What difference does a dramaturg make? While recent publications on dramaturgical practice have begun to recognize the subjective and even creative influence of the dramaturg, this turn has been largely restricted to the field of production dramaturgy. When it comes to new play development, particularly of text-based, single-authored scripts, dramaturgical influence remains a fraught and under-examined subject. Drawing on original archival research, this dissertation examines the nature and implications of developmental dramaturgy as it was practiced by influential Canadian dramaturg Urjo Kareda. Chapter one lays the groundwork for this study. Engaging with and troubling the received narrative of Kareda’s role in Canadian theatre history, this chapter draws on Kareda’s published writing and interviews as well as a range of extant archival records in order to reconstruct the subjective tastes, priorities, and preoccupations that informed his dramaturgical practice. Building on this foundational sense of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, subsequent case studies examine the influence of Kareda’s feedback on three scripts developed in the first four years of his artistic directorship at Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre: Rachel Wyatt’s *Chairs and Tables* (1983-1984), Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script* (1984-1986), and Judith Thompson’s *White Biting Dog* (1982-1984). These case studies
track each playwright’s negotiation of Kareda’s comments and questions through dozens of
drafts (including, crucially, those marked up by Kareda), revealing the often unacknowledged
and unexamined contributions of dramaturgical feedback to the trajectories of script
development. Supplemented by interviews with the playwrights, these case studies offer the first
archive-based analysis of the processes and influences of developmental dramaturgy, identifying
new ways of thinking about the role and practice of the dramaturg. Each case study intervenes in
ongoing debates about approaches to developmental dramaturgy in Canada and internationally,
evolving an argument for the recognition of the dramaturg—often idealized as occupying a
neutral and non-prescriptive position of service to the playwright—as a shaping, creative force in
new play development.
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INTRODUCTION

The “Other Side” of Developmental Dramaturgy: Urjo Kareda and the Case for Examining Dramaturgical Influence

The prominent and influential role of the late Urjo Kareda (1944-2001) in the history of Canadian theatre is widely acknowledged. In publications such as the Toronto Star, the Globe and Mail, and Toronto Life, and in his weekly CBC radio program, Urjo’s Diary, Kareda publicly shared his views on theatre—as well as opera, dance, and film—with candour, conviction, and a noteworthy confidence in his own well-developed personal aesthetic. As Kareda’s long-time colleague and friend Andy McKim once put it: “Urjo was never afraid of his own opinion” (qtd. in Breon 6). From 1971 to 1975, during an historic period in Toronto theatre that saw a dramatic increase in the production of original Canadian plays (rather than American or British imports), Kareda served as lead theatre critic for the Toronto Star and his astute, often enthusiastic, reviews have, as Robin Whittaker has observed most recently, “received significant scholarly attention” for their “extraordinary influence on playwriting and new play production” (154). Given the brevity of his time at the Star, however, it is surprising that relatively little scholarship has been devoted to Kareda’s more direct—and arguably more extraordinary—influence on new play development through his decades of work as a dramaturg. Kareda’s tenure as artistic director of Toronto’s Tarragon Theatre (1982-2001) marks the longest phase of his career in developmental dramaturgy.¹ During his nineteen years at Tarragon, Kareda was involved in the development of some of Canada’s most celebrated plays and playwrights, collaborating closely on scripts by Joan MacLeod, Jason Sherman, and Judith Thompson, among many others. Anecdotal accounts attribute considerable influence—both positive and negative—

¹ Kareda’s involvement in new play dramaturgy precedes his appointment as Tarragon artistic director by a few years. It begins in 1975 with his role as Literary Manager of the Stratford Festival followed by a brief stint as director of script development for CBC Radio Drama from 1980-1982 (Benson and Conolly 284).
to Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback and development processes. MacLeod, for example, reflects gratefully on her experiences with Kareda: “He really opened important doors for me with [his] notes…. I’ll never have another mentorship like that. It was just so important to me” (Personal Interview). Conversely, Michael Devine, a former member of the Tarragon Playwrights Unit, accuses Kareda of “using his influence like a blunderbuss at Tarragon Theatre” (“Change” 3-4). Beyond these anecdotal accounts, however, little attention has been paid to the influential contribution of Kareda’s dramaturgy to the plays on which he worked.

The relative absence of scholarship devoted to Kareda’s work as a dramaturg can be partly attributed to the period with which his earlier, journalistic career coincided. The emergence of the alternate theatre movement in the early 1970s (particularly as it developed in Toronto) has been a prominent focus in the writing of Canadian theatre history, and Kareda’s criticism is often identified as a “shaping influence” on the developments of the period (Johnston “Archetypal Enthusiast” 301).² In this light, it makes a certain sense that this early phase of Kareda’s career has received a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention. Nonetheless, there may be other reasons for the absence of scholarship addressing the significant “shaping influence” of Kareda’s work in new play development. In particular, this lacuna may be attributable to anxieties surrounding the role of the developmental dramaturg.

Dramaturgical influence is a thorny subject, particularly when it comes to new play development, where authorship is at stake. While recent publications on dramaturgical practice have begun to recognize the subjective and even creative influence of the dramaturg, this turn has been predominantly tied to production dramaturgy. When it comes to forms of new play dramaturgy that occur outside of and prior to rehearsal, dramaturgical influence remains a

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² Writing in the Globe and Mail in 1977, John Fraser observes that “[b]ecause of his... highly visible support of the new kind of drama emerging from Toronto’s alternate theatres, Kareda became inextricably identified with it and... some people now believe he was largely responsible for it” (qtd in Whittaker 155).
fraught and underexamined subject. This is particularly true of the work of developing text-based, single-authored scripts, such as that practiced by Kareda at Tarragon. Nonetheless, many recent publications which focus on production dramaturgy are also of considerable relevance to the dramaturg working in new play development. For example, Maaike Bleeker’s 2003 article, “Dramaturgy as a Mode of Looking,” draws on her experience as a dramaturg in the Netherlands and Flanders working with directors and choreographers to create non-logocentric stagings of established texts. Beyond this specific production context, however, Bleeker’s article offers key insights that can also be applied to the role of the dramaturg working in new play development. Among these is her recognition of

the ‘other side’ of definitions which consider the dramaturg as the external eye, the first audience, the observer at a distance, or even the critic. This ‘other side’ is the dramaturg as partner in a collaborative movement towards a common goal. For although the dramaturg may represent the ‘other’ within a working process, he or she is an involved other. (163)

This important challenge to the objectivity of the dramaturg as the “external eye” or “observer at a distance” has been echoed elsewhere in recent years. D.J. Hopkins, for example, in his 2003 article “Research, Counter-text, Performance: Reconsidering the (Textual) Authority of the Dramaturg,” challenges the way research is practiced and deployed in production dramaturgy, rejecting the “traditional understanding” of the dramaturg’s role as a “tertiary position” of limited scope and influence in favour of conceiving of the dramaturg as an audacious co-creator (2). Likewise, Geoffrey Proehl’s 2008 book, Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility, which draws extensively on the author’s experiences working on a production of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra, sets out to acknowledge both the “subjective and objective features” of the
dramaturgical role and to explore what might happen when “individuals who may have once stayed at a distance... move[] beyond that stopping point” (22, 23).

