

The Grounded Aesthetics in Everyday Lives: Theater as a site for critical pedagogy*

Yin-Kun Chang

(Assistant Professor, Department Early Childhood Education, National
Pingtung University of Education)

Po-Chang Chen

(Dean, National Academy for Educational Research)

Abstract

Aesthetic culture refers to a wide range of meanings, events, and practices – which do not merely occur through literature, art and music which is simply one modal formation of culture. Thus, this paper focuses on the possible formation of grounded aesthetic practice in educational field. In particular, this paper will use the concept of theater as an example to discuss the relationship among grounded aesthetic, critical pedagogy and practice in everyday lives. Through the theater, we might witness the possibility of the structural interplay of socio-cultural orders and political practices. Thus, in the theater, audiences constantly debate and analyze the relevant issues. In other words, this is the process of empowerment and aesthetic practice which strongly link to the realm of everyday experience.

Keywords: grounded aesthetics, critical pedagogy, theater of the oppressed

* We would like to thank anonymous reviewers for their encouraging comments and suggestion. One reviewer suggests that we can use the theoretical framework discussed in this paper to focus on the relevant theaters in Taiwan, such as Assignment Theater Group (差事劇團) and community theaters, in the following paper. We deeply appreciate this suggestion. Besides forum theater discussed in the text, one reviewer also reminds us to discuss relevant concepts and techniques from Boal such as invisible theater, rainbow of desire, cops in the head and legislative theater. We will discuss these concepts in the epilog.

Education is naturally an aesthetic exercise. Even if we are not conscious of this as educators, we are still involved in a naturally aesthetic project (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.118).

1. Prelude

In current trend of educational studies, many scholars pay attention to the aesthetic issue (like critical pedagogic camp) .¹ The term ‘aesthetic’ is derived from the Greek *aesthesis*, meaning perception, and that this term has broader connotations than any specific arts or even fine arts. In general, aesthetic culture refers to a wide range of meanings, events, and practices that make up social life in public as well as in private domains – which do not merely occur through literature, art and music which is simply one modal formation of culture. To follow this definition, this paper focuses on the possible formation of aesthetic practice in educational field. In particular, this paper, through theoretical debates, will use the concept of theater as an example to analyze the relationship among grounded aesthetic, critical pedagogy and practice in everyday lives.

In the work of the Frankfurt school critical theorists (e.g., Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse) or cultural studies’ tradition (e.g., Willis), the focus of aesthetics has been relocated and radically expanded to include those aesthetic signifiers commonly lost or left unattended in the flotsam of everyday life. Aesthetics, in my understanding of the conceptual expansion begun by the Frankfurt theorists, is not only a dynamic performance signifying a moment toward the realization of social phenomenon, but also a rehearsal of a revolutionary act, i.e., a rehearsal

¹ For instance, Beyer and Apple (1998, p.5-6) point out several dimensions for curriculum studies such as epistemological, political, ideological, aesthetic and so on. In aesthetic issue, they propose these powerful questions: How do we link the curriculum knowledge to the biography and personal meanings of the student? How do we act “artfully” as curriculum designers and teachers in doing this?

to acknowledge multiple forms of power exercised through various institutions and diverse forms of representation. This potential connection between understanding and action suggests a method for resisting and transcending false consciousness, and micro-organizing for localized revolutionary action.² In educational studies, Giroux and Simon (1989, p.230) follow this trend and define aesthetics as "any practice which intentionally tries to influence the production of meaning is a pedagogical practice," and in my opinion, education is naturally an aesthetic practice. If this claim about the natural position of education as aesthetic, then the constructions of education must work artificially against aesthetics in order to suppress it, and the recognition of aesthetics is also a restoration of a properly political context to the practice of educational techniques.

It is important in the beginning to focus on both *aesthetic-as-critical recognition* and *aesthetic-as-radical action*. Of course, this argument about the connection between recognition and action is not quite new. Numbers of Marxist thinkers, writing from the 1920s to the 1950s, struggled to keep alive a redemptive and radically utopian spirit as the basis for establishing a major connection between critical thought and action, like George Lukacs, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and so on. In order to develop this project, on the one hand, the aim of this paper is to analyze and explore the background of aesthetic from Marcuse and Willis. Then, on the other hand, their key arguments from divergent theoretical traditions will help to construct the configuration of aesthetic practice in everyday lives. That is, this paper

² In *Aesthetics and Politics in Education*, Apple (1992) questions how to shift the focus of critical pedagogy beyond static thinking and to turn attention to the dynamic political, economic, and ideological conditions. Thus, he calls for "doing away with aesthetic meanings"; that is, aesthetics as unveiled meaning that is built by the speaking and acting of participants, like teacher as an artist and an aesthetic critic.

uses the idea of theater to demonstrate the aesthetic practice in educational fields.

2. Relationship between Critical Pedagogy and Critical Aesthetics

(1)What is critical pedagogy?

