTIN goes and sits on the couch.)

KAREN

I wonder if your visceral reaction to Marcus's assault is connected to the memories you have of the aftermath of the hockey game?

CONNIE

I don't feel well today.

(Directed to an audience member)

Would you help me find the waiting room?

CARLY

(CARLY yells at the audience member who is with CONNIE. CARLY yells from the aisle, halfway to the stage.)

Leave her be!

(CARLY takes CONNIE's arm and leads her towards the stage.)

CONNIE

(Directed to CARLY, and points at MARTIN.)

He won't stop this business with your father.

CARLY

(Directed to an audience member in the fourth row, with a raised voice)

You can't let her just wander off like this.

(Directed at CONNIE)

Dad can take care of himself.

CONNIE

I miss you baby.

CARLY

I know. I'm so sorry Mom.

(CARLY leads her RC to the stage and helps CONNIE lie down on the couch beside MARTIN.)

KAREN

Your daydream doesn't make me uncomfortable. Phantasies are laced with wishes for what we needed and didn't get as children.

MARTIN

I got what I needed. My parents put a roof over my head, food on the table, helped with university. And they did all of that even after they lost my sister.

KAREN

After the hockey game, did you get what you needed?

MARTIN

That's unfair.

KAREN

After the game, did you get what you wanted?

MARTIN

No.

KAREN

What did you want?

MARTIN

I don't even know why I come here. You make me feel like shit! All these questions. Do you even care that what we say in here lives another life after I leave?

KAREN

(Recording from OS. KAREN mouths the words on stage. The recording sounds as if it's coming from a colour commentator at a hockey game.)

I care very much. Your dreams, phantasies, can help us figure out what lies behind some of your misplaced expressions of contempt and adoration in relation to your parents.

MARTIN

I wanted...

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

He couldn't give you what he didn't have honey. And to keep demanding something of someone when they don't have it to give, is just mean spirited.

MARTIN

Maybe he could have been less of an asshole at my games. He shouted his criticism of the play across the rink in front the other players and parents. I know to keep my head up.

KAREN

The thing you wanted most was for your father to refrain from yelling at you to keep your head up during a game?

MARTIN

That would have been a marvelous start.

KAREN

You said that your parents were able to meet your physical needs after Carly died, but what about--

MARTIN

Honestly. Not everyone needs to hold hands around the dinner table in order to function properly as an adult.

KAREN

What did happen around your dinner table?

MARTIN

(Softening)

After Carly died, we swallowed a lot of takeout in between awkward silences.

KAREN

You were just 12 years old. The experience of losing your sister impacted you in ways you have yet to understand.

MARTIN

That I won't...

CONNIE

(Directed to CARLY)

(CARLY pulls her sleeves down as far as they will go.)

When you were a little girl at school, oh. You exposed your wounds so publicly.

(Sounds of various thicknesses of ice cracking and breaking criss-cross the theatre.)

Other children seemed to be alright after they cried, but you baby, every one, everything left a scar. And at 13, you started to do their work for them.

CARLY

That's why daddy hated the cutting so much. Because I controlled how much I bled.

MARTIN

The night after Carly's funeral, Dad tore around the house and ripped every photograph of Carly off the wall. Broken glass and busted frames everywhere.

KAREN

That must have been extremely painful to watch.

MARTIN

What was worse was watching mom trail after him.

CONNIE

(CONNIE takes out a folded photograph and shows CARLY.)

You remember this one, honey? Look how lovely you were in Nana's fascinators. You said the feathers and lace reminded you of the beautiful images in your poems.

(CONNIE lifts up the camera to take a picture of CARLY.)

CARLY

(Directed at CONNIE)

(CARLY pushes the camera away from her face. The cracks diminish and fade away.)

Look at me, Mom.

CONNIE

From the time you were born, I was terrified you were going to disappear. For hours each night,

(CARLY is upset and begins to move towards UC. CONNIE follows.)

I'd watch you in your crib to make sure you wouldn't leave me. What did I miss baby?

(CONNIE grabs CARLY's hand.)

CARLY

It's not your fault.

MARTIN

I watched her follow him and gather what was left of us...I've never told anyone this, but for long time I hated her.

KAREN

For leaving you?

MARTIN

For leaving me to spend the rest of their lives in mourning.

CARLY

(CARLY rips her hand away from CONNIE Forcefully. Directed to MARTIN.)

Tell them I changed my mind!

CONNIE

What?

CARLY

(Directed at MARTIN)

Tell mom right now that I tried to stop.

CONNIE

What does that mean? What is she talking about Marty?

KAREN

(Directed to Martin)

This is upsetting for you, should we stop for a minute?

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

That's right. You're the one who's delusional.

MARTIN

Don't be ridiculous.

CONNIE

Look at me son. What does she mean, she changed her mind?

KAREN

You've never told me how she died..

MARTIN

I'm not--

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

If you don't tell them...Please... Marty! I don't want to play my part anymore.

KAREN

She was 16...

MARTY

She was 16... and my parents were out of town.

KAREN

Where were your parents?

MARTIN

Visiting my dad's sister at the cottage. He told me they wanted a weekend away for their anniversary, and that my sister was quite capable of looking after me and the house while they were gone.

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

CONNIE leaves CARLY and moves towards MARTIN. CARLY is anxious. She begins to repeat her last 3 gestures over and over again.)

I told him you weren't ready, that he should go, and I would stay. But he was so insistent. "Connie, if you want to be together for the next 15 years, you better make an effort."

MARTIN

I just, I didn't want them to go.

KAREN

But your mom and dad went away for the weekend despite your worries.

MARTIN

I never told them. The old man worked 60 hours a week. He deserved a break, and he loved going up to see his older sister. When he was around her, he really softened, and sometimes he carried some of that home. My grandmother died when my dad was just 9, so my Auntie Patty played a pretty big role in raising him. He loved her for it.

KAREN

What happened after they left?

(CARLY begins to slow her body movements down.)

MARTIN

Friday night was great. We watched movies, she made popcorn. But on Saturday, she slept the day away...A warning shot for one of Carly's-

(Carly freezes.)

CONNIE

Sad spells.

CARLY

(CARLY moves quickly to the very edge of UR. Directed to the audience)

You know the movie The Basketball Diaries? It's about a kid named Jim who's this really great basketball player. His life starts to tank because his best friend dies from leukemia and his coach is a pervy pedophile. Jim gets totally messed up by it all so he becomes a drug addict. Throughout the movie he does all this awful stuff on the street to get high. Robbery, assault. He even prostitutes himself. I know, I know, you think the film sounds a bit cliché but there's this one scene towards the end of the movie I can't get out of my head. The one where he shows up at his mom's place, really desperate for money. "Ma is that you? Ma, are you there?" You see her cry from the other side of the door... but she won't let him in...

(CARLY gestures to an audience member.)

And the killer moment, right before the cops show up..."Ma, please let me in, I'll be a good boy..." And you hold your breath because he almost charms her with his heroin soaked spell.

(CONNIE rushes over to CARLY and drags CARLY to UR.)

(CARLY forcefully yells.)

Your kid begs you to let him in, screams he's in terrible pain. Do you keep the door closed? Could you keep the chain on the door?

(Despondent. Slumps to the floor facing the left wing.)

My mom always opened the door.

(CONNIE hurries to pick up CARLY and tries to move her closer to MARTIN. She picks CARLY up. CARLY hangs in her arms like a rag doll facing CONNIE.)

MARTIN

I called my Auntie Patty's and asked to speak to mom. She passed the phone to dad and he tore a strip off me.

(Thumping techno music begins to play softly in the background.)

Wanted me to know that mom was having the time of her life, the way she used to be. She was playing cards, people were hanging off her every word. "Don't ruin this for her. If you tell her Carly's in one of her moods, she'll make me bring her home. Do you want that?"

(MARTIN's voice begins to quiver.)

Maybe if I was more insistent...

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

I didn't know you called...

CARLY

(Directed to CONNIE)

If Marty calls back, do you think I make it to prom or was I so messed up, I die no matter what?

CONNIE

(Directed to CARLY. They begin to dance. CARLY is still like a rag doll in CONNIE's arms.)

Of course baby, you go to prom.

MARTIN

I should have--

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

You, you could have called back. If I knew I would have--

MARTIN

If mom knew how bad she was, she would have rushed home...and--

(CARLY's body begins to stiffen and strengthen.)

KAREN

She may have made the same choice down the line.

MARTIN

No, no she wouldn't have.

KAREN

You can't know that for sure--

MARTIN

I do know, she changed her mind.

(CARLY breaks away from CONNIE.)

CARLY

Thank you Marty.

(The smell of peppermint begins to waft into the theatre.)

KAREN

We can't read people's minds, or predict the future no matter how desperately we want to give the ones we love what they need.

MARTIN

She said it.

KAREN

That she—

CARLY

I wanted to come back...

KAREN

When did she say it?

MARTIN

She got out of bed around supper time. I offered to make her some toast and a -

CARLY

Cup of peppermint tea.

MARTIN

She didn't respond, so I asked if I should call mom...

(CARLY climbs on top of the old wooden desk.)

KAREN

You were worried about her.

MARTIN

From the top of the stairs—

CONNIE

(Connie rushes over to CARLY. CARLY moves her toes to the edge of the desk and she looks excited and a bit wobbly.)

Will you please get down from there?

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

I yelled at you to mind your own business. God, you must have been relieved when the paramedics hauled me off to the morgue.

CONNIE

Carly, how can you say such things?

MARTIN

Nobody would dare say it out loud in front of my mother... but her spells turned our family into a crisis response team. And outsiders were never allowed to cover your shift.

CONNIE

All the doctors wanted to do was pump her full of pills. Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac, Celexa...

(Directed to CARLY)

Baby, you were so lethargic. You said the pills made it hard to hear your poets.

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN. A metronome begins to tick very slowly at first. With each tick sound comes from a different area of the theatre. The tempo increases and decreases.)

In my waking dreams I'm one of a thousand dolls on display at the toy store. Children slink by to examine my frilly dress and accessories. They want to cut my synthetic hair while their mothers aren't looking but the plastic window that seals this cardboard crypt shatters their candied fingers. Behind it, the minutes wash in like days as all the other dolls get picked. But even if by some miracle I do make it out, it's impossible to love a dead-eyed girl.

MARTIN

I heard her run a bath and I remember feeling relieved, like it was a good sign that she was out of bed.

MARTIN

(Directed to KAREN)

But when I heard something heavy hit the bathroom floor, I felt nauseous. I couldn't remember how long she'd been in there... A few feet from the door I called out to her. "Come on, I have to use the bathroom. When are you going to be done in there?"... But nothing... I could feel each bead of sweat roll down my back. I yelled again and banged on the door, "Carly you better say something or else I'm coming in!"

