

# **Dramatizing an Articulation of the (P)Artistic Researcher's Posthumanist Pathway to a 'Slow Professorship' Within the Corporate University Complex**

johnmichael rossi

## **Abstract**

Within academia, the practical arts researcher endures an unstable status owing, in part, to the diverse research methodologies gathered underneath the umbrellas of Practice-[led/based/as/for]Research. (P)Artistic Research is difficult to define, no less validate, in a result-oriented, data-driven, 'performance'-measuring culture. The (P)Artistic Researcher embodies dissent in such contexts, as the nature of most artistic research is process-oriented, collaborative and solution-finding. In response to Berg and Seeber's pleas for 'slowness' in *The Slow Professor*, this chapter reflects critically on the author's habits and history as a (P)Artistic Researcher while moving through a 'gap' in employment, from a dramatic resignation at one institution to an acceptance of a new post at another institution, one year later. This writing is contaminated by aspects of the author's 'playwrighting' practice, becoming a posthuman 'playper' in which forms of writing are intertwined, and structure, layout and grammatical positioning are used innovatively to produce new knowledge which is not 'in-prism-ed' by the narrow perspective of the corporate university. The content of the 'playper' offers a malleable frame with several pedagogical points of entry, including prompts, provocations and practical exercises which intend to slowly contaminate the classroom with a conscientious commitment to a posthuman understanding of the world.

## **Prologue**

Today's steadfast and hyperlinked neo-liberal tendencies have enabled an advanced neo-imperialist, globalized capitalism that de-humanizes the purpose of education, emphasizing 'schooling' the masses to stay within the borders of prescribed functionality, becoming gravely ill-equipped to solve worldly problems that we do not yet have the answers to. These new norms further enable systemic

racism and sexism, as is evident in current social discourses on the stages of both world politics and popular culture. Posthumanism counters this, forcing us to wonder at how narrow our entire conception of politics is,' while 'recognizing that a wide variety of seemingly disparate critical approaches (feminism, anticolonial and antiracist thought, technology studies, ecology, etc.) have a common ground in directly challenging the ways humanism has restricted politics and education' (Snaza, 2014: 41, 49). Adopting a posthumanist perspective within Higher Education offers educators a renewed ethos of learning that forges new pedagogical approaches where problematizing the human can (paradoxically) re-humanize the field.

To resist the pressures of the Corporate University Complex, Berg and Seeber (2016: 57) provide a pathway to Slowness, 'asserting the importance of contemplation, connectedness, fruition, and complexity... letting research take the time it needs to ripen'. My training as a theatre-maker, more specifically as a playwright and director, forges my methodological approach, which is framed by craft, tradition and intuition, in which writing and reading plays are embodied acts. I crawl through perspectives, characters, and imagined spaces expressed through theatre production. Drawing from my craft as a playwright, and my own ongoing development in pedagogical practice, in addition to the cybernetic triangle of human→animal→ machine which sets the stage for a posthumanist discourse as it relates to pedagogy, I consider two further triangulations:

playtext→reader→playwright and curriculum→learner→educator. These two triangulations overlap in the space of higher education learning, which becomes a site of resistance within the Corporate University Complex where the marketeers advocate their own triangle: degree→ customer→ salesperson. Brecht perhaps forecast this when he said: 'knowledge is just a commodity. It is acquired in order to be resold' (Willett, 1964: 72). Current systems of education being implemented by the Corporate University Complex continually disconnect the two key players, educator and learner.

Within Academia, the theatre practitioner endures an unstable status owing, in part, to the dispersed and diverse research methodologies that are gathered underneath the umbrellas of

Practice[led/based/as/for]-Research. Any research methodology that involves arts practice maintains a problematic existence within Academia, and perhaps it is the range of suffixes to ‘practice,’ that initially keeps the researchers of this ilk on shaky ground. In this chapter, I will use the term ‘(P)Artistic Research’ as shorthand for ‘Practical Artistic Research,’ inclusive of the various iterations of practical research in the arts. (P)Artistic Research is difficult to define, no less validate, in a result-oriented, data-driven, ‘performance’-measuring culture. The (P)Artistic Researcher, by nature, stands in opposition to the prevailing corporate university culture with its individualistic and competitive ethos, as the nature of most artistic research is process-oriented, collaborative and solution-finding.