Critical pedagogy has become one of the central, powerful discourses over the past two decades. It challenges traditional pedagogy whose strategies treat schooling as a simply and overtly technical function, a means-ends logic, which produces people as objects. On the contrary, critical pedagogy, as a way to work against blinding reproductions of cultural formations, is a broad term that accommodates a number of theoretical backgrounds. It deals primarily with two axes: on the one hand, it stands by a Neo-Marxist framework, deploying such terms as relative autonomy and overdetermination to analyze education as an arena of political contradiction and struggle in which various ideologies and interests are contested and mediated; on the other hand, it also adopts a "post" position as articulated in such notions as Foucault's discussions of the production of a power/knowledge dynamic. In addition, critical pedagogy seeks the opportunity of putting theory into practice to effect transformation. In other words, in its theoretical spectrum, critical pedagogy conveys criticism, deconstruction and transformation; and in its practical strategy, critical pedagogy questions hegemonic functions and power configurations which operate both at once. Darder, Baltodano and Torres (2003) analyze the five major influences in the formation of currently practiced critical pedagogy: (1) Twentieth-century educators and activists in U.S. tradition: John Dewey, Myles Horton, Herbert Kohl, Maxine Greene, Michael Apple, Ivan Illich, and so on. (2) The Brazilian influence: Paulo Freire, Augusto

Boal. (3) Gramsci and Foucault.³ (4) The Frankfurt school: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Leo Lowenthal, Eric Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Jurgen Habermas. And, (5) contemporary theoretical modes of thought: postmodernism, postcolonialism, cultural studies and feminism. In other words, there are many different articulations of critical pedagogy nowadays; however, there is no denying that it was born originally from Paulo Freire's discourse in most arguments.⁴ Freire's thinking insists on a deep connection between the culture of everyday life and radical politics. He defines culture as a field of struggle over meaning resulting in action with reflection, which integrates critical pedagogy into culture and politics. No doubt that he is concerned with praxis—the process of action and dialogue can be seen

³ Critical pedagogy incorporates the notion of hegemony from Gramsci and the notion of power from Foucault. However, there are some conflicts between these two notions. The Neo-Marxist theory identifies education as an arena of political contradictions and struggle in which various ideologies and interests are contested and mediated. The post-structuralist view of education tends to locate this contestation and mediation into Foucault's notion of power/knowledge. However, these two approaches are not absolute contradictions. For example, Butler (1991) combines both Gramscian and Foucauldian approaches into her debate for performativity. She considers that hegemony emphasizes the ways in which power operations to form our everyday understanding of social relations, and to orchestrate the ways in which we consent to (and reproduce) those tacit and covert relations of power; namely, contingent foundations. In the critical pedagogy camp, many scholars use multiple approaches together in their works. For instance, Roberts describes the key reference to postmodern thought in Freire's work, most notably in *Pedagogy of Hope* and concludes that Freire supported what he called "progressive postmodernism." Freire urged educators "to become more tolerant, open and forthright, critical, curious, and humble" (Roberts, 2000, p.112) in their attempts to overcome 'modern' tendencies in their thinking and working. Roberts concludes that ultimately, although Freire remained essentially allied to modernist thinking, he did promote unity in diversity as a means of confronting issues of oppression, whatever their nature. This is perhaps as close as Freire got to accommodating the challenges provided by postmodernism. Of course, we also can find similar evidences in relevant discourses by Michael Apple, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren and so on.

⁴ McLaren (2000, p.1) points out Paulo Freire is generally considered to be "the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy," though Freire himself seldom used the term critical pedagogy specifically. The heart of Freire's pedagogy revolved around an anti-authoritarian, dialogical and interactive approach which aimed to examine issues of relational power for students and workers.

as enhancing community and building social capital and leading us to act in ways that make for justice and human flourishing.

Critical pedagogic camp proposes certain principles to challenge the deadlock of knowledge, power, and instructional content in educational technology, but certain arguments also suffer from serious challenges because its critiques and actions reside within the male perspective. These arguments at times lack sensitivity to sexuality and gender considerations, such as Freire's failure to include the experience of women or to analyze or even acknowledge the patriarchal grounding of Western thought. For instance, Weiler (1994: 16-17) points out from a feminist perspective that *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is now striking in its use of the male referent. That is, not only the use of "men" for "human being," but also that the model of oppression implied in Freirean context is based on an immediate male oppressor. Weiler also noticed that the teacher is presented as a generic man, whose interests will be with the oppressed as they mutually discover the mechanisms of oppressions in a theorized Freirean context. In fact teachers are not abstract, but are raced, classed, gendered individuals of particular ages, abilities, and locations. Even in Freire's final books published in the late 1990s, this failure still exists. Weiler (2001, p.76) states that Freire continued his presentation of a liberatory teacher as transparent, and his failure to locate the teacher or to consider the various ways in which the teacher is imagined and positioned because of race or gender, remains troubling. What he fails to envision are the complexities of the intersection of the private and public, the density of everyday life. Thus, a feminist perspective challenges the assumptions and political effects generated by gender-blind critical pedagogy. From a feminist position, the discourse of critical pedagogy constructs a masculine subject, which renders its emancipatory agenda for gender theoretically and practically problematic.