(The lights begin to fade almost to black. Amidst a myriad of camera flashes, CARLY leaps of the desk into the arms of a very strong stagehand who is completely covered in a black morph suit. CARLY is caught by the stagehand and she is lit in such a way that she appears as if she is suspended in mid-air.)

MARTIN

(Directed to KAREN)

I placed my hand on the doorknob. "Carly?"

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

It's taking too long.

MARTIN

I turned the doorknob...

KAREN

(Lights slowly come up. CARLY drops to the floor. KAREN begins to walk towards MARTIN.)

You need to say it out loud.

MARTIN

(MARTIN's hands begin to shake. He stands up and crosses his arms and paces around the office.)

Nobody can know. Nobody knows...

CONNIE

Say what you did.

MARTIN

Let's talk about this next week. I want to pick this up next week.

KAREN

I can see it's eating you alive. You're so close.

CONNIE

Everyone felt sorry for you, finding her like that, but now, it's plain as day, you knew what she was doing in there. She was in the bathroom for over two hours. Wait 'til your father finds out.

MARTIN

(MARTIN sits down on the couch. KAREN gets up and sits beside him. She reaches for MARTIN's hand.)

I opened the door and I could hear her mumble from behind the shower curtain. At first, I couldn't bring myself to move.

CARLY

(Crying)

I need you.

MARTIN

I pulled back the curtain to see a thousand crimson tentacles stretch into the water.

(Holding his head)

The sound, that sound she made when her mouth slipped below the surface...

CONNIE

(CONNIE runs over to MARTIN.)

Call the ambulance Marty!

CARLY

There's no time. To do this to him, even if I wanted another chance...

MARTIN

If I called the ambulance sooner, I could have saved her.

CARLY

(Directed to CONNIE)

I couldn't see my reflection anymore.

KAREN

(KAREN holds MARTIN as he sobs. The ticking of the metronome stops.)

You were 12 years old, traumatized by what you saw. A little boy, the witness.

(KAREN strokes MARTIN's hair.)

No one was there to save you.

MARTIN

(MARTIN pulls back.)

Do you think Carly had a choice in the end?

CONNIE

(CONNIE and the stagehand carry CARLY to a long steel table that is DL. CONNIE strokes CARLY's hair.)

KAREN

I work with a lot of people who suffer with depression. When the abyss opens and the pain becomes intolerable, they can be unreachable, even to those who love them the most.

CONNIE

We fled to the hospital after we got the call. And your father, God, he made such a ruckus in front of the nurses. They had to call security to get him to calm down.

MARTIN

It was months before my mother could look at me.

CONNIE

You have her eyes.

MARTIN

And for the next 18 years of their marriage, the ghosts who used to be my parents mined their regrets for new ways to injure each other.

KAREN

They weren't able to function as parents after your sister passed.

MARTIN

A funeral reception that never ended. A way to keep Carly close to us...

KAREN

So the focus in the house before her death was on Carly's depression and even after she died, she continued to command all of their attention.

MARTIN

She needed them more than I did.

KAREN

But there must have been moments where you wanted their time, their undivided attention?

MARTIN

(A dial tone sound starts softly and then almost drowns MARTIN out at the end of this

passage. MARTIN gets louder as the dial tone gets louder.)

It took everything in them to get out of bed in the morning for the first 2 years after she died. And some days they couldn't even manage to do that. So no, I didn't spend a lot of time bitching and moaning that my mom and dad weren't able to catch a hockey game.

KAREN

Did you ever talk to your parents about what you witnessed, how you were dealing with the loss of your sister?

MARTIN

Once with the old man. If you can call it talking. We were raking leaves in the backyard. This is about 5 months after the funeral. Out of the blue he turns to me and says, "If you ever tell your mother you called that afternoon, I'll snap your neck. She'd never forgive herself." Her-self. The bastard says nothing about the fact that when he picked up the phone that day, he told me not to bother her.

(The dial tone stops. MARTIN yells.)

He's the fucking coward!

KAREN

Did you ever tell your mom you called for her that afternoon?

MARTIN

(Looks down, shakes his head no.)

CONNIE

I wish you had, son.

KAREN

Have you told anyone about how the events unfolded?

MARTIN

No. Not how I told you.

KAREN

You've been silently holding on to this guilt all these years.

MARTIN

My debt to Carly.

KAREN

That's too heavy a burden for a child to carry. You deserved to have an adult in your life who could help you process what happened to Carly and to you. We can love our parents and still be angry with them for the way they mistreated us as children.

MARTIN

Back to this...

KAREN

If a student in your school went through a similar experience...

MARTIN

That's diff-

KAREN

It's not. It's not different.

MARTIN

(The lights begin to flicker and the intermittent sound of bits of static - like the kind you used to hear when an old T.V. lost reception. There are 3 bursts of static.)

(MARTIN gets up and paces.)

The bell rings and in unison they forget their names...

MARTIN

The kids at my school are nothing like her. She- she read Emily Dickinson when she was just 11 years old. The truth of it? I knew that people in Carly's life reviled her. It sure wasn't

because they were ashamed to be happy in her presence, and it wasn't because she was irritated by their idiotic

(CONNIE climbs onto the metal table with CARLY. They both sit up facing MARTIN swinging their legs under the table.

(CARLY and CONNIE begin to laugh. At first quietly and then their laughter gets progressively boisterous. It builds to wild and uncontrollable by the end of the scene.)

suggestions on how to cultivate a stiff upper lip. No. The avoidance, their anxiety came from the realization that she was fucking right.

(Sounds of static end.)

KAREN

Right about what?

MARTIN

We live. We die. And most of us don't have the courage to go out on our own terms like she did. We slip away alone, attached to a morphine drip.

KAREN

But many people liv-

MARTIN

(MARTIN puts both hands through his hair.)

I swear if you--

KAREN

Carly did not want to die in a bathtub and have her younger brother find her like that. She killed herself in the throes of a depressive episode. It's dangerous to romanticize her decision or to ascribe meaning to her intent. She was a very sick girl.

MARTIN

I saved him from those boys in the bathroom...And he's going to say that I pushed that other boy. That it's all on his phone, and for what? For what?

KAREN

(Almost to herself)

You --

MARTIN

Lying there, covered in another kid's piss, with enough strength to hit record.

KAREN

Martin, please. We need--

MARTIN

(A recording plays of MARTIN yelling, "Will you stop laughing! Will you stop!" Each word emanates from a different part of the theatre.

(Silence.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 3

Scene 1

"Adrift"

SETTING: This dreamy looking scene is set on a cruise ship. CONNIE, CARLY and OFFICER DYLAN are on holidays. MARTIN has not seen KAREN in almost 5 weeks.

AT RISE: Sounds of waves wash in from the back to the front of the theatre. CARLY and OFFICER DYLAN are in swimsuits or other summer clothes playing a game of Blackjack. There is one empty chair at the table.

OFFICER DYLAN

Will he be in today?

CARLY

Do you think he's gone mad?

CONNIE

(CONNIE enters from SR carrying a tray of fancy umbrella drinks. She places them on the table. She takes one of the drinks off the tray and finishes the drink.)

A school principal?

OFFICER DYLAN

Respectable people are the most fun when pushed to the edge.

(Directed at CONNIE. OFFICER DYLAN touches her hair.)

Right love?

CONNIE

(CONNIE moves OFFICER DYLAN's hand away and goes down into the audience and invites one

audience member [A/M] to join them on stage.)

Surely you can help us figure this mess out for Marty. It's been so difficult to speak to him at school. So many interruptions.

CARLY

And that wife of his. She'll have her bags packed before the ink dries on the severance papers.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to A/M)

So what's the worst thing you've ever done behind closed doors sailor?

CARLY

(Directed to A/M)

Ignore him, like his conscience does. Does a video like this go viral?

A/M

(Improvised response)

OFFICER DYLAN

(Improvised response to A/M)

CONNIE

(Improvised response to A/M and/or OFFICER DYLAN)

CONNIE

Surely no other school will touch him. What will he do for money?

(Directed to A/M)

He can't deserve this? He was trying to save that young man from those bullies. Does he deserve this?

A/M

(Improvised response)

CARLY

(Improvised response)

CONNIE

(Improvised response)

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to A/M)

Dismissed sailor.

(OFFICER DYLAN escorts A/M off the stage.)

MARTIN

(Off stage, echo like)

I have to get something off my chest.

(OFFICER DYLAN, CARLY and CONNIE do not hear MARTIN.)

MARTIN

(Off stage.)

The truth is I really don't need your advice. In fact, it's making things worse. You show up when it's inconvenient and I-

CARLY

What if he could make the kid change his mind? Make him sick with guilt. Things only got heated because Marty was trying to help him.

MARTIN

(Off stage)

You want something, I know that. But I can't give you what you crave. I think it's for the best if you leave me alone.

(MARTIN's cell phone begins to ring.)

CONNIE

(CONNIE stands up abruptly. She can hear the phone ringing.)

MARTIN

(Off stage. Pleading.)

Leave me to figure this out with Karen. Mom? Mom?

KAREN

(Off stage. KAREN leaves MARTIN a voicemail.)

Hi Martin. It's Karen. We haven't met in a while and I'm just wondering how you're doing. If you could call me back and let me know that you're okay, I'd really appreciate it.

(CARLY and OFFICER DYLAN do not react to MARTIN's plea, the sound of the phone ringing or the voicemail. However, CONNIE paces, biting her fingernails as she listens to the voicemail. CONNIE chooses to ignore MARTIN.)

MARTIN

(Off stage. MARTIN is breathing heavily into the phone. Sounding distraught.)

At school there are rules. Mom?

CONNIE

He doesn't recognize the danger in this state.

(The sound of a phone that's off the hook beeps for 10-15 seconds.)

OFFICER DYLAN

(OFFICER DYLAN walks up to CARLY and taps her on the forehead with his finger.)

That kid Marcus is looking to burn down the school. He uploads a video of the school principal shoving one of his students into the bathroom wall; he'll have everybody in his life hanging off his every word.

CARLY

Then people will stop talking about what happened to him in the bathroom.

CONNIE

But Marty was just trying to help. After what those boys did!

OFFICER DYLAN

And your son's an idiot for putting his hands on a student. It's not right, and Marty's going to pay for it.

CARLY

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

That's rich.

OFFICER DYLAN

You can be a real little bitch, did you know that?

CONNIE

Officer, there's no need - Why don't I deal us another hand?

CARLY

Don't pacify this cretin.

CONNIE

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

Maybe your girl can help our Marty? Get him to calm down so he can think his way out of this mess.

OFFICER DYLAN

I hope she tosses him out on his ass. I knew he was going to give her trouble. The way he looks at her, like he could devour her.

(He points into the audience.)

You, ya you.

(OFFICER DYLAN goes into the audience to recruit one more audience member [A/M2].)

(Directed to A/M2)

I need you to get up there and tell these women that Marty deserves whatever comes his way, and he better leave my daughter out of it.