Haraway’s seminal work, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991) examines the world as ‘radically hybridized, contaminated, integrated’ (Snaza, 2014: 43), while Patrice Pavis discusses the ‘contamination of practice by theory,’ specific to postmodern theatre, explaining that ‘theory overflows into practice; it becomes difficult to separate or distinguish the apparatus of production/reception from the spectator’s hermeneutic activity... Theory is no longer nourished by an uncontested a-priori practice; rather theory generates that practice’ (Pavis, 1992: 71). This chapter is ‘contaminated’ by aspects of my playwrighting practice. As a becoming-‘playper’, the chapter draws from and intermingles aspects of my playwrighting practice, in order to compose a poly-vocal analysis of my current practical arts research as it relates to my posthumanist pedagogical approaches and my theatre-making craft. As the chapter takes on the structure and form of a dramatic play, this ‘playper’ will reveal four semiautobiographical characters: THE CRACKADEMIC, FIRE IN DA BELLY, THE HAIR and THE PRIVILEGED ALLY. Here, my playwrighting practice is entangled with Barad’s (2014: 168) notion of ‘diffraction,’ as ‘an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling [where] there is no moving beyond, no leaving the ‘old’ behind’. These characters (a workaholic, a flame, a hair and an id) are ‘diffractions’ of my (P)Artistic Researcher-self.

The four diffractive characters form a dialogue crafted through a multi-linear narrative. This models an approach to academic writing that evokes the embodied nature of (P)Artistic Research, and embraces Gertrude Stein's (1935) notion of the 'landscape play' to deny Aristotle's traditional 'centre.' In his *Poetics*, Aristotle (1970: 32) establishes 'six constituent elements' of drama where he emphasizes the necessity for a plot that 'ought to be both unified and complete, and the component of events ought to be so firmly compacted that if any one of them is shifted to another place, or removed, the whole is loosened up and dislocated'. But Barad's (2014: 176) entanglements 'are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entanglings entail differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings. One move – cutting together-apart.' The processes of playwrighting and play reading continue to be governed by Aristotelian aesthetics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, Stein's 1935 essay, *Plays*, expands the possibility of what a play could be. For Stein, the play is centre-less, and the experience of the play is created around the reader's own unique perspective, which inevitably loosens Aristotle's concrete structure. Stein was a student of psychologist William James, and her larger body of written work is anchored within James' notion of the 'continuous present,' which can be described as the reader's experience of time as fluid with many events occurring simultaneously in his/her mind (Miller, 1949: 19). In Stein's 'spatial conception of dramaturgy... the activity of thought itself creates an experience' (Marranca, 1977: x). I see Stein's 'landscape play' as providing a foundation for a posthuman approach to not only playwrighting, but also the curating of an experience, albeit in the space of a theatre, a classroom or rehearsal laboratory. The dramatic structure of the 'playper' will attempt to make visible my own developing posthuman understandings of the world in order to inspire new curricula for 21<sup>st</sup> century learners. As you experience this 'landcape,' I invite you to let the diffractions ricochet between the two triangulations introduced (playtext→reader→playwright and curriculum→learner→educator). I hope to meet you on the other side, as a collaborator in this journey.

## ACT 1

*The theatre artist turned academic has left Academia. He wonders whether or not he should re-enter this displaced community in its current state. His passion for education pulls him in that direction, but his stubbornness and arrogance require him to find a pathway back on his own terms. Perhaps this is his tragic flaw, from which a series of crises will emerge?*

In a 2013 *Guardian* article titled, *Open-plan offices were devised by Satan in the deepest caverns of hell*, Burkeman affirms that this ‘cheap way of cramming more people into less space’ is ‘associated with less persistence at challenging tasks, lower motivation, higher stress and blood pressure.’