Even though several types of critical pedagogy developed, from Paulo Freire's 'pedagogy of the oppressed' to bell hook's 'revolutionary feminist pedagogy', what all variations on this theme have in common is a focus on the shift in power from teacher to teacher and student together. Therefore, the major objective of critical pedagogy is to empower teachers and students to intervene in their own self-formation and to transform the oppressive features of the wider society that make such an intervention necessary. As I mentioned in the prelude, aesthetics is the performance of dynamic action toward the formulation of a social phenomenon, and for any educative act to be truly educative, it must have an aesthetic component. Thus, the changing the configuration of cultural politics in everyday life is also a performing of aesthetic acts. What does aesthetic mean in this context, and what does the aesthetic practice signify, especially in critical pedagogy? Let's bring these questions to the next section.

(2). Key theoretical Concepts: Aesthetic Dimension and Grounded Aesthetic

The first key concept in this paper, an aesthetic dimension, comes from Herbert Marcuse who responds to the concept of the one-dimensional man. Marcuse holds that reifies social relations, invests with a repressive ideology of control and false needs, permeate everyday life and thus insert themselves in unconscious and recognized personality dispositions. In one-dimensional society, for Marcuse, art and aesthetic experience remain one of the few junctures at which individuals gain access to critical insight. Marcuse's argument about the aesthetic dimension provides a meaningful theorization as a source of aesthetic sensibility or cognition that leads to critical insight and a movement against one-dimensional society. In his context, it is necessary to develop an aesthetic taste for differences in order to escape one-dimensionality through the ability to see another universe. In other words, the universe of

the aesthetic dimension provides the space for a second interpretation of reality or for people to want something different from their lives as they now live them. Without the insights into the nature of how life could be gained through aesthetic experiences, we would be trapped inside the problems of a one-dimensional universe. Marcuse presupposes a second dimension as the normal human state that remains a latent but mostly obscured potential for experience. By articulating the basis for a two-dimensional society, Marcuse means that there is an officially sanctioned reality associated with work and the state, and a separate personal reality in which individuals could develop according to their own rules and values. Marcuse (1964, p.11) calls this second dimension an "inner dimension of the mind in which opposition to the status quo can take root."

In addition, Marcuse emphasizes the aesthetic experience as an opportunity for the contradiction of one-dimensional reality. He considers, "Every authentic work of art would be revolutionary, i.e., subversive of perception and understanding, an indictment of the established reality, the appearance of the image of liberation" (1978, p. xi). Marcuse argues that through the aesthetic experience, art creates an opportunity for resistance and subversion. Operating at once as a vehicle of recognition and indictment, this vision of life and reality diverges from the one-dimensionality. Aesthetic experience creates an image of reality that is independent of normative reality, and such experience asserts the validity of the image as a contradiction to normative reality. Through aesthetic experience, the individual regains a second dimension of thought, which fosters an individual critical awareness. In sum, the concept of aesthetic in the Frankfurt school focuses on the notion of aesthetic as subversive, a critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world.

In cultural studies, it turns away from a literary-textual approach to

a nonreductionist social analysis of culture. In this camp, Paul Willis coins the idea of grounded aesthetic functioning in everyday lives. Willis (2000) uses art to specify a quality of human meaning-making: Human beings are driven not only to struggle to survive by making and remaking their material conditions of existence, but also to survive by making sense of the world and their place in it. He considers that “this is a cultural production, as making sense of themselves as actors in their own cultural words. Cultural practices of meaning-making are intrinsically self-motivated as aspects of identity-making and self-construction: in making our cultural worlds we make ourselves” (2000, p. xiv). In other words, art as an elegant and compressed practice of meaning-making is a defining and irreducible quality at the heart of everyday human practices and interactions. It is also at the center of the commonplace human uses of objects, expressive and other, producing and investing meaningfulness in our relations with others and with the objects and materials around us. Thus, Willis (1989, p.141) expresses that "a grounded aesthetic is a view of an aesthetic not necessarily enclosed in a single artifact, but one articulated as the creative quality in a process wherever meanings are carried." This also suggests a suspension of traditional canons of evaluation and of the notion that artistic activity is *sui generis*, unconnected with other social practices.

In *Common Culture*, Paul Willis (1990) argues for a theory of 'symbolic work' and 'symbolic creativity', resulting in 'symbolic extension', in contemporary youth culture. He discusses such activity as a grounded aesthetic⁵, part of the necessary cultural work of everyday life. In my understanding, creativities embedded in cultural forms are

⁵ He clearly defines a grounded aesthetic as follows: “The grounded aesthetics are the specifically creative and dynamic moments of a whole process of cultural life, of cultural birth and rebirth...The grounded aesthetics produce an edge of meaning which not only reflects or repeats what exists, but transforms what exists—received expressions and appropriated symbols as well as what they represent or are made to represent in some identifiable way The grounded aesthetics provide a motivation towards realizing different futures, and for being in touch with the self as a dynamic and creative force for bring them about” (Willis, 1990, p.22-23).

usually collective, where they are individual they can be seen as crystallizations of socially originated forms of meaning. The term ‘culture’ is taken here to indicate formal activity which is used to make the world meaningful in individual, interpersonal and wider social contexts: culture is *a way of being in the world*. In this vein, ‘art’ is understood as a particular set of cultural forms defined by more or less ‘traditional’ social institutions.⁶ On the contrary, Willis speaks of a grounded aesthetic to describe living figurative practices. For instance, the cultural activity of young people may not always be seen by such institutions as ‘artistic’, even though its significance in the everyday business of making meaning may be very clear. Such cultural activity might include hair and clothes styles, street jargon and slang, modes of consuming (and responding to) popular magazines and other media, and various uses of public space, as Williams (1977, p.156) has provocatively argued that “we have to reject the aesthetic both as a separate abstract dimension and as a separate abstract function. We have to reject aesthetic to the large extent that it is posited on these abstraction.” In sum, this tradition emphasizes ‘life as aesthetics’ where our daily life is ‘works of art.’