(OFFICER DYLAN escorts A/M2 up to the stage.)

CONNIE

(Directed to A/M2)

He can't help himself. It's his work, he has to make so many decisions in a day you know.

CARLY

(Directed to A/M2)

What should I tell Marty?

A/M2

(Improvised response)

CARLY

(Directed to A/M2)

(Improvised response)

OFFICER DYLAN

(Improvised response)

CARLY

I'll give him your message.

(CARLY escorts A/M2 off the stage.)

CONNIE

If he would just talk to me, I'm sure-

OFFICER DYLAN

(He looks at his cards, visibly displeased with his hand.)

And if he crosses the line, the living won't accept him as one of their own anymore. He'll be excommunicated, sentenced to live the rest of his days with the other castoffs who populate psych wards. A tad sadistic, girls, don't you think?

CONNIE

You're a vile man.

(Directed to CARLY)

There might be a way.

CARLY

How?

(OFFICER DYLAN taps the table to indicate he wants another card.)

CONNIE

(CONNIE deals OFFICER DYLAN another card.)

We make him turn strange whenever he feels shame for what those kids do to themselves or to him—For his own good.

CARLY

(CARLY looks at her cards, pleased with what she sees. She motions she'll stay with the cards she was dealt.)

It means we get Marty to understand that life in that school, for him, is the erosion.

(Shadows of large flying moths begin to slowly block out the light on stage.)

OFFICER DYLAN

What it means is that you're prepared to let the Id roam the playground unsupervised.

CONNIE

I won't let that place bury him.

OFFICER DYLAN

Or, you'll take him to the brink. And from then on, he'll hear only the witnesses to his life, the naughty ones like you who escaped their coffins.

CARLY

How could you possibly understand?

(CARLY shows her hand to OFFICER DYLAN to show him she won the hand.)

OFFICER DYLAN

All I'm saying little girl, is that it's dangerous to let some people go out for recess unsupervised.

(OFFICER DYLAN grabs CARLY, throws her over his shoulder and starts to carry her off stage while CONNIE looks on horrified.)

CARLY

(CARLY stretches her arm out towards CONNIE.)

CONNIE

(CONNIE is upset. She looks away and cleans up the table.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Scene 2

"Session 8"

SETTING:

The scene is set in Karen's office. It takes place approximately 5 weeks after their last session. KAREN has been worried because MARTIN has cancelled or not shown up for his last 4 appointments. MARTIN is dressed very casually and he's looking a little disheveled. He reorganizes the throw pillows on the couch.

KAREN

(KAREN picks up her notebook and writes something down.)

It's good to see you again. How've you been?

(MARTIN and KAREN stare at each other for a few minutes in silence.)

MARTIN

The new curtains are lovely...

KAREN

(KAREN stares at MARTIN intently for another three minutes waiting. She does not want to respond to the curtain comment.)

MARTIN

I tried something exciting 2 weeks ago.

KAREN

What did you try?

MARTIN

(MARTIN smirks.)

Marcus, that terrorist in training, threatened to upload a video of that small shove, unless I confirmed his fairy tale that Mr. Jeffries crossed the line with him.

(MARTIN leans back on the couch with his arms stretched out over the back of the couch.)

KAREN

How did you respond?

MARTIN

He thinks he can threaten me?

KAREN

What happened?

MARTIN

(While jamming his finger into the coffee table)

I told him that by the time he got back to homeroom, the video of those boys pissing all over him, could be sent to the entire student body with just one click. Then I made him sit there across from me for a while as I tapped the edge of my cell phone. Every minute or so I'd say, "Just one click." ...I let him go back to homeroom once his mascara started to run.

KAREN

(KAREN clears her throat. She is visibly shocked, but tries to hide it.)

Tell me more about why you chose to handle it this way.

MARTIN

We freed ourselves from old doctrines that constrain principal student relations.

KAREN

And you think he felt free in your office on Monday?

MARTIN

Such judgment in your voice.

KAREN

You showed Marcus that yet another adult in his life is willing to use their power to hurt him.

MARTIN

(MARTIN stands up.)

That's an allegation. But good for you. You actually spoke the truth in here for once.

KAREN

What happens next with Marcus?

MARTIN

We reached an understanding. I'm done talking about this case with you.

KAREN

You're being confrontational.

MARTIN

Empowered. I will endeavor to take an active role in the therapeutic process today.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Enters from UL)

KAREN

It's important for you to control what comes next—

MARTIN

Don't mirror what I say, I can't function in an echo chamber. Not here.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

I need you to get this guy out of here.

KAREN

Therapy is a relationship. In a relationship both parties have a chance to contribute to the dialogue and to shape--

MARTIN

No, no, no, Karen. Your patients speak so politely because they're terrified that if they don't', their masks of civility will peel away.

KAREN

And you leave your mask at home now?

CONNIE

(Enters from UR)

CARLY

(Enters from UL)

(CONNIE and CARLY meet LC.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN grins widely.)

Something like that.

KAREN

How's that been working for you?

(CONNIE and CARLY make 3 -5 frozen images of what's happening as MARTIN describes the meeting with the parent. Each time, either CARLY or CONNIE unfreezes first and makes a change or an adjustment to the other's image.)

MARTIN

Well last Wednesday, I met with a parent who wanted to lodge a complaint because his daughter's teacher gave her a B+. His princess has been an A student since the womb. So, obviously, the teacher wasn't challenging her enough, and so on, and so on. This gentleman is on Parent Council, so in the past, I would've spent hours servicing him, placating him. Hell, if he called the board office, I might've made that teacher apologize for the unlikely possibility that his darling Angela mastered only 81% of the learning outcomes over the term. How were the assignments weighted? Did you differentiate your instruction? Were the students required to set goals? Can you describe your assessment practices in three sentences or less? Did you watch all 13 of dear Angie's volleyball games to build a relationship with her? Good teachers build relationships you know. Fuck it. The fire alarm rings and this father would steal the wheelchairs from the special ed classroom if it would get him and his daughter out of the building faster.

KAREN

If you didn't placate him, what did you do?

OFFICER DYLAN

Christ sakes, for once in your life, could you turn your back on these sideshow attractions.

(OFFICER DYLAN yells at MARTIN, CONNIE and CARLY.)

Get out of here!

(CARLY and CONNIE begin to march in unison around KAREN's chair.)

MARTIN

(A bit embarrassed to say it out loud at first, and then proud.)

(A school bell rings and CARLY, CONNIE and OFFICER DYLAN, run to the long steel table DR and sit, furiously write, pass a paper to the next person in line, to the rhythm and sound of a photocopier making copies. (repeat in that order)

I told him we're not in the restaurant business. That studying and learning is hard work and it's not the teacher's goddamn job to serve entitled 10th graders the English curriculum in tasty, bite sized pieces. We're not fucking fine dining, we're a public school.

(MARTIN smiles)

It's the shortest meeting I've had with him all year.

KAREN

How would you characterize your behaviour at work over the last month?

MARTIN

Liberating.

KAREN

And your treatment of Marcus? Angela's father?

MARTIN

Honest.

KAREN

Martin I feel you--

MARTIN

For the first time in 20 years I haven't perseverated on what other people want to hear from me. You think you know something true about school because you spent so many hours as a little girl looking up at your teacher. My new approach is strange to you because your schoolgirl memories are staged in such a familiar scene.

(The photocopier stops and then OFFICER DYLAN stops, followed by CONNIE and then CARLY.)

CONNIE

(Directed at OFFICER DYLAN)

Maybe we took him too far.

OFFICER DYLAN

What did I tell you? He won't be able to notice the signs anymore.

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN. She stands close to CONNIE.)

You'll be fine. Won't you?

MARTIN

(Directed to CARLY)

Don't worry about me.

KAREN

Who are you talking to Martin?

MARTIN

(MARTIN is visibly anxious after being caught by KAREN. MARTIN gets up to avoid her gaze. CONNIE and CARLY mirror MARTIN's movements as he paces around the office.)

CONNIE

We called out to him for years.

MARTIN

(MARTIN begins to mirror CONNIE and CARLY's movements.)

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

Maybe we shouldn't talk in front of Karen. It'll cause a scene.

KAREN

Do you hear them often?

MARTIN

At first they were better behaved, but now, they appear when it suits them. At home it's fine, but it causes confusion when more than one person occupies the principal's chair.

KAREN

You're under a tremendous amount of stress--

CARLY

(Directed to KAREN)

Can he come back from this?

KAREN

We should meet twice next week, untangle what's happening in your mind--

MARTIN

They don't bother me all of the time.

KAREN

We have to talk about why you're hearing the voices--

CONNIE

It's not that complicated dear. After Carly died--Can you imagine such a young boy finding his sister sliced up in the tub like that? And you more than insinuated I was a bad mother, that all the focus was on Carly.

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

Blood in the water.

MARTIN

(Annoyed. Directed at CONNIE and KAREN. MARTIN stops mirroring.)

You know what's best for me now?

CONNIE

Let me take care of you. Find a way through this mess with the school together.

MARTIN

(Directed to CONNIE)

I can handle myself just fine. In fact, two weeks ago, I instituted an innovative disciplinary program.

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

That sounds wonderful, sweetheart.

(Directed to KAREN)

This is certainly progress. He's becoming bold, a real man of action. You've done good work, dear.

KAREN

Where did you go Martin?

MARTIN

(Apologetic. Directed to CONNIE and KAREN.)

Let's not get too excited. We have to hit an 8.9, at least, on the Richter Scale to get them to notice anything from the board office. And it'll hurt me a little because I had to take the leave.

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

When your bosses get wind you're talking to mom and me...you'll turn in to some mutant in a jar they gawk at during admin council meetings.

MARTIN

(Directed to CARLY)

Maybe it's time you took care of yourself. Stitch up your own wounds.

CARLY

You're escaping beyond reason.

MARTIN

(Directed to Carly)

They need to see what I'm capable of that's all.

CARLY

You're fooling yourself little brother. And take it from me, I've seen the edge and you're coming awfully close.

KAREN

(KAREN picks up her notebook, writes something down and puts it in her lap.)

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

Baby, she keeps the truth in her book.

MARTIN

(Directed to KAREN)

What does it say about me in there?

KAREN

I make note of things we might want to discuss during another session.

MARTIN

Specifically, what did you write about me today?

KAREN

Let's leave the notes for now.

MARTIN

(Recording from OS. Sounds like a record stuck in a scratch.)

Show me. Show. Me. Show me. Show. Me. Show me. Show. Me.

CONNIE

If the words are about him, he has every right to see what's in there. You see, she's hiding something.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to CONNIE)

What are you up to?

KAREN

I'm not comfortable giving you my notebook. It contains personal information about other patients.

MARTIN

I only want to look at my pages. You have my word.