Despite the circulation of these ideas in the 21st-century, however, Shelley Orr’s 2014 article “Critical Proximity: A Case for Using the First Person as a Production Dramaturg” cites the still “widely held view that dramaturgs should strive to be unfailingly objective” (239) before making her case for “embracing subjectivity and critical proximity” explicitly, as her title indicates, in the context of production dramaturgy (243). As an example of the prevailing assertion that “a posture of objectivity is a central feature of the dramaturg’s role,” Orr cites Michael Chemers’ 2010 dramaturgy handbook, *Ghostlight*, specifically a section titled “Maintaining the Boundaries.” In this section, Chemers discusses the controversial court battle of the late 1990s in which dramaturg Lynn M. Thompson claimed co-authorship of Jonathan Larson’s hugely successful and profitable musical *Rent*. For Chemers, the case illustrates the necessity that “a dramaturg must maintain an engaged objectivity at all times” (Chemers 130). Chemers’ invocation of the *Rent* case as “a cautionary tale” (Orr 240) aids in understanding why script development, in particular, has been neglected in the scholarly turn toward recognizing the shaping, creative influence of the dramaturg. As many dramaturgs have noted, the case “provoked a flood of emotions regarding the role of the dramaturg and the meaning of the word

3 Although Orr’s analysis is restricted exclusively to production dramaturgy (which includes work on productions of new plays), the subject of dramaturgical influence at earlier stages of development makes its way into the appendix to her article, where Orr reproduces a range of responses to her inquiries on the subject of dramaturgical objectivity. Among these are responses from two Canadian developmental dramaturgs, Brian Quirt (artistic director of Toronto’s Nightswimming Theatre) and Heidi Taylor (artistic director of Playwrights Theatre Center in Vancouver). Taylor’s comments are notably cautious in their disavowal of distance in favour of “critical intimacy,” marked by a concern with clearly demarcating “authorship or authority” (qtd in Orr 244). Quirt’s response, which I discuss in chapter two, is particularly illuminating. Informed by his work at Nightswimming, which “creates both in the playwright-driven and devised theatre worlds” (qtd in Ferrato 66), Quirt’s rejection of the “the fallacy of objectivity” is exceptional in its candid recognition of the considerable potential for influence in developmental dramaturgy. For Quirt, this increases the necessity of not only “embracing” dramaturgical subjectivity (as in Orr’s argument) but of clearly acknowledging it. The key, for Quirt, is to bring his “abilities and ideas openly into the process,” a practice which positions his collaborators (including playwrights) to “filter” his opinions, minimizing the influence of “hidden assumptions” that can be obscured by the false (self-) perception of the dramaturg as occupying a position of critical distance or objectivity (qtd in Orr 244, emphasis added).
“authorship” (Volansky 169-170) and “continues to define (North) American dramaturgy” in important ways (Shtier 165). Anxieties of authorship persist in the circulation of tropes tied to dramaturgical objectivity and neutrality, such as the detached and objective outside eye or the inanimate and reflective sounding board. They are also traceable in critiques such as Alex Lazardis Ferguson’s 2012 manifesto against the “Dangers of the Theatrical-Dramaturgical Complex,” which accuses many dramaturgs working in Canadian new play development of being “wannabe playwrights” (71). Finally, as I see it, these anxieties find expression in the related lacunae in the bodies of scholarly writing on dramaturgy and on Kareda.

In this dissertation, my aim is to attend to both. Building on recent challenges to the objectivity of the production dramaturg, my analysis will explore the unacknowledged and unexamined subjective and creative operations of the dramaturg working in script development through an analysis of extant records of Kareda’s dramaturgy. To be very clear, my aim in doing so is not to argue for (co-)authorship. Rather, I hope to shed much needed light on the nature and implications of dramaturgical influence in new play development. The spectre of authorship has produced a tendency for developmental dramaturgs to evade or obscure the considerable potential for dramaturgical influence. Consider, for example, the dominant trope of the dramaturg as a self-effacing servant to the needs of the play or the playwright, which has many variations, from “saint... [to] midwife... lover, spouse, or soul mate” (Proehl “The Images Before Us” 134). As Sandra Tomc points out in her 1988 essay on Canadian new play development workshops, this construction of the playwright’s “needs” can actually function to obfuscate hegemonic agendas operating in the play development process:

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4 For an early (and illuminating) Canadian response to the controversy, see DD Kugler’s “Learning to Hate the Bingo Scenario” (1998).
While the playwright may not consciously set out to conform to [a] dominant set of expectations, many theatres have discreetly justified their practices with a formulation of the playwrights’ ‘needs’: his need for privacy and isolation, for example.... How is a playwright to avoid internalizing such formulations and escape reproducing them in a particular aesthetic? (“Laidlaw” 16)

Likewise, the figure of the dramaturg as a humble servant to the needs of the playwright carries the potential to elide the shaping influence of dramaturgical feedback. As Tamsen Wolff, among others, has observed, these metaphors are “distressingly gendered” (103). Wolff’s (important) concern is for the financial and professional implications of these gendered conceptions of the dramaturg. However, it is also worth considering the ways in which tropes that are coded as passive and self-denying work to obscure the authority of the role and its potential for creative and ideological influence. Writing in 2014, Brian Quirt observes that despite the fact that “[t]he stereotype of the dramaturg as a service position is still a strong one,” dramaturgs “are among the strongest voices in our theatre” (Blickers and Quirt 252). This disconnect between a widespread conception of the role and its actual practice further demonstrates the importance of advancing the study of dramaturgical influence as it operates in processes of new play development.

There is much to be learned, for example, from Bleeker’s identification of the dramaturg as an “involved other” in the collaborative process. Likewise, Orr’s argument for the subjective dramaturg is useful in its recognition that the dramaturg will “bring to bear all [her] knowledge, talents, skills, background, and personal aesthetic” as a “full collaborator and artist” (243). Moreover, the implications of these subjective contributions to collaboration and creation are further illuminated by Proehl, who observes that the work of the dramaturg “will determine not only the extent to which a play’s dramaturgy will be understood but also which of several
dramaturgies within a play will emerge, for a play’s dramaturgy is not so much a simple given as a range of possibilities waiting to interact with the sensibilities of its creators” (Toward 38, emphasis added). Proehl’s insight is tied to his experience as a production dramaturg, articulating the crucial role of the dramaturg in shaping interpretive production decisions. Applied to the earliest stages of developing a script, however, there exists even greater potential for the dramaturg’s sensibility to inform which of several plays will emerge.

Indeed, many developmental dramaturgs identify their primary function as facilitating a process of emergence. According to Kareda, for example, “it is the dramaturg’s role to create a process which will help to draw the play from its hidden places in the writer’s mind” (“They Also” 9). As I discuss in chapter two, this view is shared by Bob White, who has worked at several of Canada’s top new play development centres, from Factory Theatre, to Playwrights Workshop Montreal, to Alberta Theatre Projects. As White sees it, his “greatest strength” as a dramaturg is “an instinctive sense of a play’s structure, even if that structure might be latent in the material” (qtd in Rudakoff Between 61). Like Kareda, who speaks of “draw[ing out] the play,” White’s conception of the dramaturg’s function rests on the problematic assumption of a latent (and singular) “playwright’s vision.” The term “the playwright’s vision,” which circulates widely in discussions of new play development, invokes a fixed and stable authorial intention. Conceived as a “simple given,” the playwright’s vision is imagined to exist in a dormant state, waiting to be simply uncovered or revealed by the dramaturgical process. This dangerous conception of the play—and of meaning—as latent rather than discursively produced elides the dynamic and transformative negotiation of multiple visions that occurs in any dramaturgical process. Importantly, however, this view of a stable and singular playwright’s vision is not shared by all dramaturgs. A valuable corrective to this notion comes from DD Kugler, former
dramaturg of Necessary Angel Theatre, former artistic director of Northern Light Theatre, and past president of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas. Describing his work in new play development, Kugler explicitly highlights both the limitations of a fixed “playwright’s vision” and the multiplicity of potential outcomes for the development process: “Does the writer have a clear and complete vision? Rarely. Usually they’re searching for “the” play among many possible plays” (qtd in Rudakoff Between 97).

My aim in the proceeding chapters is to study the ways in which the dramaturg’s role in this search contributes to the emergence of one of “a range of possibilities” in new play development. To do so, I will draw on original archival research, tracking the influence of Kareda’s dramaturgy in the development of three plays produced at Tarragon: Rachel Wyatt’s Chairs and Tables (1984), Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script (1986), and Judith Thompson’s White Biting Dog (1984). This work involves analyzing multiple drafts of each play, closely observing both minor and major variations over the development process. As I pore over these drafts, I track Kareda’s notes in the margins (along with other extant records of his feedback, including correspondence), observing how playwrights respond to Kareda’s comments and questions from one draft to the next. Notably, my process in tracking these revisions corresponds with an exercise assigned by Kugler to his dramaturgy students as preparation for their work on productions of new plays. Students are asked to study earlier drafts of a script on which they are working, making note, as Proehl describes, “of the deletions, additions, [and] transformations” that occur over time (Toward 93). The exercise is considered “important because each of the changes represents an artistic choice of the playwright” (ibid). “For Kugler,” Proehl observes, “a series of choices—conscious and less so—determine a play’s shape, encoding a genealogy of artistic decisions” (ibid 98). I agree. In addition to tracking the artistic choices of the playwright,
however, my analysis recognizes these changes as also shaped by the subjective and creative influence of the dramaturg, whose contributions to the playwright’s evolving “vision” also constitute part of its “genealogy of artistic decisions.”