3. Aesthetic and Everyday Lives

Although everyday cultural or aesthetic practice may be outside the interests of the canonical art or drama education, we cannot ignore the importance of everyday cultural practice which plays mediation between structure and agency. This echoes to critical pedagogy which is invoked through the act of reading the word and world, as Freire and Macedo (1987, p.29) highlighted, by taking the measure of the world's indwelling in us as we are constructed as ethical and political subjects.

⁶ The traditional or institutional aesthetic has been firmly reified and cut off from human process: it is “in” things—paintings, pictures, texts and scores. On the contrary, the grounded aesthetics of informal cultural practices put sensuous human activity at the heart of things in the multiple performances of consumption rather than fixed performance to score (Willis, 2000).

Freire's insistence on the reading of the world as an integral element in reading the word has been widely acclaimed in education circles. This is similar to Marcuse's argument: aesthetic transformation becomes a vehicle of recognition and indictment (Macurse, 1978, p.9). For critical recognition, we need to create the way of seeing (or reading) toward social events. McLaren and Giroux (1997, p.37) point out that "this means teaching students to read, to interpret, and to criticize. In reading we produce a text within a text; in interpreting we create a text upon a text; and in criticizing we construct a text against a text. To read the world and the word means understanding the cultural and generic codes that enable us to construct words into a story—stories we can tell in our own words, and from different points of view." This is the so-called aesthetic-as critical recognition. In this vein, the implication of the aesthetic may sound very much like what is commonly called deconstruction or decoding.⁷

A text, in this way of rigorous reading, does not indicate a static situation; instead a textual approach underscores the dynamics of social construction. For example, in *Education as Text: The Varieties of Educational Hiddenness*, Gordon uses the conceptual foundations of Ricoeur and Geertz to develop the notion of education as a "text," and he analyzes the "hidden curriculum" of that text as it is read by all members of the society (Gordon, 1988). He hypothesizes that education becomes a text that reveals society's myths and beliefs. Namely, social phenomenon can be read textually. Such reading constitutes a negotiation between the subject's experience and the demands, suggestion, or implications of the

⁷ We should focus on the ideas of codification and de-coding in Freirian context (Freire, 1993). Freire's notion of codification may be understood as the representation of social practices in a particular and concrete form. In his own practice, Freire has used photographs as codification of social reality. In the exercise the photographs are presented to a group of learners. The object is to encourage critical deconstruction of the codification. This decoding involves a cognitive move from abstractions to the recognition of concrete structural relations in society.

text.⁸Meaning negotiation of meaning refers to evidence that audiences are not passive recipients of the communications of others; rather, they actively construct diverse and sometimes contradictory meanings for the same text. In addition, the process of negotiation is not merely an unproblematic picking and choosing between the multiplicity of meanings that a text seems to suggest. Rather, each process of media interpretation takes place within a context of socially constructed, unequal, and competing versions of reality embedded within the text. Texts may articulate dominant ideologies that naturalize and normalize inequalities, but the contradictory meanings of texts allow for reader to resist dominant ideologies or to refashion textual meanings in empowering ways such as subversive, ironic readings. For instance, Giroux (1997, p.165-166) expresses texts constitute a wide range of aural, visual, and printed signifiers. These are often taken up as part of a broader attempt to analyze how individual and social identities are mobilized, engaged, and transformed within circuits of power informed by issues of race, gender, class, ethnicity, and other social formations. Giroux (2000, p.63) further points out, texts are now seen not only as objects of struggle in challenging dominant modes of racial and colonial authority, but also as pedagogical resources for rewriting the possibilities for new narratives, identities, and cultural spaces. Focusing on the politics of representation, critical pedagogy calls attention to the ways in which texts mobilize meanings in order to suppress, silence, and contain marginalized histories, voices, and experiences. Critical pedagogy has in this way reasserted the power of symbolic reading and understanding as a pedagogic force in securing authority and a pedagogical strategy for producing particular

⁸For instance, Giroux (1992) uses Leon Golub's painting as an example and considers that aesthetic may be seen as rupturing the complacency of bourgeois hegemony and revealing in the most unstated or silenced social conditions. Golub's art attempts to engage rather than command the viewers. It provides images that in their raw immediacy attempt to both open up and peel away those layers of ideological repressions that tie all of us prevailing system of control and oppression.

forms of contestation and resistance. In sum, texts create particular meanings and modes of understanding that need to be investigated, and one can read or observe a text for social phenomena it conveys, and we can also reflect, deliberate and redefine the possible meanings of these social phenomena.