KAREN

I don't typically-

MARTIN

So suspicious. Growing up with a cop for a dad must have made it really tough to trust people. Always coming home smelling like the worst human beings were capable of.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

He's trying to get in your head.

KAREN

(A bit harsh)

I understand that you want me to give you my notebook.

MARTIN

Maybe I should...

(MARTIN finishes the sentence using part of a fragment or a sentence that A/M2 delivered when asked, What would you tell Marty?)

KAREN

(Directed to MARTIN)

With your permission, I'd like to consult with a colleague to see if we can stabilize-

CONNIE

(Directed to KAREN)

The doctors will drown him in prescriptions!

(Directed to MARTIN)

Once the superintendent hears about all your wonderful initiatives and how you're handling the parents, the questions will stop. They won't even notice-

(The sound of bees buzzing is concentrated above different sections of the audience for a few seconds at a time.)

CARLY

(Directed to CONNIE)

Don't you do that to him.

CONNIE

Take care of him?

CARLY

Lie to him. He isn't well. His marriage is over-

CONNIE

Do you remember when she got drunk that Christmas Eve and called her ex-husband? He looked out the window until New Year's. It almost killed him. Better off without her I'd say.

CARLY

(Directed to MARTIN)

She'll cheat you out of the opportunity to get well.

CONNIE

(Directed to CARLY)

Come now love. It's not like you were around to look out for your younger brother.

CARLY

You'd sacrifice his chance to stay with the living, and for what?

CONNIE

I love him.

CARLY

Your kind of bruises always took the longest to heal.

MARTIN

(He raises his voice. Directed at CONNIE and CARLY.)

Will you please—

KAREN

(Visibly startled)

How often do you speak to them?

MARTIN

I saw you write something in there. It must be awful if you couldn't wait until after the session.

OFFICER DYLAN

Say what you have to and get him out of here.

KAREN

(KAREN nervously picks up her book and looks at a calendar.)

But I think it's important we build in some additional sessions.
Can you come back early next week?

MARTIN

No.

KAREN

No?

MARTIN

I won't.

KAREN

(KAREN picks up her notebook and walks to the door. She smiles uncertainly as she waits for MARTIN to move to the door.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN pours himself a glass of water.)

CONNIE

It's in the in-between where we lose our footing.

CARLY

She'll refuse to see you again. Is that what you want?

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

Tell him you have to leave for an appointment.

MARTIN

Please I need some more time.

KAREN

45 minutes.

MARTIN

(MARTIN puts down his glass of water and stands up.)

The last time we met, you let me stay with you until a quarter past 10.

KAREN

That was an exceptional session. You just told me how you found Carly. I wanted to make sure you were feeling safe and calm before you left.

(CONNIE begins to stroke MARTIN's hair.)

MARTIN

You held my hand and stroked my hair.

KAREN

I sat close to you, to be a comfort to you. We remember that moment differently.

MARTIN

(MARTIN walks towards the door and puts his hand out for the notebook.)

KAREN

There are notes about other patients in here--

MARTIN

An archive of all your secret thoughts, the things you would never say out loud but really think.

KAREN

(KAREN shifts uneasily by the door and then starts to gather some things on her desk.)

I have another patient to see.

(KAREN puts the notebook down and picks up her cell phone.)

MARTIN

I bet you like your other patients better than me.

(MARTIN moves closer to the desk.)

KAREN

You're a good, capable man, and I can see that you are in a tremendous amount of pain.

MARTIN

Maybe a better version of me could come from those pages.

KAREN

What do you need Martin, to be able to leave?

CONNIE

She's going to show your superintendent the notes, frame you out of context.

MARTIN

Please give me your notebook.

KAREN

I'm sorry I can't do that.

MARTIN

Can't or won't?

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

Call someone.

KAREN

(KAREN places the notebook in the top drawer of her desk.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN goes over to the desk. MARTIN tosses things around in the desk drawer until he finds the notebook. He accidentally bumps KAREN. He opens it and is distressed by something he sees in the notebook.)

Is this what you-

KAREN

(KAREN is visibly shaken.)

MARTIN

(MARTIN looks at KAREN's face. MARTIN takes a step towards KAREN.)

KAREN

(KAREN takes a step back from MARTIN.)

MARTIN

I never meant to-

KAREN

Your time is up.

MARTIN

(Directed to CONNIE)

The dead, they force us to keep their secrets.

(MARTIN grabs KAREN's arm - not harshly, more pleading.)

(Directed to KAREN)

How do we carve them out, get the last word?

(MARTIN puts his hands on KAREN's cheeks.)

Tell me you understand what I mean.

KAREN

I-I know what you mean.

MARTIN

Tell me.

(MARTIN studies her face and pushes her hair behind her ears. It's not aggressive. He is trying to be tender.)

Someone in college maybe?... No, that's not it, is it? Your father, the cop?

KAREN

(KAREN looks away.)

MARTIN

He's the one.

KAREN

This is unacceptable--

MARTIN

What did he do to you?

OFFICER DYLAN

Keep your mouth shut.

CARLY

Look at him, he's hemorrhaging.

MARTIN

Did he hit you? Let his lips linger too long when he kissed you goodnight?

CONNIE

You'll feel better sweetheart.

KAREN

(KAREN tries to pull away from MARTIN. MARTIN keeps hold of one of KAREN's hands.)

MARTIN

If we recognized it sooner, that we didn't have to be the ones to satisfy their cravings--

KAREN

(KAREN attempts to get up and get to the door.)

MARTIN

Please stay with me.

(MARTIN sits closely beside her.)

Try.

KAREN

We're finished for today, Martin.

(KAREN gets up and pulls what looks like a fabric throw pillow from the couch. The 'pillow' unravels and she takes the material, OFFICER DYLAN and MARTIN and begins to wrap them together.)

CONNIE

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

Will they let you wear the uniform in our dreams once she says it out loud?

OFFICER DYLAN

(He looks afraid.)

I don't know what you're talking about.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN)

I put a roof over your head. Fed you, clothed you. Helped you pay for college.

CONNIE

(Directed to OFFICER DYLAN)

All those years she hid under the covers and prayed her monster would have to work a double shift.

OFFICER DYLAN

I loved her.

CARLY

Your home was a crime scene.

OFFICER DYLAN

(Directed to KAREN, sounds of a skipping record playing in rhythm to the lines.)

We'll be alright. We'll be alright. We'll be alright. I'm alright. I'm alright. I'm alright. You, you, you-

CARLY

(Directed to KAREN)

It's your choice.

MARTIN

Go on.

(KAREN wraps their heads. OFFICER DYLAN struggles and MARTIN stays still.)

CARLY

(Directed to KAREN)

He didn't choose either. Nobody asked him.

KAREN

I should decide when it's time.

CONNIE

(Directed to KAREN and MARTIN. She pulls the fabric from MARTIN's face.)

Pull yourself away.

CARLY

(Directed to CONNIE)

Let go.

MARTIN

(MARTIN pulls at the fabric.)

CONNIE

It's time you relieve your father of his post.

MARTIN

(Directed to KAREN)

Karen, please don't show anyone what you wrote about me in your notebook.

(CONNIE takes MARTIN's hand and leads him gently towards the door.)

MARTIN

(Directed to CONNIE)

I made a real mess of things.

CONNIE

(Directed to MARTIN)

I know, baby.

(Directed to CARLY)

These offices never did you any good either.

KAREN

(KAREN stands up and looks at OFFICER DYLAN.
Directed to MARTIN.)

Don't come back here.

(MARTIN turns around. KAREN looks at OFFICER
DYLAN.)

MARTIN

I believe you.

KAREN

(Gestures towards Officer Dylan)

Then take him with you when you go.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

...They call out to you. At times, they traffic in hearsay and admonish your failures. It is their public chastisements that cut to the bone. Some of them live their lives as testimony to be given at your funeral while others stand close enough so that you can see the beauty of the world reflected in their eyes. Our flesh and blood witnesses, and the witnesses who take up residence in our minds, are fascinating keepers of who we were, who we are and who we want to become...

In Defense of Sincere Liars: Not the Play, the Sincerity of the Liars

The third act of this study contains some of the psychoanalytic interpretations I mined from the play to spectralize aspects of the psychic demands placed on educational administrators. It is an offering of some of my critical reflections on the results of this arts-based thought experiment. The choices I made in regards to what is discussed in this section are not intended to eclipse other interpretations of the play but to fulfill a promise to share what I imagined and learned as I engaged in this work. It is my attempt to give language to some of the ideas that remain somewhat invisible in educational administrative discourses.

In the theatre, an audience encounters storytellers who fabricate evocative lies that shimmer against a multiplicity of psychically inherited mise en scenes. Each performance gathers a curious collection of egos, complicit in their desire to be deceived in three acts. These willing participants sit night after night drenched in a sensory-scape that denaturalizes personal, familial and social imperfections. As the play simultaneously distorts and clarifies the most recent version of the psychic coda, inner monologues become sharper and amplified. To put it differently, the stage foregrounds images of alternative realities, making it possible for the characters' desires to pierce through the threadbare ties to deeply held assumptions. For a fleeting moment in time, these beautiful and painful fictions shine a spotlight on the assumptions

that form the foundation of one's psychic inheritances. To that end, a powerfully staged fiction can illuminate what one desperately needs to be true about the world.

Within this highly charged emotional field that is at once public and private, the ontological ground can abruptly shift between rows of seats. Held captive by the proximity of the other participants, feeling their breath up close, an audience member may be confronted by a fiction that breaks its epistemological promises. For instance, the interactions between the characters Carly, Connie and Officer Dylan point to an unconscious in-between space where the living's intimate dead interact and influence moments and understandings in the present. In response to epistemological ruptures, the ego is forced to choose. The auditory and visual syncopations presented on stage reach into the unconscious and reverberate between old psychic allegiances and the play of the play.

Outside of the theatre one is less autonomous in this regard because the play of the play is muted by routinized thinking and behavior. Like the sound and movements a needle makes when trapped inside the scratch on a favourite record, the mind rapidly repeats a disharmonious pattern. In the play, Martin cannot think outside his feelings of guilt and responsibility for Carly's death. Complexity is reduced and aberrations are recreated, which can significantly limit one's ability to compose a life. Trapped inside a mental scratch, Martin deals with outliers and ego conflict by manufacturing the sincerest of lies. He cannot see that his mother's psychic legacy is complicit in his devolution nor can he admit to himself that the school environment has become a toxic breeding ground for his delusions.

Many of the lies that the characters tell in the play are not malicious but whispers from the ego to defend emotional stasis. For example, Connie cannot admit to herself that Carly's depression is life threatening. She exaggerates her daughter's intelligence and poetic positioning

in the world to maneuver away from Carly's reality, one in which her depressive episodes exert debilitating effects on the family. Like Connie, we too, may draw upon our capacity to traffic in fiction when we sense the field of social relations has become less than hospitable. The defense mechanisms that are triggered by the emotional storms that tear through shared psychic terrain keep our lost objects cloaked in symptoms.