Coincidentally, it was that same year, when my former employing institution crammed the Performing Arts and English departments into a makeshift open-plan office, just prior to my being hired as a full-time permanent lecturer.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am walking away. In the rain.  
I am walking away from my empty desk  
in that open-plan office in that badly-shaped building  
on that poorly constructed campus that  
part of me, hopes to never step into  
again.  
I suspect and expect that, in time, I might...

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

Back in NYC, ‘Reichman,’ a close friend and long-time collaborator, reveals that he is hungry to form a new theatre group to engage in a long process without the pressure of a production. He asks me if I was aware that Aeschylus’ *Prometheus Bound* was part of a trilogy of plays; Of the other two parts, he explains, only fragments remain. I am not aware of this. **Sparks.**

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

Today was a ‘swan song’ sort of a day; dramatic  
pomp and circumstance:  
The commencement of my first graduating class:  
A ‘motley crew’ who, I met when everything felt promising and new. Now,  
we get to leave that place together.

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

Reichman is a Shakespeare-lover, whereas I prefer the Greeks.  
He **strikes the match:**  
Would I be interested in writing an adaptation of the Prometheus trilogy?

### THE CRACKADEMIC

I sat on stage, looking into the sea of shining faces about to enter the 'real world;' Tarnished, I saw myself reflected in them.  
I sat next to Professore Poetry, my mentor.  
In those in-between moments, we made jokes and snapped 'selfies.'

### THE HAIR

People keep asking me about his facial hair:  
A long beard adorned with an over-sized handle-bar moustache,  
accented by the white hairs that were once auburn traces of his  
mother. His face has become its own spectacle:  
A display of madness, and a mask...He has gone mad!  
I have been plucked, by him, a trichotillomaniac.

### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i have been procrastinating with the writing of this play, *d;vine*,  
which has been shelved in my mind for quite some time. i am  
afraid of this piece. i am afraid of its relevance. i am afraid  
that i am too naïve to do it justice. But, i trust that i will tend to  
it soon. It is unavoidable.

Everything I know deeply, I know through having worked on a play. The process of producing a theatrical work is a learning event that continues beyond the performance itself. I am still reflecting on and learning from works that I produced as an undergraduate, almost twenty years ago. I often discuss the nature of plays with my students, as riddles, or onions, with many layers to be unpeeled by the various makers and readers involved. Plays are peculiar puzzles that must be solved, yet have no concrete solution or fixed final picture. Plays can be simultaneously direct and covert. They can agitate, educate, provoke and yes, entertain. A play implies critical thinking, and for makers and readers alike, a play invites collective and creative problem-solving. For me, playwrighting is an embodied process; I write on a hunch, from my gut. Here is the dilemma for playwrights (and most artists) who become (P)Artistic Researchers: as playwright, I layer, I veil and I soak the work in symbolism. I flirt with subtext. I create a work that requires analysis from a multitude of perspectives that, in order to curate an aesthetic and dramatic experience, are preferably not explained directly. But, as (P)Artistic Researcher, I must critically unpick and unpack these guttural, embodied intentions. Stein's radical positioning of the play as an open field to experience a 'continuous present' doubles over in the classroom, where '*the play's the thing*' to be studied (Shakespeare,

2018: 60). Bennett's (2004: 348) notion of 'thing-power,' which suggests 'the possibility that attentiveness to (nonhuman) things and their powers can have a laudable effect on humans,' both problematizes, and is problematized by, the play: the play has a life which is both material, as literature, and ephemeral as live performance. The 'thing-ness' of a play is questionable, and ricochets between Stein and Aristotle.

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i can only recently begin to articulate this play: *d;vine*. It stems back to my fascination and intrigue with Dante's *Divine Comedy*. i first encountered *The Inferno* when i was in high school. i studied *Paradiso* in a university class called *The Philosophy of Love*.