However, critical recognition alone is not enough to transform the cultural configuration of the individuals relations within a repressive institutional context. It includes critical recognition in addition to radical action. This is the so-called aesthetic-as radical action. In this line of thinking, one that follows from critical pedagogy, a transformative moment such as that suggested "conscientizacao" contains the ultimate goal for learners to exercise the right to participate consciously in the socio-historical transformation of their society (Freire, 1993). In other words, critical pedagogy not only remains powerful at the moment of critique, it also aims its critical force at transformation. Thus, the second meaning of aesthetic is based on real action, and practices of cultural struggle. No doubt that aesthetic is therefore also a radical democratic performance. Radical democratic theorists have tried to theorize the conditions that would increase opportunities for public-minded, participatory democracy in diverse communities. They imagine an ideal political community whose members sustain a great deal of individual autonomy and who debate many of their own assumptions. For instance, Habermas has theorized an ideal model of public-minded communication in a political community that depends on highly individual actors who can criticize themselves and other members without being held back by ideological blinders or by uncritically accepted traditions (Habermas, 1989). In brief, radical democracy goes beyond conventional political thinking into the far more dynamic domain of cultural representations and social practices. That is, democracy is defined at the level of social formations, political communities, and social practices, which are regulated by principles of social justice, equality, and diversity. Thus,

radical democracy begins with a radical critique of current forms of representation that limit the populace's decision-making to choices over who will govern. Members of such a community increasingly realize their individual potentials as they replace unquestioned traditions or habits with open discussion between free and equal individuals about their community's priorities. As Freire (1998, p.45) states, "one of the most important tasks of critical educational practice is to make possible conditions in which the learners, in their interaction with one another and with their teachers, engage in the experience of assuming themselves as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons; dreams of possible Utopias, capable of being angry because of a capacity to love." Thus, it's not difficult to image that students and teachers make new possible forms of cultural politics within pedagogy to extend the critical capabilities in an educational setting to reflect and deliberate social and cultural issues.

In addition, critical pedagogy is more interested in collective action so "individual critically is intimately linked to social critically" (Burbules & Berk, 1999, p.55). The key issue to reach this condition is to develop democratic intellectuals⁹: whose act on collective goals by the process of communication and deliberation. Discussion and debate about social reality can lead to the roots of a conflict and then, by identifying problems and their sources, one may develop possible solutions and work for change in advance. When a teacher can reflect and transform his/her own social practice, it means that s/he is attentive to the concrete social, economic, cultural and gender/sexuality issues in schools, and examines on the relationship between teachers and students. This also echoes Freire's ideas about problem-posing education and the beauty of teaching practice. Freire (1998, p.95) expresses that "I am a teacher proud of the

⁹ In critical pedagogy, intellectual needs to be connected to political and cultural struggle. Giroux (1988, p.125-128) stress that teachers must take active responsibility for raising serious question about what they teach, how they are to teach, and what the larger goals are for which they are striving. This is the jargon "transformative intellectual."

beauty of my own teaching practice, a fragile beauty that may disappear if I do not care for struggle and knowledge that I ought to teach. If I do not struggle for the material conditions without which my body will suffer from neglect, thus running the risk of becoming frustrated and ineffective, then I will no longer be the witness that I ought to be, no longer the tenacious fighter who may tire but who never gives up. This is a beauty that needs to be marveled at but that can easily slip away from me through arrogance or disdain toward my students." This is a dialogic practice in which there is no given message X. On the contrary, the message takes form in the process of interaction and communication between the educators and the learners. In short, the perpetual goal of radical democracy is to reconstruct and redistribute power from elites to various local publics, and radical democracy creates the condition for marginalized groups to invest in the debates over the meanings and natures of education as both discourse and critical practice. Thus, the struggle over the meaning and values is the performance of aesthetics through reflection and deliberation. Freire referred to this as achieving a "radical form of being" which he associated with "beings that not only know, but know that they know" (Freire, 1978, p.24). In my opinion, both recognition and action constitute the possible condition for the grounded aesthetic.

4. Theater as a Site for Critical Pedagogy

The grounded aesthetic in the educational field that does more than just serve the traditional concerns of the established arts curriculum and the drama/theatre workshop offer such potential. This idea would be emphasized influences from the everyday cultural practices.¹⁰ In

¹⁰ Beyer's critics could be a good example. Beyer (1985, p.391) criticizes that "the appreciation of genuine works of art (the so-called fine arts: painting, opera, ballet, classical music, certain aspects of the theater, and the like) is increasingly the domain of a cultural elite...Because art is seen as removed from other life choices and possibilities and as the almost exclusive province of the privileged, it has lost an important measure of its social significance." This is a reason why this paper emphasizes aesthetic value cannot be separated from our everyday experiences.

particular, this significance has been brought to the context of young people's aesthetic culture in late modern societies by such writers as Willis (1990), and Fornäs & Bolin (1995). In this paper, I should be speaking of significant aesthetic practices that are not necessarily acknowledged as art practices in the traditional way. I am looking at a cultural practice, not serving institutionalized culture, but rather ideally serving itself as a medium of cultural production anywhere. These practices may be labeled aesthetic, not only because of their affective and sensitive criteria, also because of the way that they are specifically dramatic or fictive and engage with the context in which we exist. Thus, theater, in my opinion, is a one site for aesthetic practice in critical pedagogy tradition. In this vein, play, drama and theatre are comprehended in terms of meaning, language and cultural practice. Drama can help learners find their true and unique selves; appreciate the talents and needs of others; feel the satisfaction of working successfully with a group; develop skills which will be useful for other endeavors; help add meaning to factual material; and so on. Drama includes all creative activities, conceptual learning and whole body involvement. That is, it is not just play acting, because theater often involves the audiences participating in 'mutual symbolic construction'.