Phantasy, which could be considered an intricate lie that threads and unthreads symbolic costumes of symptoms, fills in empty signifiers when one's passions are enflamed. It happens because people project their own desires and fears onto what is being said, and language is ambiguous. Filling in the blanks on behalf of others when one's truths about the world are threatened, is both a limitation and a possibility. For instance, phantasy could be constructed as deviant in hyper rational terms if one assumes that there are clear and agreed upon demarcations between what is real and unreal and what is true and what constitutes a lie. In contrast, one might conceive of phantasy as a revelatory process that draws attention to a psychic stutter. When individuals construct reality in surreal terms, for brief moments in time, it may be possible to tune in to the presence of the symbolic chain of historical events that testify to the ways a person searches for his or her lost object in present day circumstances. Martin's discussion with Karen about the dream he had of Carly crawling out of her own skin is a symbolic treatment of this revelatory possibility. Karen invites Martin to consider the potency of the image in relation to his own administrator costume.

Dreams, memories and the childhood dramas that are rehearsed in adulthood are some of the sincerest of lies because they are soaked in the inherited representations of familial distortions. Karen's caress of Martin during the second session is an example. This action is an introjection of a force that brings her father into her dreams at night. Further, one's dreams,

memories and childhood dramas contain latent versions of counterfeit selves that escape their mental crypts to chase the intimate dead across multiple zones of intimacy. Karen's waking dream in the beginning of the second act conjures representations of the terrified little girl who became a silent witness to her father's tyrannical abuse of power.

The symbolic representations that appear in dreams, memories and childhood dramas provide insight into the psychic contexts that make it possible for the ego to be skewered during its negotiations with the superego and its supervision of the id. In this way, the sincere lies buried in the unconscious are doubly potent. One can treat dreams, memories and childhood dramas as an overconfident historian who promises to deliver explanations about the past. An alternative treatment is one that opens a space for the anarchistic revenants in one's psyche to provoke the dreamer, memoirist, or the child actor in the adult to fabricate new stories about their lives. As Britzman eloquently puts it, in our dreams we get to play with our "second-chance selves" (2009).

In Your Dreams

Dreams are wordless poems born in the unconscious. When these poetic fragments find their way to morning consciousness, they remind us that bedtime is liminal puissance. While breathing deep, the dreamer enters wild spaces that are symbolically rich and rootless in terms of time and relationship. People fly, topple governments, talk to animals or listen to the dead while suspended in a free association phantasy world. Moreover, these vivid and metaphorically potent representations suture unlikely images together (Britzman, 2015). This can be disturbing and revealing because when we wake, we sometimes feel the urge to draw connections between what is happening in our lives and the latent symbolism in the dream. If dreams are shadow representations from the unconscious, then interpretations of dreams hold possibilities for deep

reflection on the past as well as uncovering imaginative possibilities for the future. Lying in bed, the sleeper can become more awake in the world.

Enckell (2010) describes two approaches to psychoanalytic reflection. The first is archeological. In the classical approach, the symbols of the dream are to “help the patient look ‘back’ at reality reflecting itself in its derivative” (p. 1104). This is a closed representation system (p. 1104). It assumes the reflective process allows the analysand to attune to the difficulties that she or he experiences when making self-observations. The hope is that a conscious awakening to these difficulties will help the analysand move closer to uncovering the roots of the pain. The second reflective approach is teleological. It is an open representational system that is based on the analysand’s recognition that the analyst understands the patient in a way that is affirming and novel (p. 1105). This new relational web is not grounded in the past. It is an original entity, a third interpretive space that hovers somewhere between the analyst and the analysand. In this way, the analysand’s free associations become metaphors that are open to limitless interpretive possibilities in the future.

Karen’s engagement with Martin’s dreams are predominantly reflective of the archeological approach. In Martin’s description of the bookstore dream in the second act, he reveals to Karen that in the dream, “I, I...pull a book off the shelf. You tell me you spent years looking for this particular edition. You’re so pleased I found it for you that you take my hand.” Martin cannot distance himself from the symbolic anchors of the past and Karen’s heavy-handed interpretation leads them both back to the (given) reality of Martin’s childhood. To illustrate the point further, one of Karen’s reactions to his dream is to force a connection between Martin’s dream of the bookstore and his painful memory of the hockey game. In this moment, the archeological approach forecloses the metaphorical possibilities of the *bookstore*, the

handholding or the *quest* for the *limited edition* of a coveted book. Both the archeological and the teleological reflective approaches are necessary but lead to different ends. At this moment, Karen struggles to remain in *relational analysis* with Martin.

As we dream, the events of our lives morph into abstract portraits that are dislocated from conscious attempts to represent our identities. I believe this is part of what Britzman (2009) gestures towards when she refers to the “second-chance self.” The surreal landscape of the dream is a realm in which entrenched identity constructions can be shed and unconscious experiments with new personas can be manifested. In this way, Karen’s “archeological” response to Martin is instructive. She asks Martin to think about the administrative persona he adopts in relation to his dreams of Carly wearing his face. In this scene, audience members have an opportunity to dream their identities anew.

Theatre is an invitation extended to strangers to share the same waking dream. These types of dreams are luscious terrain upon which to explore the background scenery of a collective consciousness. To illustrate, if I take some of the elements from Carly/Martin’s waking dream in the second act and treat them metaphorically, the interpretive possibilities regarding identity construction in educational administration begin to show themselves to me. Carly offers Martin the following description:

In my waking dreams, I’m one of a thousand dolls on
display at the toy store. Children slink by to examine
my frilly dress and accessories. They want to cut my
synthetic hair while their mothers aren’t looking but
the plastic window that seals this cardboard crypt
shatters their candied fingers. Behind it, the minutes
wash in like days as all the other dolls get picked.

But even if by some miracle I do make it out, it's
impossible to love a dead-eyed girl.

The dream's symbolic content is cast within an underground space used to bury the dead. After writing and looking back on Martin's dream of Carly's dream, I ask myself, what has been buried in the storying of educational administration? Educational leaders assume a shared responsibility for the most complex and emotionally taxing behaviors and events in the organization. However, the emotional labor of leadership and the inherent psychic difficulty of the work remains an "exquisite corpse," (Torok, 1968) a wish the collective ego of the field has repressed. It waits in a state of hypervigilance for the words to express itself. Its 'R'eality is the rejection, disavowal and dismissal of its existence.

The role of an educational leader, constructed partly by its codification and the system's incapacity to stop the urgency signaled by the school bells, amplifies the types of behaviors that repeatedly draw the administrative gaze. The gaze can be elicited by the administrator her/him/themselves, by living witnesses in the organization such as instructors, teachers or students, or by one's intimate dead. While it is true that all educators play a complicated hand in the mitigation of their desires to control undesirable behaviors as they profess a love for teaching other people's children (Taubman, 2012), this tension is intensified in the administrator's office.

The environments of educational organizations play a fundamental role in predetermining the behaviors that are put under the administrative gaze. Among "a thousand dolls" certain behaviors are selected for administrative work. To put it differently, what is policed, gets investigated. Defiance, vandalism, physical altercations, protests, intoxication, theft and verbal abuse are examples of the elements that administrators chase to the fringes of the social field in the organization. When something or someone holds one's gaze for long enough, it may begin to skew what one is able to see and to perceive. These repetitive encounters contour one's identity

in the organization. All dolls come with accessories! More concretely, traumatic or dramatic incidents in organizations are laden with emotional externalities. Additionally, if several other actors in the social field assume it is part of the work of the organization to maintain order and control, its formal leaders are frequently policed in terms of their capacity to achieve these ends.

In the dream, the dolls are displayed inside cardboard boxes with plastic windows. This image poses questions about the ways that administrative identities are watched by several actors in the school system. The partially observable and shared nature of administrative work expands the administrative gaze to include the administrator. As leaders are called to mitigate the effects of behaviors that draw the administrative gaze, they do this work amidst other actors in the organization that “slink by with candied fingers.” Candied fingers conjure thoughts of stickiness, and the impregnation of the fruit of encounters with sweetness. Some watchers watch for a while, ensure the organization’s ends are interpreted and being actualized in ways that do not significantly challenge the ends of the organization. This is the sweetness of the candy, it distracts on the palate while it rots the teeth.

When the watchers exit the scene, what are left are the psychological remainders or the accumulations of one’s participation in outlier experiences and of being studied in times of great stress. These remainders become vanishing twins, lost souls whose “mothers aren’t looking.” In the dream, “all the other dolls get picked” which points to an absence of talk about the cumulative effects of administrative work on administrators. It is important to name this phenomenon because absences can be costly. They may cut your “synthetic hair.” Psychoanalysis teaches us that the vanished will have their day. To re-member one’s lived experiences and relations with others may open opportunities for the dreamer to query who one is and who one might become in the organization.

Memory

Memories are illusory images of one's past experiences. These chimeras are formed and deformed by self-censorship and a need to simplify what is complicated in one's mind. In this way, memories are sincere lies people weave for themselves to string together a coherent narrative about their lives. Near the end of act one, Martin shares the following hockey memory from his youth with Karen:

“Out of nowhere I'm hit, hard. I'm mean ass over teakettle and then land in a heap in the corner. My head is swimming, but I can hear the old man. ‘Jesus Christ, Marty! Keep your head up!’ He doesn't talk to me the whole ride home. Pulls into the driveway, puts it in park, turns to me and says, ‘A real fucking embarrassment. You don't let anybody lay you out like that and get away with it....’ And then, snap....”

As a consequence of sharing the memory, Karen asks Martin to think about the detrimental effects of his parents' inability to provide for him emotionally after Carly's death. In response, Martin becomes defensive. He insists that his parents did the best they could after Carly died. He edits to absolve them of their responsibility to him as the surviving child. At one point, Karen suggests that Carly's illness consumed their lives before and after her death. Martin counters by saying, “She needed them more than I did.” One interpretation of the oversimplification of his parents' obligations to him and to the memory of his sister is that Martin needs to keep them close in their reconstructed parental roles even after their deaths.

Amidst the edits and oversimplifications, memories can cement the heart of life stories. The trauma Martin experiences coagulates in childhood and later in adulthood as a blessing in disguise. *It made me tough. I am what I am today because I survived. My father did what he had*

to do. I wasn't the easiest kid to deal with. These little affirmations wrapped in memories make it difficult for people to trace their symptoms back to the root. Additionally, the dislocation creates a space for the contempt of others to creep in and to be internalized. For instance, Carly reveals to the audience that Martin's wife's words are merely endured and that, to her brother, the words are like "blackfly bites on the beach." A dislocation from the roots of one's symptoms also makes it possible for vitriolic currents to travel outward. Martin, too, displaces the symptoms that have brewed in the psychic coagulation on to others with whom he works because of his inability to revise his memories. This is evident in the transference with Karen when Martin describes his interactions with Marcus.