During the first two years in my first permanent position at an academic institution in the UK, there was a spiked increase in the awareness of police shootings of African Americans, usually unarmed, in the US. I say 'awareness' because it is the advent of technology, the ability to document and 'livestream' these horrific events that has forced (some) white Americans to confront the realities of what it means to be black in America. Hill (2017: xi) states that in a 'surveillance society' where 'everything we do is being watched, we can actually watch the things we do, and see them for what they are.' This optimism for society's capacity to be critically reflective, ebbs and flows in my heart.

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i must come to terms with the reality that despite my education, my liberal upbringing and all of the friends, lovers, colleagues and students who have familiarized me with, and included me in aspects of Black culture; that i know very little of the Black experience. And for all that i think i know, i must admit that this knowledge is not **embodied**. i too, am part of a tradition of naiveté and ignorance within White culture.

The 'Black Lives Matter' movement emerged during this period. The terms 'White Guilt' and 'White Privilege' were increasingly becoming part of public discourse. I felt compelled to acknowledge my own experiences of guilt and privilege, but had no tools for doing so. I decided to

confront these terms with the tools I did have: theatre-making and research. I aimed to use playwrighting to become ‘woke;’ to position myself as an ally in the fight for social justice. I suspected that the play developing in my mind could have the potential to awaken others: ‘Differences are within; differences are formed through intra-activity, in the making of ‘this’ and ‘that’ within the phenomenon that is constituted in their inseparability (entanglement)’ (Barad, 2014: 175).

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

*d;vine* is a moving poem that **ricochets** between three realities: ‘This,’ ‘That’ and ‘Neither-This-Nor-That’. Two stories are happening simultaneously, and ‘Neither-This-Nor-That’ is the liminal glue that connects ‘This’ and ‘That,’ through choral refrains representing a highly reflective **woke** state.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

Following the graduation ceremony, I stopped by that open-plan office to retrieve the last of my personal belongings. I left a few traces of myself: A misunderstood poem I once wrote in response to working conditions. I taped it underneath the desk; a gift for the sorry soul that will occupy that space after my departure. On the chalkboard wall, cluttered with dates of meetings and acronyms, I left a chalky message: *Stay Strong. Don’t Drink the Kool-Aid.*

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

In the weeks following my resignation, I dove into a surge of writing, drafting an adaptation of Aeschylus’ *Prometheus* trilogy, the project **ignited** by Reichman

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

*d;vine* will submerge the reader in an experience where one must dig deep in the memory bank of time to acknowledge that—

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

A growing resistance to a culture steeped in corporate greed was embedded in my conscience, **fueling** this new telling of *Prometheus*, not to mention the recent Brexit vote and *the (ir)resistible rise of* Donald J. Trump towards the presidency.

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

To acknowledge that: *Something is rotten in the state[s]*— *d;vine* calls attention to a plague: a dis-ease that continues to manifest. It will overwhelm purposely, to shake the amnesia, compelling us to rip the tumor out, with our own bare hands.

## THE HAIR

WHY are we resisting?! WHAT are we resisting?

Berg and Seeber (2016: 6) see ‘individual practice as a site of resistance.’ The mask that will become ‘D.Spair’ was gifted to me by Dr. Myer Taub, a friend and colleague from South Africa. Taub’s masked character, ‘JuJu the Pig,’ has collaborated with my masked character, ‘Dottore JoMiRo,’ in *The S’Kool of Edumacation*, an ongoing series of performance interventions staged within classroom motifs. Taub had plans to visit London, and I suggested he bring JuJu. He did not bring JuJu, but instead brought a papier mâché mask resembling the distraught figure in Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, presented as a peculiar peace offering, or just another Taub-ian provocation.

## THE HAIR

Why did Taub bring him this crude mask?

As he stares into the mask, I begin to imagine: A character trapped in a Kafka-esque nightmare, continuously encountering absurd situations, burdened with bureaucracy and unthinking, uncritical, un-human peoples.