Among relevant works in critical pedagogic camp, Augusto Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* is the best exhibition for aesthetic practice in everyday lives. Boal¹¹ calls for the aesthetic of liberation in theaters. He focuses on this formula of activation—seeking “to change the people”—‘spectators,’ passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon—into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action” (Boal, 1985, p.122). That is, the spectator delegates no power to the character (or actor) either to act or to think in one's place; on the

¹¹ Boal built his arguments based on the Marxist theater tradition developed by Bertolt Brecht and on Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Theater of the Oppressed is an original form of theater that combines play and games to produce social and political simulations.

contrary, one assumes the protagonic role, changes the dramatic action, tries out solutions, discusses planes for change - in short, trains himself for real action. Thus, aesthetic offers the rehearsal of evolutionary act. Boal begins by stating that the first stage in this theater is knowledge of the body, which involves a series of exercise by which one gets to know one's body, its limitations and possibilities, its social distortions, and its possibilities of rehabilitation. Then, one must make the body expressive: this step involves a series of games by which one begins to express one's self through the body, abandoning other, more common and habitual forms of expression (Boal, 1985, p.125-126). In Boal's opinion, the human being not only makes theater; it is theater itself. In this vein, initially cast and directed by its real-life protagonist are those performers who play themselves to express their social situations. When the joker invites the spectators to replace the protagonists, audiences act themselves in order to change the situation presented on stage. Thus, theater of the oppressed is the theater of the first person plural, a performance of a collectivity, an enactment of "we." For instance, Boal says that "The spectator does not relegate any power, so that others act instead of him. He liberates himself, acts, and thinks for himself. Theater is action" (Boal, 1985, p.48). At this point the spectator becomes actor, or spect-actor. Boal argues that by acting out on stage and attempting to change an oppressive situation, actors and spectators 'rehearsed the revolution' which would later happen in real life. Thus, *Theater of the Oppressed* plays as a tool to open up dialogue, in the spirit of Freirean dialogical education. As Berenice Fisher (1994) says,

"Boal's techniques themselves do not tell us when or how or with whom they best fulfill our political intentions. Figuring out how to use TO involves reflection, discussion, and decision-making...Without this political process, TO can be used unwittingly against us, either by people who think they are on our side or even by ourselves."

It is particularly important for us to focus on Boal's forum theater¹²: A group of people decide to enact an impromptu scene about a particular social problem. During the process of improvisation, the aim is to empower the masses by placing the theatrical means of production in the hands of the people rather than under the control of an elite group composed of director, playwright, and actors. It therefore articulates itself as a discursive practice which is conducive to the Freirian ideal of conscientization with its desire of breaking through the culture of silence.

In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Boal (1992) further mentions invisible theater, which is public theater involving the public, without their knowing it, as participants in the action. They are "spect-actors," the active spectators, of a piece of theater, but while it is happening, and usually even after the event, they do not know that—in place of real life—this is theater. So too, clearly, is such a performance real life because it is actually happening: the people are real, the incidents are real, and the reactions are also real. In other words, this is theater that does not take place in a theater building or other obvious theatrical context. In invisible theater, the spectators are transformed into a protagonist in the action, a spect-actor, without ever being aware of it. As Boal (1992, p.190) puts it, "we who look on, very often, almost always, we can be looking without seeing. Everything seems natural to us, because we are used to watching the same thing in the same way. However, it is sometimes enough to change the masks within a particular ritual for its monstrosity to become apparent." In sum, Boal's main goal is to foster critical thinking and break the actor/spectator dichotomy by creating the

¹² Forums are created around a short play (5 to 10 minutes long), usually scripted on-site, and based on the suggestions of the participants. The scene always enacts an oppressive situation, where the protagonist has to deal with powerful characters that do not let her achieve her goals. Since the problems are complex, the solutions are generally incomplete. This is why the process is repeated several times, always offering a new perspective on the subject. Boal uses theater as a tool, not as a goal *per se*. In other words, the ultimate objective of Forum Theater plays is not to produce beautiful or enjoyable performances, but rather to promote critical discussions among the participants.

“spect-actor,” a new category that integrates both by giving them active participation in the play.