A thoughtful deliberation on the way that memories are exchanged could provoke a sensitization to some of the emotionally depleting struggles in educational administration that are remembered and memorialized as *blessings in disguise*. One interpretation of blessings is that they help you to do something within a sanctioned framework. As previously stated, administrators are called to act in response to some of the most emotionally taxing events in the school. The telling and retelling of stories about these events often valorizes images of stoicism under pressure, calmness and measured language in the face of emotional wildness, control of the situation and actions that demonstrate allegiance to policy and discretion when it comes to the dissemination of particular elements of the story.

The blessings of rationality, focus, quietness and control are often thought of as anchors in administrative work. In Martin's description of the parent's worry about the secret rainbow society, the audience is privy to the manifestation of these elements. The anchors are sharply contrasted in Martin's description of his interaction with Marcus in the third act. Towards the end of the play, the audience is invited to think about the system of approval that helps one to do

the work that comes from the blessing. As Martin becomes less rooted in the present, his language becomes wilder, vengeful and unmeasured. Martin's story about Marcus confronts the audience with Officer Dylan's warning that "A school's an awfully large echo chamber for the boss's neuroses." The officer warns the audience about the disguise or the pernicious effects of the pressure that is exerted on people who lead within a system that closes in on wildness.

If we think about memories as photographs, there is a much larger 'scene' that falls out of the frame of the photograph. The viewer knows that if the photographer had zoomed out or zoomed in, there would be different elements that informed the story of the shot. Additionally, the frame of the picture is a reminder that the photograph is always taken by someone who does not have access to the unconscious influences that framed the shot. When an administrator appears at an emotionally charged scene, he or she frames the scene in relation to his or her life story and the stressful incidents that have accumulated in the psyche. As an illustration, when Martin describes Marcus' assault in the bathroom, he zooms in on Marcus' body position on the floor and he begins to feel the 'inevitable' shame-filled conversation with Marcus' caregiver. However, the administrator's unconscious influences are frequently left out of the frame of interpretation in the vaults that house organizational memory. Moreover, the camera in play is intended to be a symbol potent enough to hold questions about what and who is or is not memorialized in educational administration.

The camera lens is a metaphorical treatment of the ways in which a parent's memories are shaped by repressed desires that can surface at the expense of the child's emotional wellbeing and development. Caregivers do not do this consciously, but it happens as a result of the unconscious transmission of intergenerational emotional distortions. Carly makes a comment in the first act that she cannot remember a time when her mother did not have her camera in her

hands. Shortly after she asks Martin, “Do you think she could see us differently through a lens?” The lens represents the idea that at times, people’s perceptions of others are mediated by their own repressed childhood traumas.

Before Connie takes the stage, the audience sees the camera flash. The flashes are intended to be sanguine flickers of representations of the fleeting moments when it is possible to link present day symptoms with the psychic injuries one has endured in the past. This is painful and complex work because the ego protects well-entrenched family narratives. However, the act of remembering allows us to recast ourselves and others in the face of new learning by “constructing meaning from our memories to suffer less in the present” (Roth, 2016, p. 123). To that end, it can be very fruitful to claim as a part of one’s identity the role of memoirist.

Administrators contribute to the records that construct part of the history of the organization but sometimes they are too quick to give away the pen. Taubman (2012) reminds us that the “aim of psychoanalysis is not the pursuit of truth but speaking truthfully” (p. 24). I believe leaders are obligated to tell their leadership stories to themselves in relation to the flashes. To that end, it would be beneficial to administrators and to those they lead if they thought deeply about how their personal histories were informed and challenged by the written and oral stories that are memorialized or forgotten in the organization. It is in fact critical, because there is a unique collection of memories from one’s childhood that are sometimes rehearsed in adulthood that have the potential to cause emotional discomfort in the present.

Rehearsal of Childhood Dramas in Adulthood

One can behave in the present in ways that are connected to the inheritance of someone else’s processes of incorporation. What “haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (Abraham, 1975, p. 173). To exorcise a phantom requires that one make

sense of what remains unsettled from the past. One must reanimate childhood memories to discover the psychic terrain that has been unconsciously colonized by one's ancestors. What might be called for in order to do this difficult work is a place in the dark where people can focus their dreams on the same words and sounds for a while. The theatre may open such a space to think about ourselves as sincere liars. Just as the actors speak the lines written by someone else, we too, act and speak in ways that emanate from the crypt of secrets we incorporate from significant others.

In the theatre, rehearsals are practices for public performances. In psychoanalytic terms, the mind produces a psychic backdrop that presents repressed desires as symptoms in the present. In this sense, these repetitions or rehearsals are a ritualized forgetting that reproduces old ways of being with others. To put it differently, it is the act of repeatedly casting actors in the present in the roles that were written in the past. These are times when one plays the parts one was given as a child and behaves in ways that demand others play the roles one unconsciously assigns them. These types of rehearsals can and do play out in educational leadership spaces, as Martin demonstrates in the bathroom when he reacts to the sight of Marcus being pinned to the floor, or when he describes his reaction to the complaint made against Mr. Jeffries. In both examples, Martin freezes for key moments like the little boy who stands on the other side of Carly's bathroom door.

There is another, more freeing possibility if one takes the psychoanalytic idea of rehearsal and places it in the theatre. The play is written, yet it is the expectation of directors and the audience that the actor will bring the character and the lines to life on stage. To deliver a compelling performance, the actors must interpret the initial offering from a playwright, and this interpretation must make sense within the world that is co-created by the director, actors and

later the audience. In this way, rehearsals are generative and creative spaces. The collective interpretations of the playwright, actors, director and audience come together to significantly revise new and old stories. Leadership stories can be retold in ways that allow the teller and the witnesses to the telling to deconstruct plot devices and roles to escape reductive leadership narratives. Memories and stories can be continuously mined for more nuanced interpretations.

The performances of educational leaders are intertwined with incorporations of their childhood memories. Even though, at the end of the play Martin leaves with Connie, his earlier relational interactions with Karen speak to the possibility of escaping the confinement of the part he was given as a child. An example of this would be Martin's decision to tell Karen about the circumstances of Carly's death. Further, he shows it is possible to challenge the normative constructions of leadership as evidenced by the description of his interaction with the honor student's parent in the third act. He tells the student's father "that studying and learning is hard work and it's not the teacher's goddamn job to serve entitled 10th graders the English curriculum in tasty, bite sized pieces. We're not fucking fine dining, we're a public school." One may bristle at Martin's words and behavior and lament the obvious psychic and social neoliberal intrusions in public schools but the description evidences a capacity to unmoor from some of the professional anchors that have muted these impulses in the past.

One's dreams, memories and the childhood dramas rehearsed in adulthood are the sincerest of lies. The sincerity with which they are told and protected is connected to a need to manage the demands placed on the ego by the protean demands of social environments. The play, and much of the discussion that surrounds the play in this study, speaks to the strong influence the unconscious wields in one's life. If one agrees that our houses are haunted by the past and that these hauntings can limit what we can perceive and do in the world, the significant

relationships one develops with others can help us to catch our breath when we become emotionally unmoored. It is the unique and complicated role of witnesses that may help administrators in schools to more thoughtfully trouble what they want to be true about the world as they experience and manage some of the most complex and emotionally charged incidents in the school.

Cue the Witness

A leader's living witnesses, as well as the ones who take residence in the hallways of his/her /their mind, influence the potency and diversity of the interpretive possibilities available in any given situation. This is because school leaders exist in interconnected emotional webs of conceptual understanding and disavowal. In this way, living witnesses can be influential *live thirds* (Gerson, 2009, p. 1343) in administrators' lives. Live thirds are people who respond thoughtfully and compassionately as individuals try to make livable meaning of their experience. *Dead thirds* are like phantoms and are experienced as the losses of individuals or social structures that, at one time, helped individuals to develop a shared sense of meaning and continuity about themselves and the world around them (Gerson, 2009, p. 1343).

Due to the responsibilities and socially constructed anchors of administration, leadership work is often studied as a one-way transmission process. More specifically, a lot of attention is given to the ways in which a leader impacts his or her followers. Examples of these prominent themes in the literature include the effects of instructional leadership behaviors on student achievement (Hallinger, 2010) and the ability of administrators to develop professional capital across their organizations (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). A psychoanalytic treatment of leadership work allows for some discussion and interpretation of the ways in which one's real and imagined witnesses impact individual administrators. The psychoanalytic concept of countertransference is one way to give

language to what leading does to leaders and to think more about the influences of various constituents, more specifically witnesses, at work in a given leadership space.

Countertransference: Unwieldly and Productive

As previously stated, countertransference is the redirection of an analyst's feelings towards an analysand. These are moments when the analyst is triggered by the patient. The concept is discussed in positive and negative terms in the literature. Ferenczi (1995) writes about countertransference in positive terms. It is, for him, a beneficial alarm for the analyst, a warning system that the analyst is becoming emotionally entangled with a patient in unhelpful ways. Although countertransference is a contested concept within the various iterations of psychoanalytic work, its explanatory power reminds those who work in organizations that we, too, become emotionally entangled within spaces that manifest a relational third (Ogden, 2005).

This emotional entanglement can look like the over identification with Mr. Jeffries. It transpires in the moments when Connie tries to care for Martin at the expense of his well-being. Another more obvious example of countertransference in the play is Karen's reaction to Martin's declaration that living with a father who was a police officer was a "breeding ground for little psychiatrists." A more layered example is the correlation between the increases in Martin's aggression and the dissolution of the analytic third in their last session.

It is not difficult to imagine that countertransference makes an appearance during leadership performances. At times, the offices of educational leaders morph into interrogation rooms, confessional booths, archives, classrooms and waiting rooms. The work is difficult and disorienting at times. All the while, administrators are significantly impacted by the conceptual tapestry woven in the dynamic exchange of words between themselves and those they are entrusted to lead. If leaders and followers were more sensitized to the elements of

countertransference in their interactions, maybe they could suffer more openly and the phantoms would have less influence over their professional lives.

Phantoms and Ghosts

At the end of the play, Martin walks away with Connie. It is a reminder to all of us who work in education that we frequently ignore our own “psychic investments and autobiographically overdetermined involvement in [our] work, but as psychoanalysis insists, those investments, one’s family and the intimate dead, however irrelevant they may seem to one’s scholarship are always pressing close” (Taubman, 2012, p.3). My decision to have Martin leave the living, at least psychically, is partly rooted in my deep concerns about the absence of language in the field that addresses the complicated ways we manage the meanings of our leadership stories and “the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (Mac Varish & Leavit, 2016, 171). The absence of language is itself a ghost and, as a consequence of our inability to interpret ghost stories, the superego’s leadership demands remain superordinate at a significant cost to educational leaders and to those they want to lead.