Rather than agonizing over this tragic state of affairs, the character will be playful and childlike; an innocent disruptor of the System. Agency.

*(pluck, cling, fade...)*

## ACT 2

*The (P)Artistic Researcher embarks on a 'Resignation Tour:' Stonehenge, Croatia, New York City, Providence (Rhode Island), the gorges of Ithaca in upstate New York, Toronto, Niagara, Sao Paulo and The Basque Country. His drive and hunger to create engaging, meaningful and socially conscious work burns in his belly. This is the beginning of his academic breakdown.*

In a refusal to be 'serious about categories,' Haraway (Franklin, 2017: 51) prefers to think in terms of 'companioning' and suggests that 'compost is a place of working, a place of making and unmaking ... a place of failure, including, well, culpable failure. Compost can be a place of doing badly.' Haraway's compost(humanist) viewpoint brings the two triangles (playtext→reader→playwright and curriculum→learner→educator) in parallel where playtext and curriculum become palettes of possibilities unwritten, written and re-written; offering a vast landscape to absorb meaning framed by interpretations, stagings and readings, where participants (playwright/reader and educator/learner) are in companionship with one another, making and un-making.

### FIRE IN DA BELLY

In my garden, I shift between drafting material for *Prometheus* and pulling weeds, mowing the lawn and planting flowers.

I sit in the **hot sun** for hours, scribbling ideas, consulting *Wikipedia* and conducting *Google* image searches, while re-arranging Aeschylus' fragments through trial and error. Writing was never been so freeing.

### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i delve in: How do i come to terms with my own privilege?

This privileged position: to quit, to resign, to walk away.

To be afforded the opportunity *to be or not to be*. Even getting that job that i quit, was a privilege. Accruing a modest savings while working was a privilege. Moving to the UK to pursue a doctoral degree funded through US government loans was a privilege.

Maintaining resident status to remain in the UK, with an EU passport acquired through a somewhat ironic reversal of my great grandfather's emigration to the US; To reclaim Italian citizenship through my bloodline, was a privilege. To cross borders without too much hassle, with two passports, is a privilege.

### THE HAIR

Taub's mask has its first public appearance at an anti-Brexit march in London. The character is undeveloped and yet to be named, but the character wants to be at the march.

The march is also *his* return to activism. Ironic, since he has been teaching a political performance module for the past four years. I am uplifted by the communal experience of the protest. The unnamed character takes part in a re-staging of the iconic image of the Battle of Iwo Jima, using the EU and Gay Pride flags. The mask both detaches and connects him to the movement in ways that I do not yet understand.



Figure 2 'D-Spair' participates in re-staging of 'Battle of Iwo Jima' (June 2016)

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i am not aiming to be a hero, or a savior, or a protagonist in writing this work. i am trying to relinquish the position of the protagonist, while confronting a history and heritage of antagonism. i am antagonizing my self, to pro-tagonize the rest (?)

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

I am back in New York. Reichman has organized his new group for a reading of the first draft of *(Promethe)ūs*. Putting the play on its feet, we slowly **burn** through this new material.

Through *d;vine*, I am waking up; becoming 'woke:' strengthening my social conscience and beginning to think more critically about my role within socially engaged work. Through *(Promethe)ūs*, I am reclaiming my writerly rhythm. Through the mask, I become more acutely aware of how far away from my own practice I have become. I consciously turned the mirror inward, in order for my work to reach outward; to become accessible, and perhaps even, to have 'impact.'

### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am applying to non-academic jobs, but my academically framed CV feels weighted, heavy, over-intellectualized. How do I frame myself? This new identity of form-filling triggers an endless cycle of overly critical self-reflection.

### THE HAIR

I am in hot and humid New York. Sticky.  
It is his 35<sup>th</sup> birthday and he is chopping off his beard; but keeping the moustache, which continues to get bigger, and more ridiculous. Mad. Mad Dali.

### FIRE IN DA BELLY

I am back in London, **cooking** up a revised draft of *(Promethe)üs*.

### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i am trying to let go of the narrative. But, it feels like i'm just putting another white male at the center of the narrative, and celebrating his process of getting **woke**.

### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am cut-and-pasting my life away. I frame, un-frame and re-frame myself according to 'essential' and 'desirable' criteria, all redundant.

### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

i am gaining the courage to write this play, by tending to it each day. My writer's muscle is being flexed. i am no longer waiting for the **ebb and flow** of inspiration to determine productivity.

### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am attempting to squeeze into my blue suit.  
I have an interview for a Senior Lecturer post.

### THE HAIR

I am lingering in a sea of text, lost in the words of others; the Union Square 'post-it' protest: *This is not the end*.  
Happy Christmas in New York.



Figure 3 Union Square ‘Post-It’ Protest (December 2016)

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am notified that I am the ‘Reserve Candidate’ and will receive follow-up once their first choice accepts or declines. I wait several days. I build up the courage to send a follow up e-mail: No reply. Weeks later, I write to the Head of Department: No reply.

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

It is the first week of 2017: I am a passenger in a car that was just pulled over by the Providence police, because of a burnt out light bulb above the license plate. We are coming from a workshop that D-K, a close friend and long-time collaborator, organized in order to read aloud and explore extracts from *d;vine* with a group of local actors. The officer plays a power game with the notoriously mouthy D-K, who has no patience for authority. The officer calls for backup. Things get heated. All I can think is: if we were Black, one or both of us would already be dead bodies on the street. Privilege.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

Another Institution sends a body-less email, with just a header: *Unsuccessful Application*. At least they responded. I slip into reclusiveness.

#### FIRE IN DA BELLY

It is the first week of 2017. We are work-shopping the second draft of *(Promethe)üs*. We tangle ourselves in discussions around language and the undeniable parallels between Züs and Trump, but we do not want this to become a Trump play—

*(The fire goes out, unexpectedly. Fire In Da Belly disappears, unexplained: **Even through the ashes, growth can flourish.**)*

## THE CRACKADEMIC

Another Human Resources e-mail from another academic institution:  
'We are not ready to let you know if  
your application has been successful.'  
I never hear otherwise. I guess they're still trying to figure me out. I  
can't blame them. I am too.

## THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

It is the first week of 2017. On the subway platform for a  
Flatbush-bound train, i notice two young ladies who look familiar.  
They get off at the same stop and are heading in the same direction.  
They keep looking back at me and one blurts out: *I swear I know you!*  
They are former students from Brooklyn Theatre Arts, a high school  
that i helped to form and develop several years back. We have an  
explosive laugh on the street, and they show me pictures of their  
babies.

Being out of the classroom for the first time in ten years, I have come to realize how much the act of teaching contributes to my research. The opportunity to dialogue with curious minds and test out rough ideas in the classroom, has been a privilege that I have overlooked, and one I deeply miss. In a classroom where trust has been nurtured, students become participants and collaborators in my body of work – but this 'entangled' state can no longer think in terms of my work/my body. 'To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intrarelating' (Barad, 2007: ix). Who else would I engage with this work, if not my students? My colleagues at the Corporate University Complex were far too frazzled and bogged down to engage in an exchange of ideas. Oftentimes, we were teaching in vacuums, unaware of what theories or practitioners were being discussed in other modules, and doubling over each other's efforts rather than reinforcing them. Most of my colleagues had no comprehensive knowledge or understanding of the work I was engaged with, and I must admit, I had little time to be a participant in their research. The work we do as educators is continuously being documented in the minds of our students, and rarely do we ever get to see or understand how such knowledge is or isn't applied outside of the academic bubble. In the age of the corporate university, the rate of burnout for academics is far too

high, and the emphasis on teaching and learning is far too low. In the UK, we are tongue-tied by talk of the REF (Research Excellence Framework) and TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework), exhaustingly long, un-poetic documents compiled into a set of guidelines that determine excellence based on the ‘impact’ of an ‘output.’ From the outside, I straddle the fence on whether or not it would be a healthy decision to re-enter Academia (if I ever left).