To reconstruct dramaturgical influence in this way requires an extensive archival record. This practical consideration has informed the focus of my analysis on Kareda’s earliest years at Tarragon. The three play development processes examined here took place in the early 1980s, before computers became the predominant tool for writing and revision, and thus furnish considerable evidence of changes that occur between drafts. The number of extant drafts tied to these processes is certainly a boon to my research, as are the markings they contain, including both Kareda’s notes in the margins as well as the playwrights’ handwritten (and often related) revisions. Beyond the surviving drafts of the three plays selected for analysis, my choice of dramaturg for this study also serves the demand for a rich and illuminating documentary record. Kareda’s reknowned volubility has produced a substantial body of published and unpublished writing, including his dramaturgical correspondence.

Laying the groundwork for the case studies to follow, the first chapter of this dissertation draws on the extensive record of Kareda’s writing in order to establish the clearest possible sense of his dramaturgical sensibility. I find such an undertaking to be necessary for two reasons. First, due to Kareda’s prominence in the history of Canadian theatre, there exists a received conception of his dramatic tastes and preoccupations, namely, that he favoured varieties of “literary” drama, particularly works of character-driven naturalism. Second, despite the considerable record of Kareda’s developmental dramaturgy, my archival reconstruction of Kareda’s dramaturgical influence is nonetheless subject to certain limitations. One obvious loss to posterity is that there is no record of face-to-face discussions between playwright and dramaturg. Such conversations
were a substantial feature of Kareda’s approach to developmental dramaturgy, one that undoubtedly shaped each of the selected plays in ways that escape my analysis. Added to this are the gaps that exist between feedback and revision, spaces of absence that invite inference or conjecture. Supplemental interviews offer some insight, but are limited by the passage of time, the subjectivity of memory, and the fact that Kareda himself cannot be consulted. Perceiving the danger, in attending to these gaps in the archival record, of uncritical reliance on a preconceived notion of Kareda’s preferences, chapter one sets out to reconstruct the complexities of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. Following a microhistorical impulse, it closely examines the surviving evidence, engaging records that support but also, crucially, that unsettle the received conception of Kareda’s tastes and preoccupations.

Building on this foundational sense of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, subsequent case studies examine the influence of Kareda’s feedback on three scripts developed in the first four years of his artistic directorship at Tarragon. In chapter two, I examine Kareda’s development of Rachel Wyatt’s *Chairs and Tables*, tracking the shaping influence of his dramaturgical questions in order to challenge the widely held view of interrogative dramaturgy as a “neutral” approach to new play development. Of the three case studies examined here, *Chairs and Tables* represents the most drastic trajectory of revision over the course of the development process, from its earliest, more politically charged and stylistically experimental versions to its ultimately conventional form and content. Following this, chapter three tracks a developmental trajectory that involves more subtle—but still significant—revisions in Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script*. Distinguished in part by its insight into Kareda’s dramaturgy as it

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5 Asked about the relative lack of extant written records of Kareda’s feedback on her work, Joan MacLeod recalls that although she “would always show him something before I had a first act, even,” the feedback he provided was delivered orally, “sometimes over a glass of Scotch” (Personal Interview). This conversational dramaturgy (including the whisky) is an oft-cited aspect of Kareda’s process and represents an insurmountable gap in the historical record of his development of plays and playwrights.
was practiced in and beyond the Tarragon Playwrights Unit, this case study analyses 
dramaturgical influence within wider historical and institutional contexts, revealing the 
emergence of a crucial confluence of sensibilities not only between playwright and dramaturg, 
but also among other members of the “Tarragon family.” Finally, chapter four investigates one of 
Kareda’s most well-known and long-running collaborative relationships, tracking his shaping 
influence in the development of Judith Thompson’s *White Biting Dog*. As the first of five plays 
developed between Thompson and Kareda, this case offers insight into an exceptionally fruitful 
collaborative dynamic. Thompson’s negotiation of Kareda’s feedback is distinguished by a 
degree of resistance unseen in the other development processes examined here; in several 
instances she opts to disregard Kareda’s comments and questions. Nonetheless, as my analysis 
demonstrates, the collaboration between Thompson and Kareda produces significant revisions to 
this frequently produced and widely read script.

Each case study examined in this dissertation provides new ways into thinking about the 
playwright-dramaturg relationship and the operations of dramaturgical influence, evolving an 
argument for the recognition of the dramaturg—often idealized as occupying a neutral and non-
prescriptive position of service to the playwright—as a shaping, creative force in new play 
development. Of course, the nature and implications of the work of “drawing out” an emerging 
play vary according to the participants involved as well as their processes. Contemporary 
practitioners employ a range of approaches to new play development, including those which de-
centre the playwright and text, drawing on the interdisciplinary contributions of a range of artists 
in the creative process. However, despite expanding approaches in recent years, the script-based 
model for which Kareda’s work at Tarragon served as an early template has a lasting legacy in 
both ongoing development practices and in the canon of Canadian dramatic literature, which
includes many plays developed by Kareda. Tracking the nature and implications of Kareda’s dramaturgy will offer new ways to read these canonical works and, importantly, to understand the conditions that informed the writing of them.

“In Canada,” Judith Rudakoff has observed, “dramaturgy is synonymous with new play development” (Between 3). Production dramaturgy is practiced here as well, but new play development is the most predominant—and, potentially, the most influential—dramaturgical mode. As Alan Filewod has argued, “a system of playwriting workshops and new play development programs in which playwrights work with dramaturges”\(^6\) has emerged in response to the material and financial constraints of theatre making in this country; and in turn, this infrastructure has contributed to “the systemization of Canadian theatre” (12-13). Though largely invisible, developmental dramaturgs have contributed substantially to the body of dramatic writing that has come to be canonized as Canadian dramatic literature, and the assumed necessity of developmental dramaturgy continues to inform the structure of funding for new play development in this country. For this reason, it is of vital importance to move beyond anecdotal accounts of dramaturgical influence, to find ways to understand dramaturgy as one of the key conditions of production that shape Canadian plays and playwrights. In what follows, I offer one way into the examination of the “other side” of the developmental dramaturg, shedding light on the subjective and creative in Kareda’s shaping dramaturgical influence.

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\(^6\) In keeping with the preferred spelling of the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, I have used “dramaturg” in this dissertation. However, I have preserved the spelling in cases where “dramaturge” is used in my sources.
CHAPTER ONE

The Dramaturg as Ghost:
Archival Remains and the Presence of the Personal

“[E]xploring the often-raised issues of the dramaturg’s role in the artistic process and the dramaturg’s place in the room, I began to think about whether or not there was a difference between being anonymous and being a ghost. A ghost, I concluded, has a presence: shadowy, but everyone knows they’re there.... Dramaturgy, which sometimes necessitates engendering a type of ghost presence, can then be characterized as, to turn it into an epigram, to be and not to be.”

- Judith Rudakoff, Between the Lines 3

“De gustibus aut bene, aut nihil”
(a combination of two proverbs: De gustibus non disputandum, “There’s no disputing taste,” and De mortuis aut bene aut nihil, “Speak well of the dead or say nothing at all.”)