In the first act, Martin tells Karen that one of his students was assaulted in the bathroom. He reports that when he arrived at the scene he found two seniors with “a junior pinned to the floor so their buddy can urinate all over him.” Much later in the play, the audience learns that Martin shoved one of the students who had Marcus pinned to the floor. When Martin crosses the line in the bathroom, it represents the moments in a person’s life when repressed trauma from the past is destructive in the present. Further, the incident points to the intergenerational transmission of aggressive impulses. The stakes become higher when Marcus, the victim of the assault, reveals that he managed to record Martin shoving the other student.

In response to Marcus's threat to release the recording, Martin's aggression intensifies. He repulses Karen when he tells her that he deals with the threat by informing Marcus that "by the time he got back to home room, the video of those boys pissing all over him could be sent to the entire school with just one click." Here, Martin shows us how the negation of our past diminishes one's capacity to muster a healthy amount of suppression. Karen's facial expressions of disgust and the absence of her narration open a space for their unmetabolized traumas (Harris, Kalb, & Klebanoff, 2016) to manifest as ghostly witnesses. Officer Dylan, Connie and Martin's father are phantoms (Abraham & Torok, 1975) without the capacity to reinvigorate life in that they limit the opportunity for second chances and psychological recovery (Ferguson, 2016).

Psychoanalysis has been historically concerned with the ways in which ghosts can be laid to rest as ancestors (Harris et al., 2016). Ghosts are different than ancestors, for unlike ancestors, they are "sensed as lingering absences" (Mac Varish & Leavit, 2016, p. 156). Ghosts haunt the living, and in response, the living operationalizes defensive structures to keep the ego intact. When administrators interact with others in their school, students, teachers, parents and community members bring their own ghosts to the playground. Karen and Martin's sessions make visible the idea that specific relationships determine which ghosts make an appearance in our lives (Hollan, 2014).

Martin hears the ghosts as carnival barkers, but he does not have the language to treat their looming arrival in psychoanalytic terms. One of the ways that Martin copes with the sound of the carnival barker he references in act one, is to look at his students through the eyes of the mistreated child inside of himself (Miller, 1983). He constructs some of his students as monsters and as the flesh and blood warnings of social decay. Martin's expressions of contempt are projections of the parts of himself he hates. To survive the self-loathing, he must choose between

his allegiances to the narratives he inherited as a child and a severance of the emotional ties to his students and colleagues. He is caught in phantom spirals of self-hatred and grandiose claims.

Sincere Liars confronts the pain that is caused when a witness operates as a phantom in a leader's life. These phantoms can be alive or dead because the deadness refers to the assimilation of helplessness and a paralyzing fear of the unnamed absence. Carly's death is a phantom in Martin's life. Although his memories of Carly and several other elements of the play are infused with melancholia and loss, it names an absence of leadership language that, if developed, could address the unhelpful myths that valorize stoicism that shape the environment, work and personas of educational leaders.

Let's imagine that these are the witnesses we encounter in the fourth act, the empathic listeners in our lives who point out blind spots, positively challenge our defense structures and help us to live more fully in the present. Gerson (2009) eloquently describes these witnessing others as "the presence that exists between the experience and its meaning, between the real and the symbolic, and through whom life gestates and into whom futures are born" (p.1342). Educational leaders might think about reaching out towards those who demonstrate some of the characteristics of the *relational analyst* in their organizations, to those trusted others who are able and willing to help them make new meaning of their leadership work and stories. Leaders, too, could hone their abilities to listen in-between gestures and words to co-construct more emancipatory narratives about leadership, schooling, children and families.

Witnesses to Look for in the Fourth Act

Language is performative. If I speak, I seek to describe my reality but my speech also creates reality (Butler, 2006). When a school principal makes an explicit performative statement such as, "I expel you Marcus," the adolescent moves through a space that exists between student

and non-student. The administrator's words produce a new reality, one where there are mobility demarcations, the stripping of a previous identity, and the inscription of a new one. Parents, fellow students, administrators, and teachers play a critical role in the adoption of this new reality. Acting as living witnesses, they make the expulsion 'real' and reify its power.

Sedgwick (2003) coined the term peripperformative to describe utterances that are "...not themselves performatives, they are about performatives and, more properly, that they cluster around performatives" (p. 68). She conceptualizes this special category of utterances that move beside, around, and up against the performative. Sedgwick builds her case for the generation of a new category through a critique of Austin's (1970) attitudinal treatment of his "I dare you." performative. She suggests Austin's foundational work does not properly consider the "scene" in which the utterance has been made. If I dare you to do something, I must assume a real or an imagined audience for the spectacle I aim to unleash upon you. Witness responses or non-responses for that matter, can change the scene in dramatic ways.

There are productive possibilities inside a situation when a witness disinterpellates. Disinterpellation may open an exciting and liberating space to challenge unexamined assumptions. Sedgwick (2003) claims:

To undare oneself or another, is likely to take the form of a peripperformative: I won't take you up on it. Who are you to dare me? Who cares what you dare me to do? The fascinating class of negative performatives - disavowal, demur, renunciation, depreciation, repudiation, "count me out," giving the lie - is marked, in almost every instance by the asymmetrical property of being much less prone to becoming conventional than the positive performatives. To disinterpellate from a performative scene will usually require, not another specific performative, nor

simply the negative of one, but the nonce referential act of a periperformative.... It requires little presence of mind to find the comfortable formula “I dare you,” but a good deal more for the dragooned witness to disinterpellate with “Don’t do it on my account. (p. 70)

Language is both precious and precarious. It is precarious because people often fill in the blanks for others or they turn ambiguity into assumptions that fit dutifully into their life narratives. Language is precious because it is the dominant way that people make sense of themselves and their lives in relation to others in the world. The witness can be an emancipatory live third if he or she adopts the stance of a courageous and capable listener who is willing and able to turn the word or a scene. Amidst the turn, a new interpretive possibility can emerge for the one who discloses and for the one who listens. In the second act, Karen uses the moment when Martin tells her he has feelings for her to suggest that it might be time to think about his *monsters*. She turns the transference and challenges Martin to go to the root of the word and to think about the monsters as *warnings*. Monster becomes a language pivot point, a moment of disinterpellation, so that Karen and Martin can reinterpret disturbing images from the past in ways that are more tolerable and instructive in the present.

It is incredibly difficult to collect the shards of emotional externalities when someone disinterpellates. To sit quietly within the blank, the negative, or the absence is a formidable task. It makes all involved vulnerable as the new interpretation emerges. The ego screams from the deep dark place within us to maintain allegiance to the things we know to be true about ourselves and others. Therefore, what is required of the witness, and the one who is witnessed, is an emotional strength (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005) and the flexibility to withstand counter-narratives about an incident or memory. Peri-performative acts can figuratively and literally unmake

categories and make it more difficult to sustain entrenched representations of the other. Listening to and then deconstructing the words spoken by living witnesses in leadership spaces can provoke those enmeshed in educational administrative spectacles to take notice of the ways the well-rehearsed narratives about themselves limit what they are able to think and practice in a school.

Taubman (2012) reminds us that we are responsible for the meaning we ascribe to experiences, but what does it mean to fully accept one's responsibility? Karen challenges Martin to think about the psychological inheritances from his parents. In order for Martin to allow Karen to hold his parents responsible for their inability to be a loving witness in Martin's life after Carly's death, Martin must loosen his allegiance to the idealized image of his mourning parents. What are we asking Martin to give up in this moment? Egos cannot flee from existential anxiety. In the face of such discomfort, he is being asked to question some of the illusions that protected him from his own tyrannical judge.

When loss is ignored, it dehumanizes the person who has experienced the loss (Hardy & Laszloffy, 2005) and the person who denies the loss. *Sincere Liars* asks the audience to contemplate the psychic losses that are experienced when someone's personal and professional narrative is troubled by the disinterpellation of the witness. Martin's exit at the end of the play reminds us that it is essential, in times of great stress and emotional upheaval, that some thought and credence is given to *interpretive losses*. Administrators frequently desire that teachers and students change in ways that might better serve the organization and the individuals the organization serves. Think about the number of change initiatives that populate strategic plans. Each one of the strategies that seems to behave well on paper will inevitably bump up against some of the teachers' or the administrator's blind spots and defensive structures.

To see something or someone anew often requires the courage to interrogate the illusions that have insulated us for many years. The witnesses to our personal and professional lives can help us to manage the meanings of our stories. They can help us deal with our cravings to be certain. Further, they may act as co-dreamers to help us see a multiplicity of interpretive possibilities that exist in times of change and emotional upheaval. Being able to trust in a wise and empathic witness may increase our comfort when we are required to sit in the blank or the absence. This difficult work can be rewarding as it may help leaders and followers to live more fully in the present and to see the beauty and power in allowing trusted others to write into the stories of our lives. In these moments, leaders and followers can remind one another of the strengths they have observed in each other's past demonstrations of resiliency so these skills can be transferred to new situations.

Educational Administration as Psychoanalytic Theatre

The work of leadership is often emotionally laborious, but to our detriment, we often speak of it as if it is composed merely of the rules, policies and processes developed outside of us. Administrators are asked to provide guidance and support to a diverse cast of actors, which in turn, means their work is fraught with dilemmas and conflict. Despite the emotionally charged nature of their work, there is little consideration given to its psychoanalytic implications. In the third act, Martin describes a number of the tensions that administrators face on a daily basis:

Last Wednesday, I met with a parent who wanted to lodge a complaint because his daughter's teacher gave her a B+. His princess has been an A student since the womb. So, obviously, the teacher wasn't challenging her enough, and so on, and so on. This gentleman is on Parent Council, so in the past, I would've spent hours servicing him, placating him. Hell, if he called the board office, I might've made

that teacher apologize for the unlikely possibility that his darling Angela mastered only 81% of the learning outcomes over the term. How were the assignments weighted? Did you differentiate your instruction? Were the students required to set goals? Can you describe your assessment practices in three sentences or less?

The play problematizes some of the harsh effects of the school environment on the psyche of the administrator. In the excerpt of Martin's meeting with Angela's father, we become privy to the competing demands an administrator might have to manage in just one encounter with a student's parent. The beginning of the second act offers another, less obvious opportunity to contemplate the intensity of the school's emotional terrain. Martin shares a story about a design student who invented a hammock that one can clamp under a desk. He tells Karen, "Their motto is "A nap in a snap." Get yourself one of those mini fridges and you never have to leave the office. Voluntary confinement." He bristles at the idea while, at the same time, he recognizes himself in Karen's disorientation after she is awoken by his noisy arrival at her door. Further, the consequences of an unhealthy integration between work and home manifest in Karen's disturbing realization that Martin has been studying her morning routine from the street outside her home office.