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

*d;vine* is the story of a character who cannot let go of the narrative but desperately wants to. He wants to frame himself frameless...

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

At the suggestion of a concerned friend, I look into my eligibility for receiving ‘benefits’ to help make ends meet. I enter the *JobCentre*, where I meet a new cast of characters...

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

An idea crops up! What if *d;vine* is written alongside a social justice curriculum that helps to pull apart the aesthetic and poetic layers of the text, to stimulate intellectual curiosity, to encourage critical thinking and self-reflection, to equip young people with truth-seeking and fact-checking skills, to develop the imaginative muscle, and to celebrate the form of the play as a communal learning experience that also embraces the solitary confines of reading! Impact.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

I need to pee. I rushed from that job interview to get to my compulsory appointment at the JobCentre. I sign my name to the electronic pad to document my attendance. Before leaving, I ask:  
*Which way to the bathroom?* My ‘Job Coach’ responds:  
*We don't have toilets for clients. People were doing things in them.*  
*And we're not insured if something happens.* I rubber band it. Output.

In order to justify what it is that we are doing, just to keep doing the things that we are supposed to be doing, we bend, twist and turn our practicing selves; distracted, displaced and derailed from our unique research paths. This is no way to conduct research, or make theatre, or educate the next generation. As a result, educators and learners are being reduced to ‘useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person's sufferings and achievements’ (Nussbaum, 2016: 2). For the (P)Artistic

Researcher, the personal is unavoidable. One's personal narrative, by way of collaboration, inevitably becomes a multi-linear narrative.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

I am heading back to that campus, for the first time since I left.  
I was **awoken** by a call from a former colleague, weeping: Professore Poetry passed away.

#### THE PRIVILEGED ALLY

*d;vine* is in me. It lives in me. i can feel it—it's fighting to get out. It is urgent, but i choose to take my time with it.

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

Professore Poetry had a magic about him: A great provocateur, with an exceedingly high bar of expectations. He often joked about his fascist approach to classroom management. He had a wicked sense of humor: crude and raunchy. His heart was full of high drama at its best; classy, yet bawdy. I scroll up an old chat-screen on my phone, to re-read the last message I had received from Professore Poetry:  
*'There are cures around the world and at least I will travel to try them. [INSERT NAME OF THAT INSTITUTION] literally 'killed' me with two weeks of evil just before I first collapsed. But I have better things to do than wasting time hating those pillocks. Miss you badly,'*

*(pluck, linger, burn)*

#### EPILOGUE

*The overall socio-political climate around the globe has distracted the (P)Artistic Researcher. As his creative work refines his critical lens, he is unraveled by his attempt to (re)frame himself; He discards the frame; too many diffractions. This is his dénouement.*

#### THE CRACKADEMIC

On a plane back from Sao Paulo. Delirious.  
I have been offered a permanent post at a UK university in a hauntingly familiar role:  
Programme Leader for a BA Honours degree in Drama. I am optimistic. Cautiously optimistic.

The 'entangled' nature of research and practice offers an 'approach to the world that is more *intra*active, more mutually co-constitutive rather than one that is more *inter*-active, where ontologies

separately encounter each other in space and time' (Bayley, 2016: 48). In this work, I attempt to resituate the discourse on (P)Artistic Research, through a blending of writing forms: academic and dramatic. Emerging from this playper's entanglement of research and practice, diffracted, I offer these 'six constituent elements' to being a (P)Artistic Researcher on a posthumanist pathway to a Slow professorship:

- Actively Questioning
- Experimenting
- Taking Risks
- Operating On Hunches
- Drawing From Past Experiences
- Being Vulnerable, Humble and Reflexive