- Shamrayev, in Chekov’s The Seagull 20

The dramaturg as ghost. Contrary to the well-worn tropes discussed in the introduction, this one is rare, perhaps a little eerie, but for my purposes also an apt place to begin. The metaphor comes from Judith Rudakoff’s introduction to her co-edited collection of interviews with prominent North American practitioners of developmental dramaturgy. Among the Canadian inclusions in the collection is Rudakoff’s interview with Kareda, dated just weeks before his death at the end of 2001. This rich, reflective conversation, in which Kareda looks back on his nineteen years of play development at Tarragon, has been a resource of considerable value to my research. In my efforts to reconstruct and analyze Kareda’s involvement in scripts past, I can turn to this interview, alongside the considerable archival record of his dramaturgical practice, to gain insight into his thoughts, preoccupations, and preferences. Of course, these forms of access have their limits, as I am reminded by historians and archival researchers like Barbara Hodgdon, who compares her work in the archives to “eavesdropping on one side of the

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7 The two proverbs are reproduced here as identified by David French—Tarragon’s “paradigmatic playwright” (Knowles Reading the Material 130)—in his translation of The Seagull. For French’s explanatory note on Shamrayev’s amalgamated proverb, see page 104.
conversation” (374), or Carolyn Steedman, who “celebrates the constraints” imposed by the archives: “what they forbid you to write, the permissions they offer” (xi). In the archive, as Rebecca Schneider hauntingly observes, “absent flesh ghosts bones” (102). Communing with Kareda’s ghost through the records he left behind is a tricky business, subject to the gaps, overlaps, and contradictions of the surviving evidence as well as my own subjective reading of what remains.

In this way Rudakoff’s figurative description of the dramaturg as ghost resonates with my efforts to thoroughly know Kareda’s dramaturgy; in my reconstructed, imagined conjuring, Kareda is both there and not. As Rudakoff employs it, however, the trope also intimates the crucial necessity of such an undertaking. Rudakoff’s ghost metaphor, conceived as an alternative to anonymity or invisibility, identifies the dramaturg as a “shadowy” presence and frames this ghost-like tension between being and not being as a condition “necessitate[d]” by dramaturgical practice. This elusive, provisional visibility (both self-adopted and perceived or imposed) that Rudakoff terms a “ghost presence” strikes at the heart of my project, which seeks a new way—primarily through archival records—to bring to light the nature and implications of the too-often overlooked influence of the dramaturg in new play development.

Kareda is an ideal subject for this analysis. In many ways, his work at Tarragon fits within the discourses of service and invisibility that circulate around developmental dramaturgy. Unlike most artistic directors, Kareda rarely directed productions, devoting his time and energies instead to the development of new plays. As Don Hannah observes, this work occurred out of the limelight—in the shadows, one might say: “It would never say on the poster ‘Dramaturgy by Urjo Kareda.’ He was very respectful of playwrights. Because he knew he wasn’t one. His objective was to ask the right questions, say the right things, and be useful” (Personal Interview).
This self-effacement couched in service, however, must not be confused with absence. A ghost, in Rudakoff’s terms, “has a presence: shadowy, but everyone knows they’re there.” The anonymity or invisibility implied by the absence of a name on a poster (or on a cover page) may elide the influence of a dramaturg, but the influence remains nonetheless. As to whether everyone knows it is there, Hannah’s comment reveals that the nature or extent of Kareda’s influence on the plays and playwrights with whom he worked often went unrecognized—by the general public, and also by participants in his developmental process, including Kareda himself. In the case studies to follow my aim will be to examine the archival record (in particular, script drafts annotated by Kareda) in order to bring out Kareda’s ghost presence in the processes of his developmental dramaturgy. Tracking dramaturgical influence in this way requires making the dramaturg more visible, identifying the points of intervention where the priorities, preoccupations, and preferences of the dramaturg inform the development of a script. Given the limits of the surviving evidence of any particular development process, however, bringing this shadowy presence to light requires first establishing a better sense of the particular characteristics of the dramaturg in question. In other words, before turning to the case studies that follow I must establish the clearest possible sense of what might best be described as Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility.

In Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility, Geoffrey Proehl adopts the word sensibility over other options, such as philosophy, ethos, aesthetics, or taste, preferring its inclusiveness of different epistemologies, in particular the fact that it “signals a way of meeting the world that encompasses” both “analytical, usually Apollonian functions” as well as other, “Dionysian”
ways of knowing, including the emotional, intuitive, even creative forms of engagement often elided in descriptions of the dramaturgical role. Perhaps most importantly, sensibility also serves to stress the personal and subjective nature of these forms of response, highlighting the influence of training, experience, tastes, values, and preoccupations in determining the ways in which a particular dramaturg engages with plays and playwrights. As Proehl puts it, still casting about for his preferred term, “We expect it, whatever it is, to vary from one individual to the next” (Toward 17, original emphasis). Finally, sensibility encompasses both poetics and praxis, emphasising the link between a dramaturg’s personal tastes and training and the shaping approaches to dramaturgy that result. Following Proehl, then, my aim in this chapter is to lay the foundation for the case studies that follow, establishing the key features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility—both analytical and intuitive, conscious and unconscious—as revealed by the surviving record of his personal constellation of training, tastes, and preoccupations, and to begin to trace the operation of this dynamic sensibility in Kareda’s dramaturgical practice.

A variety of sources are available to me in attempting to make this reconstruction. First, I can draw on an established narrative regarding Kareda, one that, as I discuss in the introduction, places emphasis on his fondness for the “literary” plot- and character-driven varieties of naturalism in which Tarragon specialised from its earliest days. As part of a larger story of Toronto’s “alternate” theatre movement, for example, Denis Johnston’s account of Kareda’s role in this history begins with his early theatre criticism at the Toronto Star (1971-1975), linking Kareda’s exceptional enthusiasm for Tarragon with a preference for naturalism—“Kareda’s most prominent critical theme” (Up the Mainstream 92)—that made him “particularly attuned to

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8 As I discuss in the introduction, the emphasis in Proehl’s book is on the production dramaturg, which is somewhat safer terrain for the assertion of creative influence in the dramaturgical role than a study of developmental dramaturgy.

9 Although Johnston uses the term “alternative” in his study, the more widely used “alternate” is maintained here as elsewhere in this chapter.
[Tarragon founder] Bill Glassco’s aesthetic sense” (ibid 26); Kareda’s subsequent career as Tarragon’s artistic director is then tidily linked with these traits as “completing a kind of career circle” (ibid 25). Evincing a similar narrative impulse, Kamal Al-Solaylee identifies in Kareda’s programming at Tarragon “what can justifiably be described as Kareda’s (and by extension the Tarragon’s) twin pulls of literary work and various stages of naturalism, including poetic naturalism” (Tonight vi). Such accounts, which seek to position Kareda’s work within a broader narrative regarding the Tarragon, make essential observations related to Kareda’s dramaturgical practice; nonetheless, they also risk certain historiographical pitfalls. Thus, in establishing a foundational sense of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility for the case studies to follow, I propose to heed Thomas Postlewait’s indispensable warning against the historian’s uncritical reliance on “popular narratives” and “oft-repeated anecdotes,” which can lead to misconstructions of the past recycled as given truths (61), as well as his caution against approaching historical inquiry “with answers and assumptions already in place” (63).

In the remainder of this chapter, then, I will undertake close analyses of several key—either un- or under-examined—primary records of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, with the aim not to affirm or deny the established narrative but rather to do justice to the complexities of Kareda’s sensibility and to lay the foundation for the work of examining his case-specific dramaturgical processes in the chapters to follow. The key records selected for close analysis here are drawn from my larger survey of the available primary evidence, which includes: published interviews with Kareda regarding his developmental dramaturgy, including his above-cited conversation with Rudakoff in late 2001, as well as earlier interviews with Deborah Cottreau (1996) and Cynthia Zimmerman (1983, with Robert Wallace; 2000); Kareda’s published writing, including his criticism and op-editorial pieces in publications such as the
*Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, and *Toronto Life*, his introductions to multiple published scripts, and his essential 1986 *Canadian Theatre Review* article, cited above, “They Also Serve Who Only Stand and Wait for Rewrites”; and finally a crucial range of archived records of Kareda’s dramaturgical practice. Extant archival records include: evidence of developmental exercises employed by Kareda; records of his reading on the subject of play development (including a set of four files of newspaper clippings and articles labelled “New Play Development 1982-1996”); his notes in the margins of script drafts (a resource of particular importance in the case studies to come); and, finally, an extensive body of unpublished writing, including archived records of his thoughts on dramaturgy and, most importantly, extant copies of Kareda’s correspondence. The substantial scope of the surviving record of Kareda’s letters is particularly striking. It includes thousands of his unprecedented responses to unsolicited script submissions, themselves a testament to Kareda’s “archetypal enthusiasm” for emerging Canadian playwrights. Moreover, Kareda’s reciprocal correspondence with playwrights whose work was undergoing sustained development also survives, and these letters reveal not only his preferences and priorities as an artistic director and dramaturg, but also his approaches to communicating with playwrights about their work. While the scope of this record—the letters and beyond—serves as a testament to the remarkable dedication and commitment of time and energy that constitutes an indisputable feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, this scope also precludes my inclusion of an exhaustive analysis of its entire contents here. Instead, I propose to offer close analysis of some of the most revealing records, drawing on my wider research to create as dynamic as possible a reconstruction of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility.