If I could make some primary conclusions here, *Theater of the Oppressed* can be regarded as “popular theater,” as a normative discursive practice, engages in dialogues with others. In particular, the social utterance that we conceptualize as popular theater arises from and constantly interacts with other modes of social discourses. Thus, popular theater and street theater are further types of radical communication that we must include in this tapestry of rebellious cultural expression. For instance, Boal’s theater is designed for the street and other public places and as a provocation. His goal is to engage the audience existentially and politically within the physical space of their everyday terrain and preoccupations. His work especially illustrates the importance, for radical media activists, of not limiting themselves to providing counterfactuals, central as that exercise is, but developing ways to give their media bite. Thus, through the theater, we might witness the possibility of the structural interplay of socio-cultural orders and political practices. In this process, the redefining of reality enables individuals to negate some of the influences of unequal phenomenon and, thereby, to negotiate with the pervasive, consciousness-distorting influences of hegemony. Audiences, in the theater, constantly debate and analyze the relevant issues. This is also the process of empowerment and aesthetic performance also strongly link to the realm of everyday bodily experience. In short, we could say that theater offers people an opportunity to employ the critical categories of voice, difference, and community in ways that integrate the dialectical relationship.

5. Critical Review on the Empirical Studies of the Grounded Aesthetics in Everyday Lives

Among relevant empirical studies about theater and resistance followed by Boal’s insights, Auslander (1992, p.37) mentions the political

theater, which is the expression of a universal “counter-force of great unifying, celebrity, sexual, and the life-giving power.” This kind of theater would also invite audience participation, thus theoretically placing the audience on the equal footing with the performers in the creation of the event, privileging its communal aspect and, paradoxically, deprivileging the authority of the performers while offering them as models. In other words, the political theater is political in that it presents the theater itself as an alternative model of social interaction and political structure. Correspondingly, Hal Foster suggests that a resistant political/aesthetic practice might work to reveal the counter-hegemonic tendencies within the dominant discourse and even to propose a vision of “the utopian” or “the desired” along with a deconstruction of the process of cultural control (Foster, 1985, p.179). In other words, the aesthetic must strongly link to the realm of everyday bodily experience, where the political is democratic, and the demos is a collectivity of powerful bodies in motion.

Applying the concept of theater or critical drama to the educational context, Clar Doyle (1993) seems to be one of the first educators to make a strong link between critical pedagogy and drama with his book *Raising Curtains on Education: Drama as a Site for Critical Pedagogy*. In this book, he exposes the significant relevance of critical pedagogy to the drama educator and draws on extensive examples of how drama teachers might usefully incorporate critical pedagogy into their classroom. Doyle argues that dominant pedagogical practices aggressively assert the politics of representation by positioning students as spectators rather than actors; it envisions students as those who watch rather than political actors engaged in critical acts of cultural production, relegating students to the position of witness rather than conceiving of them as human agents who write and tell their own stories. Thus, Doyle demonstrates a keen sense of the importance of drama as a pedagogical practice that links theories, practices, and the politics of representation and the body. That is, drama is

a form of cultural production that enables students to apply their bodies and minds to the forging of links between language and experience, desire and affirmation, and knowledge and social responsibility. Drama offers people an opportunity to employ the critical pedagogies of voice, difference, and community in ways that integrate the dialectical relationship between affective and rational investments, individual experiences, and the collective stories. In addition, Chapman, Skyes and Swedberg (2003) have created a project that involves performance, workshops, and discussion and that, in their classroom, goes by the name *Wearing the Secret Out*. This is a thirty-minute performance piece about the real-life experiences of non-heterosexual physical education teachers and is performed in teacher education classroom, where spectators can discuss homophobia and heterosexism in teaching and learning environments. The content of this project interrupts heterosexist assumptions and biases that may be present in teacher education classrooms. It takes on the project of opening a discussion about identity and about how related assumptions play out in schools, particularly in relation to sexual identity. In other words, *Wearing the Secret Out* is designed to generate incomplete and multiple meanings. Underlying the performance is no claim that students will learn how to teach in less homophobic or heterosexist ways. Instead, the performance addresses multiple who's in the audience, creating possibilities for identification and dis-identification. Ultimately, the performance obliges students to make their own meaning about how to approach anti-homophobic teaching.

Rasmussen and Wright (2001) argue “dramatic knowing” is a form within the broader concept of a "cultural aesthetic," and highlight cultural production as distinct from merely socializing young people to arts canons or using theatre as an under-developed curriculum tool. In linguistic terms, dramatic knowing highlights a certain intentional, interactive, creative, and context-situated production of meaning.

Dramatic knowing is generative and breaks with social and cognitive structures; hence, drama as a way of knowing allows for more than just the mere repetition of conventional social life. Rasmussen and Wright (2001) also distinguish the ideas between *cultural-aesthetic* and *playful education*. It is important to look beyond the cultural institutions of art and pedagogy into the realm of the cultural aesthetic way of knowing. What this means is that drama as a way of knowing becomes somewhat independent of the societal constructed boundaries of life, art and education bridging across all three. Hence, this bridging implies a dramatic arts education that is less considerate of the status of representational art forms, less considerate of serving the "right" authorities of arts or education, and more concerned with *form-making*, *symbol-application* and *creation* as life practices that are part of a *cultural* production of meaning and knowledge. What this form of knowing then allows is the use of established arts canons that can be re-interpreted and changed according to the context of the creative producer. For instance, Gonzalez (1999) reflects on her own efforts as a high school theater directors to contribute, through theater, to student-empowerment strategies and democratic education. She proposes the similar terms "democratic casting" and "democratic directing" to indicate the difference between traditional directing strategies and those that take steps toward the liberating of student actors. Democratic casting means to increase students' contribution to the artistic concept of a teacher-directed play through an augmentation of their creative participation in, ownership of, and responsibility to the production. Hence, democratic directing represents an incremental shift away from conventional methods of directing, toward a method that leads to a more empowering rehearsal atmosphere. In my opinion, whether it takes place in the invisible theater or the political theater, resistance to hegemony gives rise to the aesthetic meanings that partake of such empowerment by means of their democratic elements.