The spine to these 'elements' is forged by collaboration and reflection. For Berg and Seeber, 'collaboration is about thinking together' where 'Slow Professors act with purpose, cultivating emotional and intellectual resilience to the effects of the corporatization of higher education' (2016: 90). The edges of the triad of triangles (human→animal→ machine, playtext→reader→playwright and curriculum→learner→educator) become the tools that empower us to make 'agential cuts' carving a 'continuous present' where educators and learners can 'begin to *experience* the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally' (Bennett 2010: 10). I view my new post as an opportunity to forge theory and practice as a Slow professor with posthumanist underpinnings to ask students to engage 'with the 'human' as problematic' (Snaza, 2014: 41) as I myself search for 'individual agency within the institutional context' (Berg, 2016: 4). Slowing down, here, becomes a political tool rather than coping mechanism. These elements, I believe, hold 'the potential to disrupt the corporate ethos of speed' (11).

To conclude, inconclusively, I return to Haraway's 'compost,' which 'includes living and dying... the questions of finitude and mortality are prominent, not in some kind of depressive or tragic way, but those who will return our flesh to the Earth are in the making of compost' (Franklin, 2017: 51). Adopting a 'Slow' posthumanist outlook from within my research practice has stimulated a process of diffraction in both my playwrighting and pedagogical approaches, as well as navigating the circumstances given by the Corporate University Complex. My lesson plans have been re-imagined

through the opportunity to design curriculum in my new role. An incomplete Act 3 to this playper was drafted with the residue of classroom sessions, teaching moments and failures from my first year in the (com)post. More poignantly, this research has diffracted and diffused my burning angst with/in the Corporate University Complex. The characters in this playper are traces, reminders, to shift perspective. The posthumanist landscape remains a vast and open field; composting conversations, curricula and creative production in companionship.

## References

- Aristotle. (1970). *Aristotle poetics*. Trans. Gerald F. Else. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.
- Barad, K. (2014). Diffracting diffraction: Cutting together-apart. *Parallax*, 20(3), 168–187.
- Bayley, A. Trans-forming Higher Education. *Performance Research*, 21(6), 44–49.
- Bennett, J. The force of things: Steps towards an ecology of matter. *Political Theory*, 32(3), 347–372.
- Bennett, J. *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berg, M. & Seeber, B. *The slow professor: Challenging the culture of speed in the academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Brecht, B. (1981) *The irresistible rise of Arturo Ui*. New York: Methuen Drama.
- Burkeman, O. (2018) Open-plan offices were devised by Satan in the deepest caverns of hell. *The Guardian* [online] 18 November 2013. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2013/nov/18/open-plan-offices-bad-harvard-businessreview> [Accessed 1 May 2018].

- Franklin, S. (2017). Staying with the manifesto: An interview with Donna Haraway. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34(4) 49–63.
- Haraway, D. (1991) A cyborg manifesto: Science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century. In: *Simians, cyborgs and women: The reinvention of nature*. London: Routledge.
- Hill, M. L. *Nobody: Casualties of America's war on the vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and beyond*. New York: Atria Books.
- Marranca, B. (1977). Introduction: presence of mind. In C. V. Vehten (Ed.), *Last operas and plays by Gertrude Stein*. (pp. vvii – xxviii). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Miller, R. S. (1949). *Gertrude Stein: Form and intelligibility*. New York: The Exposition Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Pavis, P. (1992). *Theatre at the crossroads of culture*. Trans. Kruger, Loren. London: Routledge.
- Shakespeare, W. (2018). *Hamlet*. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare.
- Siegel, C. (Ed.) (2015). *Aeschylus' Prometheus Trilogy*. New York: Omo Press.
- Snaza, N., Appelbaum, P. Bayne, S., Carlson, D., Morris, M., Rotas, N., Sandlin, J., Wallin, J., Weaver, J. (2014). Toward a posthumanist education. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 30(2), 39–55.
- Stein, G. (1935). Plays. In C. V. Vehten (Ed.), *Last operas and plays by Gertrude Stein*. (pp. xxix – lii). Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Willett, J. (Ed.) (1964). *Brecht on theatre: The development of an aesthetic*. New York: Hill and Wang.