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This descriptor was first applied to Kareda in the title of Denis Johnston’s account of his theatre criticism, the phrase itself taken by Johnston from Kareda’s 1974 description of the ideal drama critic: “he himself must be an archetypal enthusiast” (qtd. in Johnston “Archetypal Enthusiast” 299). As this chapter will show, it may be aptly extended to Kareda’s conception of and approaches to the role of developmental dramaturg.
To begin, I propose to turn to the perhaps most frequently identified feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility in the dominant narrative, his “deep sympathy for naturalism” (Knowles *Reading the Material* 136). Johnston, in his valuable survey of Kareda’s prolific pre-Tarragon career as a professional theatre critic, cites ample evidence of an “affection for naturalism” in Kareda’s journalistic writing, from Kareda’s lament “Why has naturalism become such a taboo in Canadian theatre?” to his enthusiastic—perhaps “crowing,” as Johnston puts it—response to Larry Kardish’s *Brussels Sprouts* in 1972: “A little naturalism does the trick again” (qtd in Johnston “Archetypal Enthusiast” 297). More recently, Robin Whittaker identifies a “ceaseless preoccupation with naturalism” as “Kareda’s defining bias” both at the *Star* and in his earlier theatre criticism for the University of Toronto student paper, *Varsity*, in the 1960s (160, 159). Likewise, Al-Solaylee observes an inclination toward naturalism in both Kareda’s programming and play development at Tarragon, citing several of the “writers strongly identified with the Kareda years” in making his above-quoted assessment of the “twin pulls of literary work and various stages of naturalism, including poetic naturalism” in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility (*Tonight* vi).

While observations of Kareda’s taste for naturalistic theatre are pervasive, their authors can be ambiguous in their definitions of naturalism itself, participating in the general slippage of the term from the historically specific literary and theatrical movement of the late nineteenth century to the broader—and much more unstable—contemporary use of *naturalism* or *naturalistic* to describe theatre that falls somewhere within a tradition anchored in elements of scenic realism and immersive, psychoanalytic approaches to dramatic character. As Al-Solaylee’s above-quoted “various stages of naturalism” implies, there are a range of potential, sometimes contradictory, definitions of naturalism to which the term may refer, resulting in a
rather muddy and sometimes hotly debated definitional field. For this reason, a comprehensive definition of Karedian naturalism is called for. Here, the observations of others regarding Kareda’s preference for naturalism may be fleshed out considerably by the surviving record of Kareda’s own thoughts on the subject, as represented in his published writing and interviews as well as in extant archival remains.

Among the secondary accounts of Kareda’s preference for naturalistic theatre, the most frequently cited primary document is his 1972 introduction to the published script of David French’s *Leaving Home*, in which Kareda offers an early articulation of the type of theatrical naturalism he favoured as “the most satisfying, the most finished” (viii). A dense piece of writing at under five pages, the introduction elaborates on the recurring theme Johnston observes in Kareda’s theatre criticism: his defense of naturalism in the face of its perceived “taboo” status among many Canadian playwrights in the 1970s. Given Johnston’s description of Kareda’s “a little naturalism does the trick again” as “crowing,” it is unsurprising that many scholars have read the introduction to *Leaving Home* in a similar light. On the whole, scholarly discussion of the introduction has consisted of brief accounts which aim at establishing (rightly) Kareda’s unabashed advocacy for naturalistic theatre but which stop short of delineating the parameters or key features of Kareda’s personal definition of naturalism revealed in this important piece.¹¹

¹¹ Knowles, for example, cites the introduction to *Leaving Home* as evidence of Kareda’s “deep sympathy for naturalism” in both *The Theatre of Form and the Production of Meaning* and *Reading the Material Theatre*. The latter (and lengthier) account is comprised of two sentences (ten lines), in which Knowles quotes Kareda’s celebration of “old-fashioned, naturalistic drama” in addition to admirably and economically observing Kareda’s modified “selective naturalism” (discussed in greater detail below) and its link to Kareda’s praise for “carefully gauged” detail. In both accounts Knowles quotes Kareda’s definition of “selective naturalism… [as] an impressionistic method with strict and fascinating formal controls,” albeit without the space to tease out the nature of these naturalistic “controls” or selection principles as Kareda perceived them (*Reading the Material* 136; *Theatre of Form* 136). Likewise, Johnston, whose detailed study of Kareda’s theatre criticism, “The Archetypal Enthusiast,” contains astute insights of considerable import to my own analysis of Karedian naturalism, devotes eight lines of his study to the introduction to *Leaving Home*, seven of which are comprised of a lengthy quotation which culminates with the popular “strict and fascinating formal controls” (297); from there, however, Johnston proceeds to a wider survey of Kareda’s critical support for naturalistic drama (including the above-quoted “crowing”), leaving aside the introduction and its clues to Kareda’s personal definition. Most recently, Whittaker’s somewhat lengthier analysis of
Given the notorious slipperiness of the term and the importance, for this project, of establishing the clearest possible sense of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, it is thus worth undertaking a more extensive analysis of this oft-cited introduction, drawing also on the wider body of available evidence, including both the observations of others and the extant record of Kareda’s thoughts on naturalism over the years in print and elsewhere.

In the introduction, Kareda famously praises *Leaving Home* and a handful of other plays he deems the best of the Toronto 1971-72 theatre season as “old-fashioned, naturalistic drama” (ix), but just what, for Kareda, does “old-fashioned” mean? It is tempting to imagine that this adjective signals adherence to the tenets of the late 19th-century movement of theatrical Naturalism from which the term originates, in particular the scenic realism, dramaturgical causality, and highly developed character psychology that arise out of its defining concern with demonstrating the effects on behaviour of heredity and environment. In the introduction to *Leaving Home*, Kareda’s conceit of describing the 1971-72 Toronto theatre season as “an unconscious, formal re-enactment of the development of contemporary theatre,” with the most successful playwrights identified as those who “began at the beginning—with naturalism” (viii emphasis added), seems to support this reading and, as I will discuss later in this chapter, features associated with 19th-century Naturalism, such as an emphasis on traceable causality in plot and character, are observable in Kareda’s dramaturgical practice. Nonetheless, elsewhere in the introduction Kareda is careful to make distinctions between the recent Toronto plays he admires and the features of what he refers to as “traditional naturalism.” For example, Kareda

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the introduction (160-161) is devoted to the similar project of establishing it as Kareda’s “naturalism manifesto of 1972” (160). My hope is that my humble attempt to analyze the introduction to *Leaving Home* in greater detail here will augment the fine work presented by these and other scholars by filling this small but important lacuna.

12 Whittaker makes a related observation in his recent article, finding Kareda’s rhetoric indicative of his “seeking to replicate the genealogy of twentieth-century European theatre in Toronto...begin[ing] with naturalism, once itself a revolutionary style” (160).
observes that the contemporary, Canadian naturalism with which he is concerned does not make “any claim to naturalistic authenticity,” which he finds to be the domain of “films and documentary television” (viii). In a departure from realistic “duplication,” which Kareda associates with his ambiguously defined “traditional naturalism” and which may call to mind the meticulous stage realism of the 19th century box set, this “selective naturalism” is, according to Kareda, “impressionistic” rather than fastidiously realistic, its “detail carefully gauged and controlled for poetic resonance” (viii). For Kareda, it seems, “old-fashioned” is not synonymous with “traditional”; a script may be old-fashioned—and, consequently, praise-worthy—in its ties to the origins of naturalism, but this does not preclude certain breaks with “tradition” that complicate the relationship of Kareda’s favoured style to the Naturalism of the 19th century.