6. Coda

Through theoretical analysis, we can get clear insight that aesthetic is to develop the resistance nature of counter-hegemonic culture. Peter McLaren (1991) has proposed the term enfleshment and refreshment to describe the dialectical interplay between oppression and resistance. Enfleshment connotes the process through which a body acquires certain habits over an extended period of time. These habits become ingrained such that they appear to us and to other as though they were natural rather than culturally constructed. Refreshment invokes a body's innate ability to learn alternative behaviors. Habits can be broken; what was learned can be unlearned, and new ways of being can be developed that are more enabling than old habits. In my mind, theater in educational field could be the cultural mechanism of refreshment, which involves people's questioning of the ways in which knowledge about the knowledge is constructed, collected, and applied by different sciences and discourses. In this matter, theater is not simply a reflection of culture but a critical interaction with that culture. In other words, theater can be seen as a cultural field where knowledge, language, and power intersect. This intersection can be an alternative place to create something outside so-called legitimate knowledge and practices. Through theater, we witness that social agents are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and a partial penetration of those structures, as the critical pedagogy camp insists. Through theater, we also witness that the aesthetic is a category which enables the performance of dynamic action toward social phenomena.

7. Epilog

Boal techniques for the Theatre for the Oppressed include: Forum Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Cop in the Head, Rainbow of Desire, and Legislative Theatre. Besides "Forum Theater"(論壇劇場) discussed in

the text, one reviewer also reminds us to discuss the two practical techniques from the arsenal of the Theater of the Oppressed, and relevant theater forms.

About two practical techniques, “Rainbow of Desire”(慾望的彩虹) explores the internal voices that complicate our capacity to achieve our goals. On the contrary, “Cops in the Head”(腦袋中的警察) explores the voices we have internalized; the voices of society that tell us “we shouldn’t / must” and stops us from taking action for fear of consequences. These two techniques explore how our internalized voices enable or disable us from taking action in the world. Through this exploration we can better discern our underlying motivations, the sub-texts that impede our capacity to be open to the world of others. In addition,

In addition, Boal also mentions invisible theater and legislative theater. Invisible theater (隱型劇場) is a form of performance in which the show is enacted in a place where people would not normally expect to see a show, for example in the street or in a shopping centre, similar to busking, except without the need for payment. Invisible Theater can give people who would not normally have the chance to see plays the opportunity to do so -- or, as is often the case, it can be performed without the knowledge of the 'audience,' which in such a scenario would consist of whoever happens to wander by. This can be done in order to help actors make a point publicly in much the same motivational vein as graffiti or political demonstration, or it can be done in order to help actors gain a sense of what a realistic reaction might be to a certain scenario; for example, a heated argument over a political or social issue. Legislative Theater (立法劇場), which pushes Forum Theater a step further, is Boal’s most recent innovation. This method of governing came to be called legislative theater in which ordinary people, usually restricted to the role of voters, were encouraged

to become legislators. In 1997, Augusto Boal became a vereador (legislator) on Rio de Janeiro's city council. He took his entire theatre company into office with him, and together they developed the Legislative Theatre. In this system, Forum Theatre was used to enable groups around Rio (from street cleaners to blind people) to investigate issues of importance to them; after the Forum, they had the opportunity to suggest laws that might be passed to help their various causes. After some editing and revising, Boal would then take these laws to the Chamber and propose them. In Boal's words, the proposition was 'To transform desire into law' (Boal, 1998).

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日常生活的紮根美學： 劇場作為批判教育學的實行地點

張盈堃

(屏東教育大學幼教系助理教授)

陳伯璋

(國家教育研究院籌備處主任)

摘要

美學的文化指涉著廣範的意義、事件與實行—美學並不只是透過文學、藝術與音樂發生而已，因為這些形態只是文化型貌的一部分而已。本文的焦點關切著在教育場域裡紮根美學的實行，這種動態美學實行的可能形式。特別之處在於本文使用劇場的概念作為例子，討論紮根美學、批判教育學與日常生活實行之間的關連。透過(受壓迫者)劇場，我們可以見證到社會-文化秩序與政治實踐，結構性相互影響的可能性。因此，在劇場裡，觀眾可以持續地辯論與分析相關的議題。換句話說，這正是一種彰權益能與美學實行的過程，特別地這樣的過程強烈地連結到日常生活經驗的領域，而非抽象的範疇。

關鍵字：紮根美學、批判教育學、受壓迫者劇場