Psychoanalysis can help us to better understand how social pathologies infect individual subjectivities. For Martin, and other administrators, time is always running out. It is therefore understandable that administrators have difficulty in stilling themselves with others in order to co-create alternative interpretations of school phenomena. In an environment that prizes efficiency and order, the liminal absence may actually be, at times, invisible. To that end, sleeping under the desk, yet keeping the madness of the day close, may come from living in a perpetual state of urgency. Martin teaches us about some of the effects of living in this way. He

shows us that in a place that presses in on wildness, one can become emotionally depleted and reliant on behavioral memes. In the most extreme cases, the environment can produce a splitting and an incorporation of the harshness of the environment.

I draw on the interpretive power of psychoanalysis because the school is in many respects like a psychoanalytic theatre. It, too, frequently colours reality in surreal terms and replicates family dynamics. The *principal father* or *mother* must manage the school/family's resources, keep everyone safe and ensure that the children are good stewards of the values and beliefs reinforced within the structure of the family/school. The relationship between one's capacity and incapacity to navigate the replication of family dynamics in school is embodied in a more subtle operationalization of the concept of the Clever Baby. Carly uses the beautiful words of her poets to give a language to her depression and the dysfunction in her home. Her intelligence is exaggerated by Martin when he tells Karen that "The kids at my school are nothing like her. She- she read Emily Dickinson when she was just 11 years old." This exaggeration is an example of a Clever Baby who "treats with deep sayings." Martin is a Clever Baby in that he took care of his mourning parents for many years and then transferred his training to the school.

After Martin describes the circumstances of Carly's death, it affords Martin and Karen the opportunity to reinterpret the memory. Karen is able to remind Martin that he "was 12 years old, traumatized by what he saw. A little boy, the witness." In this session, Martin hears for the first time, "No one was there to save you." Furthermore, this part of the session connects to Ferenczi's (1995) work on trauma in that the therapeutic space allows patients to relive and reframe traumatic incidents so that the guilt and shame associated with the traumatic event can be reinterpreted. . It was Ferenczi's contention that trauma could tell us important things about the injuries one endures every day (Ferenczi, 1995). In the context of educational

administration, how leaders respond when teachers discuss their emotional injuries can significantly impact how resilient teachers are in dealing with emotional difficulties in the future. In this way, the empathetic administrative witness replicates the family ideal, the caring parent who acknowledges the inner child's psychic wounds.

The Carnival Barker in the Academy

We live in a society that is obsessed with quick fixes. Therefore it is understandably challenging to build a case that the slow work of thinking in psychoanalytic terms is worth the time and the emotional labor. Nonetheless, as we learn from the play, all of the characters pay a price for ignoring the impact of their inherited illusions. Britzman's work (2003) provokes teachers and teacher educators to think about what teaching does to teachers. I suggest it would be helpful to current and aspiring administrators and professors in educational leadership programs to place a greater focus on what leading does to leaders. To conclude this study, I offer some thoughts on what could be taken up in leadership programs of study.

In act three, Karen catches Martin speaking back to the voices in his head. Unnerved by the revelation, she asks Martin how frequently he hears the voices. He admits, "At first they were better behaved, but now, they appear when it suits them. At home it's fine but it causes confusion when more than one person occupies the principal's chair." In my mind, this moment in the scene provokes a wonderment about the symbolic value of the "principal's chair." The principal's chair in this play represents control, authority and order. If the intimate dead make their demands known in the light of day, the principal's power is destabilized. In response to the destabilization, the ego reaches a state of high alert. Governed by his primitive impulses, Martin shoves a student and threatens another. Meanwhile his internalized tyrannical judge forces him in

to the school every day even though he is losing touch with reality and aware that the “carnival is on the move.”

Although the play intentionally exaggerates to create evocative situations for the characters and the audience, a carnival will inevitably show up at the students’ doors. Sometimes they will hear the barker in time, but there will be moments when the barker will be muted by childhood experiences with power and authority. The absence of psychoanalytic questioning in educational leadership classrooms is problematic. It is important that current and aspiring leaders consider the ways in which their unconscious desires subvert rational decision making. We are less rational than we think, and to pretend otherwise by adorning ourselves in more elaborate decision making models or data drenched school improvement plans, will not allow new school leaders to outrun the psychoanalytic implications embedded in their leadership work.

In his text, *Ethnotheatre from Page to Stage*, Saldaña (2011) outlines the arc of an ethnodramatic monologue. The arc could inform a process that professors could use with students to interrogate events and experiences in ways that open up the possibility for multiple interpretations. The monologue arc consists of the following elements: the Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, the Final Happening and the Coda. Imagine using the monologue arc with students to interpret leadership stories in ways that trouble normative constructions of leaders and leadership.

Abstract: If we read between the lines, what is this leadership story about?

Orientation: Who is in this story? What happens? Where and when does it take place? What are the contextual factors that frame the story? What is visible in the frame? What is left out of the frame?

Complicating Action: In this leadership story, what do the actors want? How do their wants conflict? What happens as a result of the conflicts?

Evaluation: What are the emotional impacts on all of the actors who are implicated in the story?

Final Happening: What happens to the characters at the end of the story?

Coda: How is the narrative brought to a close?

The leadership stories could come from the students' lives and from evocative plays, films, novels, paintings, lyrical dances, or song lyrics. Arts-based content in leadership classes would imply that the leadership coda is never fully brought to a close. In this way, leadership classes could open a space for the psychoanalytic re-symbolization of disciplinary regimes of knowledge. Some of the psychoanalytically informed questions professors in educational leadership programs could broach are:

- a) In a field where the practitioners are so deeply affected by stress and heightened states of emotional engagement, what do you think accounts for the absence of language around this topic?
- b) How do your past experiences with power and authority as a child in school intersect with your current understandings of leadership?
- c) Is leadership an interpretive act?
- d) What are some of the myths that construct you as a leader?
- e) How might you conceive of yourself as a compassionate and emotionally grounded witness in your organization?

- f) How might you, as an educational leader, make space for counter-narratives to challenge your understandings of your leadership work and the work of others in your organization?
- g) In what ways does love intersect with your desire for control?

As an illustration of how one could make Saldaña's (2011) monologue arc sing with a psychoanalytic interpretation of leadership, I briefly take up W.B. Yeats's (2010) poem, *What Then?* (p. 400) in the context of an educational leadership class.

What Then?

His chosen comrades thought
at school He must grow a
famous man;
He thought the same and lived
by rule, All his twenties
crammed with toil;
'What then? sang Plato's ghost. What then?

Everything he wrote was
read, After certain years he
won Sufficient money for
his need,
Friends that have been friends indeed;
'What then? sang Plato's ghost. What then?

All his happier dreams came true –
A small old house, wife, daughter
and son, Grounds where plum and
cabbage grew.
Poets and Wits about him drew;
'What then? sang Plato's ghost. What then?

'The work is done,' grown old he
thought, 'According to my boyish
plan;
Let the fools rage, I swerved
in naught, Something to
perfection brought';
But louder sang that ghost, 'What then?'

I might begin by inviting students to offer some of their initial interpretations of the poem. These initial responses could lead to a conversation about the times in their lives that were “crammed with toil” or what it felt like when they “lived by the rule” of others in a professional context. Further, they might start to write about their leadership desires. I could ask, “What is your leadership plum?” They might think about their plums in relation to their stories of professional toiling and living by someone else’s rule. Then we could wonder about the appearance of Plato’s ghost. They or I might ask, *Why Plato? When does the ghost appear? What does the ghost want? Why does the ghost make its presence known after “All his happier dreams came true?” Who and what are some of the ghosts that haunt educational leadership stories?*

As a way for students to give language to some of their emerging thoughts, I would ask them to experiment with scriptwriting as a way to deconstruct their leadership plums if “*All their happier dreams were to come true.*” For example, if the plum was the successful enactment of the principles of instructional leadership, they might stage a scene that illustrates what the school would look like and how different people in the school would feel if instructional leadership was fully and ‘successfully implemented’. Students could perform scenes and intervene in other students’ plays by introducing new conflicts or characters that complicate the leadership narratives and the assumptions that frame the initial scenes. As a group, they might think about the emotional demands placed on the characters and what happens as a result of the conflicts that are embodied on stage. The scenes and the interventions might provoke a “second-chance” interpretation of the plum or the inheritance of the plum’s mythology.

Students in leadership programs of study are witnesses to the workings of leaders in their own organizations and they may have a great deal to share about the peculiarities that are embedded in administrative performances. Indeed, many of them will have experienced

moments when they acted as trusted witnesses in their respective organizations. Here I refer specifically to the type of witnessing that “requires that the self empathically join the other in an absence by which they are both at that moment ephemerally constituted” (Butler, 2016, p.128). How one empathically joins another is a leadership art that, I imagine, takes a lifetime to develop. Leadership programs of study could inspire and further develop this artful practice.

Curtain

However tempting it might be to disavow the psychological difficulties imbued in leadership work, I believe psychoanalyzing leadership is well worth the investment. At minimum, those who study, research and practice in the field might be reminded by *Sincere Liars* to engage in continuous self-analysis to trouble the assumptions that dominate the interpretations of well-circulated administrative discourses. Additionally, the psychoanalytic concepts of countertransference, trauma and the phantom may assist scholars in educational administration to develop a language that treats the self and social fashioning of administrative identities in relational terms. Furthermore, these psychoanalytic concepts might be a way to talk about the emotional scar tissue that can accumulate and become entombed in the storied and inherited performances of educational leadership.

This study was for me an adventurous thought experiment. As I wrote the play, and thought about what I wrote and why I wrote it, I came to believe that writing a play gives the playwright permission to listen and argue with the voices in his or her head. The process was revealing in many ways. On a personal level, there were several moments in the writing process when I confronted some of my own memories and symptoms. For instance, the play made me question if it was the consultant with blue hair who made Martin disappear. Further, there have been times in my life when I lost touch with my cherished witnesses. I know something about

melancholia and what it feels like to be unable to dream. More importantly, I know something about relational witnesses and how they can help you to see yourself differently through their eyes.

The first time the ghostly characters in the play worked together to influence Martin and Karen's behavior, I found it unnerving and redolent of the moments when colleagues or students appeared as if they were being addressed by a force that was not physically present in the room. I began to dream vividly about the emergence of shared consciousness in leadership spaces. The soundscape I heard in my mind became echoes that now look like stage directions in the play. This imaginary world allowed me to think about the ghosts that haunt school hallways and the ancestors who affirm the shared legacy that is continuously being rewritten by the children, teachers and administrators in schools.

There are many more questions to be asked about the impact that witnesses have on administrative acts and there are other plays to write so that I may explore leadership in relational psychoanalytic terms. I know that I am just beginning to understand the interpretive potential of psychoanalysis in educational administration but I am exhilarated by the possibilities. To be sure, there were times it was difficult to be played by the play, but I appreciated the uncanny ways in which the process disoriented and enlivened the voices that whisper to me in my waking dreams.

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