While Kareda’s language in the introduction to Leaving Home may at times seem dizzyingly tautological—a naturalism that denies its claim to certain naturalistic features, an old fashioned play that breaks with tradition—the problem may be resolved by reading Kareda’s description as the (unmethodical and partial) articulation of a sub-genre, namely “selective naturalism,” a naturalism distinguished by its refinement or distillation of human experience in pursuit of “poetic resonance.” Indeed, Kareda’s emphasis on the poetic, impressionistic effect of the particular naturalism with which he is concerned may suggest a closer alignment of his “selective naturalism” with the more recent—but still, for many, “old fashioned”—sub-genre of American poetic naturalism, an affinity signaled by Al-Solaylee above and also observed by Ric Knowles in his analysis of the Tarragon production of Tennessee Williams’ “masterpiece of American naturalism,” The Glass Menagerie, staged under Kareda’s artistic directorship in 1997 (Reading the Material 136). As Knowles observes, that production, anchored by what he describes as “naturalistic actors” trained in a “blend of the Stanislavski System and the American
Method,” was characteristically preoccupied with “the realms of the psychological, individual, and ‘universal’ rather than [...] the social, historical, and therefore political” (ibid 138). Where Knowles critiques the depoliticization and normalizing psychoanalytic preoccupations of the Tarragon’s presentation of this classic of American poetic naturalism, however, Kareda offers praise for these very features in his description of Leaving Home and other early 1970s examples of Canadian selective naturalism, which he finds “political only in the crucial sense that they explored the relationships of men [sic],” producing a “universal [...] experience” through the selective and “specific” depiction of “personal reminiscence” (ix).

Kareda’s praise for universal, poetic resonance establishes one of the cornerstones of his personal definition of naturalism. For Kareda, naturalism’s aim and “reward” is the “intensity of public response” it generates, and he observes that “Toronto audiences were profoundly affected by” Leaving Home and the other “old-fashioned, naturalistic drama” of the 1971-72 season (ix). For Kareda, the carefully chosen, specific, and highly personal details of selective naturalism are the source of this power: “In Leaving Home, [...] nothing is generalized, everything is specific, and yet from a personal reminiscence comes a universal—dare I say national?—experience. Because he doesn’t lie, David French has found a way to speak to us all” (ix). As I will discuss in the case studies to follow, such assumptions about universality, truth, and national experience, including the problematic homogeneity of Kareda’s reference to “us all,” have considerable implications for Kareda’s approaches to developmental dramaturgy and for the plays that emerged from his dramaturgical process. For my present purpose, the high value Kareda ascribes here and elsewhere to the universalizing empathetic engagement of the audience helps to delineate the parameters of his personal definition of “old fashioned” naturalistic theatre.13 As

13 Indeed, returning to my earlier observation of a (partial) link between Kareda’s personal definition of naturalism, as outlined in the introduction to Leaving Home, and the origins of the term in a particular cultural and historical
Kareda put it many years later, in his interview with Zimmerman: “There is something, you know, in that old universal truth about emotional connection” (“Maintaining” 216).

If this effect—“universal experience” achieved through an “intensity of public response”—expresses the essence of the naturalism Kareda distills from its various historically and culturally specific variations, the way in which this effect is generated is the key to the distinct contemporary Canadian style he celebrates under the modified term “selective naturalism.” At this point it is worth observing that despite the usefulness of reading Kareda’s selective naturalism as a sub-genre aligned with American poetic naturalism, Kareda himself avoids the term poetic naturalism in his introduction to Leaving Home, a seemingly deliberate choice in light of his repeated use of “poetic” to describe naturalistic plays and their effects. Perhaps this omission reflects the nationalist cultural moment out of which the essay emerges, a rhetorical strategy arising out of Kareda’s desire to avoid the conflation of this contemporary Canadian style with its American antecedent. However, it may also be that Kareda’s language in the introduction is informed by a particularity in his conception of naturalism, one which Johnston astutely observes in his survey of Kareda’s theatre criticism: that “Kareda treat[ed] naturalism not as a genre separate from others, but as a force present to some degree in many theatrical styles” (“Archetypal Enthusiast” 298). Indeed, when Kareda coins the term “selective naturalism,” he refers to it not as a genre but as a technique: the “much more interesting technique of selective naturalism” (vii). Similarly, on introducing his list of the “most satisfying, the most finished new plays of the season” Kareda identifies the plays as “all naturalistic in

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14 As Johnston argues in Up the Mainstream, the alternate theatres that emerged in Toronto in the wake of Canada’s centennial in 1967 flourished upon entering what he calls a “nationalist stage,” marked by a shift away from the creation of work drawn from avant-guard European or American repertoires and toward a commitment to Canadian content and (particularly in the case of Tarragon and its predecessor, Factory Theatre Lab) the conscious cultivation of “the Canadian playwright.”
“technique” (viii emphasis added). Thus Johnston’s observation of Kareda’s tendency to treat naturalism as a “force present to some degree in many theatrical styles” may be developed further if the “force” in question is understood as a technique—or, more accurately, a range of techniques—applied by the playwright in order to achieve particular effects identified by Kareda as naturalistic.

As discussed above, economy of detail—the selectivity of selective naturalism—is one such technique. Other evidence of the techniques Kareda praised in the work of French and others—techniques that define his personal use of the term “naturalism” and which often, as later chapters will demonstrate, inform his dramaturgical practice—can be uncovered in the introduction to Leaving Home and other samples of Kareda’s writing. Johnston, for example, supports his observation of Kareda’s tendency to find naturalism in non-naturalistic works with a particularly salient piece of theatre criticism in which Kareda praises the work of Harold Pinter, a playwright famously if contentiously yoked into Martin Esslin’s category of the Theatre of the Absurd: “Pinter didn’t create a specifically absurdist environment—as Beckett or Ionesco do—but plays rather with a naturalistic presentation of life. It is his chilling stare at the stark underbelly of ordinary experience which is so remarkable. The dialogue is close to ordinary speech, but the edges are as dangerous as an open razor” (Kareda qtd in “Archetypal Enthusiast” 296, emphasis added). More than just an illustration of Kareda’s inclination to identify naturalistic elements in a variety of theatrical styles, these observations, penned in 1972, also illuminate additional features or techniques which Kareda understood (and frequently celebrated) as part of a naturalistic presentation of life: the creation of realistic theatrical settings; and the closely observed, believable depiction of human behaviour and speech. Moreover, Kareda’s
praise for Pinter emphasizes the crucial tension between these realistic elements and the exposure of a “stark underbelly” below this “ordinary” surface.

To explore how these key features of Kareda’s sensibility informed his dramaturgical practice, I propose to begin with the “ordinary” elements on the surface of Pinter’s naturalistic presentation of life. In contrasting this with the creation of a “specifically absurdist environment,” Kareda’s description reveals the place of theatrical setting in his understanding of naturalistic technique. Indeed, despite his disavowal, in the introduction to *Leaving Home*, of “naturalistic authenticity” (in the form of “duplication”) as the province of television and film, there is evidence elsewhere in Kareda’s writing of an illusionist representational bias in his conception of theatrical setting. The following assertion, offered in one of Kareda’s famously detailed rejection letters, dated 1987, provides insight into this and other matters germane to contextualizing and elaborating Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility:

I believe passionately that the theatre’s strength comes from its history as the most *human* and *intimate* of the art forms, the one whose experience is, no matter how elevated, still on a human scale which is comparable to our own. (In any theatre, if you walked onto the stage, you would be the same size as the characters. You breathe the same air). Therefore, I think that the theatre best serves those writers who want to express human themes, dreams, imaginations, passions, sorrow, laughter and conflicts. But I think that dramatic characters have to be *inhabited from within*, not kept at a remove. I think that playwrights have to earn the audience’s commitment to the characters and the plot with their own commitment. Those are the kind of writers I work best with, both in workshop and production situations. (Letter to Playwright X 28 July 1987,\(^\text{15}\) original emphasis)\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{15}\) The recipient of this letter has requested anonymity.
The humanist, universal experience presented in the introduction to Leaving Home as the chief aim and “reward” of selective naturalism—for both audiences and playwrights—is articulated here in physical, spatial terms. Describing an ideal encounter with the theatrical world from the perspective of the audience, Kareda’s parenthetical comment assumes a certain contiguity between the onstage and “real” worlds. Significantly, these personal beliefs about the theatre and its “strengths” are articulated in the letter as part of an attempt by Kareda to address a perceived incompatibility with the playwright to whom it is addressed. The passage is prefaced by the statement, “I think that our starting positions are really at cross purposes” and is followed by the observation “I think that working together would be mutually frustrating and unsatisfying. I don’t think that the Unit (which, at heart, espouses these values and methods) is going to be appropriate to your style and interests.” The letter is remarkable both for Kareda’s surprisingly candid admission of a ghost-like shaping influence over a Unit that “espouses [his own] values and methods,” but also for his explicit (perhaps contradictory, but nonetheless characteristic) disavowal of the notion of the “Tarragon playwright” as one bound to a particular (to some extent naturalistic) style: “There is, for me, no such thing as a ‘Tarragon playwright,’” Kareda goes on to write in his letter, “when these creatures are as diverse, stylistically, as John Murrell and Michel Tremblay and Judith Thompson, and Don Hannah and Joan MacLeod and John Krizanc and David French, but they do share that basic principle of playwriting that puts their own stake in their work first” (Letter to Playwright X 28 July 1987, original emphasis).

16 In an article in the Toronto Star the following year, Kareda offers a similar opinion, employing similar language, revealing his commitment to these ideas: “Whatever else it lacks, theatre is still the most human of art forms.... It’s a living expression of real people on the same scale as you, in the same room as you. And that makes a play’s argument much more powerful” (Mietkiewicz).

17 In creating this list, Kareda evidently conceived of diversity within a relatively narrow scope (all seven playwrights produce traditional, text-based scripts for Tarragon) and the degree of stylistic diversity among Kareda’s listed playwrights is debatable. As subsequent case studies on Hannah and Thompson will show, there are undeniable stylistic differences but also key common features recognizable in the scripts these playwrights developed at Tarragon, especially in the 1980s (e.g. the dramaturgical prominence of monologues in both scripts;
This single rejection letter—out of the thousands that are extant—reveals many key features not only of Karedian naturalism, but also of Kareda’s wider dramaturgical sensibility, particularly as it haunted his dramaturgical practice. Kareda’s comments here, addressed to a single playwright whose work he seeks to encourage,¹⁸ may be read not only as reflections of Kareda’s thinking about the “Tarragon play” during this period, but also, importantly, as advice to an emerging playwright and an articulation of a preferred set of playwriting techniques, including the conception of the onstage world. Moreover, Kareda’s discussion of stage space in later interviews reveals similar beliefs about theatrical setting in succeeding years. In his final interview with Rudakoff, for example, Kareda describes the theatrical world as “a different world” from that of the audience but also stresses its familiarity, even its capacity to generate the illusion of seamless contiguity with reality:

We have one of the last spaces in Toronto that’s flexible and can be transformed from show to show. Audiences enter the space and they’re physically entering a different world [...] I try to honour the very individual world of each play, even physically. One of the wonderful things about Kristen Thomson’s *I Claudia* was that audiences couldn’t believe that the space they’d stumbled into was a designed set. Some even wondered if they’d ended up backstage in the Extra Space and were seeing a little corner of the building by accident” (Rudakoff *Between* 9).

This quote from the end of Kareda’s long career at Tarragon reveals much about his dramaturgical practice. Kareda’s aim to “honour the very individual world of each play” reflects relatively small casts; and localized, domestic settings). These shared features are also present in the works of the other playwrights Kareda mentions here, with John Krizanc perhaps stretching (or “diversifying”) these features the farthest. It is worth observing, however, that unlike the other listed playwrights, Krizanc produced only one script at Tarragon, *Prague*, the setting for which reduced in scope and scale from his initial meeting with Kareda (as described in the introduction to the published script) over the course of its development.

¹⁸ Although it was a rejection, this lengthy, detailed letter is nonetheless filled with dramaturgical feedback, evincing Kareda’s stated aim to “take everybody seriously as a writer” (qtd in Rudakoff *Between* 24-25).
the mandate to “serve the playwright’s vision” which was not only a cornerstone of his
discursive inheritance as artistic director of Tarragon but also a deeply felt personal commitment
which guided his dramaturgical practice, revealed in such assertions as “[t]he first production of
a new play—the culmination of the development processes—has to be the writer’s production,
presenting the writer’s vision of the play” (“They Also Serve” 8, original emphasis). At the same
time, Kareda’s illustrative descriptions of audience experiences\(^1\) of theatrical worlds—in both
the letter dated 1987 and the interview in 2001—also reveal the implicit illusionist bias that
shaped this “service” to the playwright’s vision. Echoing his comments in the early rejection
letter, Kareda’s description of audience response to the set for \(I\) Claudia articulates the
“strength” he located in the theatre’s “intimacy” or “human scale”: the illusion that audience
members could comfortably enter into and exist in the world of the play—a space where real
spectators and fictional characters “breath the same air.” This too calls to mind the emphasis on
detail, specificity, and familiarity which is to be found in Kareda’s introduction to \(Leaving\nHome\). Given this long-held appreciation for a carefully constructed and recognizable onstage
world capable of prompting emotional—even universal—identification, it is unsurprising that
Johnston observed a similar inclination in his survey of Kareda’s theatre criticism: “To Kareda, it
is naive to think of theatrical realism as simply an illusion of reality onstage; rather,
realism/naturalism is a sophisticated system of conventions that root humanist themes in a
\textit{particular setting}” (“Archetypal Enthusiast” 297, emphasis added).

This observation by Johnston, like his above-quoted identification, in Kareda’s theatre

\(^1\) That both comments articulate audience experiences of theatrical setting also reflects the influence of the
sensibilities of Tarragon’s audiences on Kareda’s own dramaturgical sensibility, an influence discussed in greater
detail below. Consider, for example, an extant audience donation request form circa 1986 which includes, under the
heading “Enclosed is my $15 for Tarragon. I’m sending because of,” such selectable categories as “friendly staff,”
and “new Canadian plays,” along with the following three revealing options: “real rain on stage;” “real trees on
stage;” “real and incredible actors” (“Donation Request”).
criticism, of an “implied tension between realism/naturalism and other theatrical styles,” is further illuminating in its conflation of realism and naturalism. The archive reveals that Johnston sought to confirm this interpretation of Kareda’s views on naturalism in a letter dated 14 February 1994. “It seemed to me,” writes Johnston, “that, in your critical writing, you didn’t draw much of a distinction between realism and naturalism [...] that to you (as to me) the difference was more one of degree rather than of kind. Do you find this a reasonable assessment?” The archival record also includes Kareda’s affirmative—if perfunctory—response: “I’m fine with [...] your take on me and naturalism/realism.” Once again, I am treading on contentious terminological ground, as the treatment of realism and naturalism as synonymous is a deservedly contested phenomenon. As Solga and Barker have observed most recently, “‘Realism’ is often understood in British and North American theatre studies through a conflation of genre (the dramatic realism of such modern playwrights as Ibsen and Chekov, for example) and performance technique (“psychological realist” acting and directing styles, buttressed by fourth-wall naturalism in stage and lighting design)” (2). What is at issue here is what this reveals about Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, and indeed Solga and Barker’s observations about realism and its conflation with naturalistic acting, design, and playwriting could serve as a description of many of the beliefs demonstrable in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. In exploring his preferences, including the taste for naturalism identifiable in his praise for the works of French and Pinter, a crucial question is: Which elements needed to be “real”?

Here, once again, Kareda’s letters—including the above-quoted rejection letter of 1987—provide illuminating companions to such published pieces as his theatre criticism or the introduction to Leaving Home. Beyond the (selective) scenic realism intimated by his description
of the theatre’s “human scale,” Kareda’s letter also reflects a realist imperative in the creation of dramatic characters, those onstage figures he describes as “the same size” as spectators, “breath[ing] the same air.” Kareda’s celebration of Pinter’s “naturalistic presentation of life” reveals one of the ways these familiar, realistic characters are to be constructed; in Pinter, the “dialogue is close to ordinary speech.” This reproduction of realistic dialogue is a key characteristic Kareda looked for in a writer, part of the “piercing strength of observation” he identifies in all four of the naturalistic playwrights lauded in his introduction to Leaving Home (viii). Praise for a playwright’s ear for dialogue is common in Kareda’s letters, both to playwrights with whom he worked closely and to playwrights whose work he rejected but whom he nonetheless sought to encourage. A letter dated August 1989, for example, praises a rejected submission for its potential as “the work of a real writer,” and his positive feedback on the script emphasizes that “the characters emerged naturally and interestingly through their dialogue” (Letter to Beth Herst). A letter to nineteen-year-old playwright Adam Barken, inviting him to join the 1994 Playwrights Unit, likewise praises the playwright’s “ear” and “command of dialogue” (Letter to Adam Barken 20 October 1993). Moreover, the difference between these two letters reveals that, according to Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, the creation of satisfying, believable dramatic characters ran deeper than surface realism. While he found that the first recipient’s characters “emerged naturally” through dialogue, Kareda found the script flawed in that the central relationship seemed “more dramatically expedient than emotionless/psychologically believable” (Letter to Beth Herst). What set Barken’s work apart—

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20 This playwright, Beth Herst would go on to participate in the 1989-90 Tarragon Playwrights Unit, where she developed her play, A Woman’s Comedy. The resulting Tarragon production (1992) was notably co-directed by Kareda (with Andy McKim).

21 Barken went on to become an award winning TV writer. The script he developed as part of the Playwrights Unit, The Drive, went on to be given a public reading by Playwrights’ Workshop Montreal (in association with Theatre Passe Muraille) on March 5, 1995 and was optioned for film in 2006.
and earned him an invite into the Playwrights Unit—was that, beyond his “ear” for realistic
dialogue, his script revealed a “command of [...] subtext, and what people suppress” (Letter to
Adam Barken 20 October 1993).

Kareda’s emphasis on psychology, subtext, and suppression in these letters affirms the
prominence, in most secondary accounts of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, of his implicitly
naturalistic inclination toward highly developed character psychology. Detractors and champions
of Kareda alike identify the influence of this way of understanding dramatic characterization on
his dramaturgical practice. In Devine’s “Tarragon: Playwrights Talk Back,” for example, Nigel
Hunt complains of Kareda’s “insistence…that I justify my writing in terms of psychological
motivation” (17), while Colleen Murphy enthuses over a Playwrights Unit exercise which
involved “writing a 10-minute monologue for the weakest character in the script, then having to
PERFORM it in character and answer everyone’s questions while still in character” (21, original
emphasis). Archived notes confirm that this “monologue exercise,” which literalized Kareda’s
above-quoted assertion that “dramatic characters have to be inhabited from within,” was
employed in multiple iterations of the Unit.22 This exercise reflects an affinity for naturalistic
approaches to acting in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility; in practice it often produced plays
well suited to the “naturalistic actors” trained in a “blend of the Stanislavski System and the
American Method” observed by Knowles in his account of such Tarragon productions as the
1997 Glass Menagerie.

Another consequence of the sensibility that informed this exercise is the predominance of
monologues to be found in plays produced by Kareda’s dramaturgy. As Sky Gilbert has put it, in
an evident critique of this dramaturgical influence, “What I call the "Tarragon Play" always

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22 Records survive in the form of Kareda’s handwritten lists of Unit participants alongside the names of characters
singled out for the exercise. These lists are titled “monologues” or “monologue exercise” in various files in the
Kareda fonds at Library and Archives Canada.
contains a heavy dollop of Shelley Winters dramaturgy. There's always a point in most mainstage plays, for instance, where you can see Kareda's heavy hand, when a character steps out and starts to tell their little story of abuse or whatever” (111). Again, Kareda’s own writing on the subject may help to nuance this characterization, revealing that, for Kareda, not all dramatic monologues are created equal. In a 1972 review which includes what Johnston describes as “a lengthy consideration of the genre of monologue,” Kareda writes: “The use of monologue as a symbol for loneliness and isolation is gauche and self-limiting. The characters’ alone-ness in The Separate Condition isn’t dramatized and doesn’t touch us; it is too artificially contrived, too arid” (“Archetypal Enthusiast” 298). Kareda’s objection to contrivance here, as well as his emphasis on “touching” the audience through the dramatization of a character’s internal state, further illuminates the features of the “real” in Karedian naturalism/realism.

Among the qualities praised by Kareda in Leaving Home is a perceived “honesty.... Because he doesn’t lie, David French has found a way to speak to us all.” Against contrivance, Kareda often invokes honesty and truth in his praise for scripts and productions, and an examination of his use of these intangible, subjective terms can illuminate what these words meant for him. His review of the premiere production of Leaving Home, for example, finds these qualities in the naturalistic performance of Sean Sullivan as Jacob Mercer, whose “anger [wa]s always a beat ahead of the thinking” and thus produced “the difficult urgent complexity of truth.” Crucially, Kareda’s review also locates this truth in the writing, with special praise expressed for “David French’s marvellous honesty” (qtd. in Johnston Enthusiast 295-6). Moreover, in the introduction to the published script of Leaving Home, the implied source of this honesty further reveals what it

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23 The “Shelley Winters School of Dramaturgy” is Gilbert’s term for a (naturalistic) actor-centred (myopic and self-serving) focus on character: “If Shelley wanted a big speech, she’d say to the director, ‘I’m sorry, but why is the character so bitter? We never get to see why, I think she needs a big speech where she explains why.... There’s got to be some reason” (111, original emphasis).
might mean, for Kareda, to inhabit dramatic character from within. Several times in the introduction Kareda stresses “autobiographical” writing as the wellspring of the “poetic resonance” of naturalistic drama; “from personal reminiscence comes a universal [...] experience.” Observing that his favourites of the 1971-72 season were “plays arising from personal history,” Kareda goes on to assert that naturalism offered these playwrights “a method of transforming personally observed information into an artistic order” (viii). If the source of honesty or the “real,” here, is autobiographical truth, if it is personal reminiscence that touches an audience, then it is no surprise that a dominant feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility is a taste for plays—and monologues—characterized by a confessional, psychologically revelatory quality.

The dramaturgical implications of this poetics of the personal and psychological are reflected in one of his most frequently used analogies for the dramaturgical role, the psychoanalyst.24 In his final interview with Rudakoff, Kareda reveals that he once aspired to be a psychiatrist (Between 26) and this fascination with the psyche recognizably informs his dramaturgical sensibility, including a taste for dramatic characters as objects of analysis (a dominant characteristic of theatrical naturalism from its inception), but extending as well to a psychoanalytic dimension in the playwright-dramaturg dynamic. Indeed, Judith Thompson signals this intersection of dramaturgical and psychological analytic functions in her description of Kareda’s “brilliant dramaturgy” as “flashlight-in-the-dark attention to my work, my deepest self” (“It’s My Birthday” 112, emphasis added). Moreover, Kareda’s earliest published account of his approach to developmental dramaturgy at Tarragon expresses the influence of this psychoanalytic fascination on his conception of the dramaturgical role:

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24 Kareda also uses “psychologist” and “psychiatrist” in various contexts over the years in articulating this dramaturgical impulse as he experienced it.
I believe that a playwright, in the early developmental stages of a play’s creation, knows much more about the play than he or she is able to put on the page. The knowledge is only partly conscious; much more information is available on the levels of dreams, fantasies, and the unconscious imagination. It is the dramaturg’s role to create a process which will help to draw the play from its hidden places in the writer’s mind. (“They Also” 9).

This early description of the operations of new play development, which figures the dramaturg as psychoanalyst, facilitating the excavation of the playwright’s unconscious mind, helps to elucidate anecdotal accounts from playwrights who recall “an encouragement to dig deeper” as a feature of their experiences with Kareda’s developmental dramaturgy (Devine “Tarragon Playwrights” 21). In later years Kareda would express the need to resist this therapeutic impulse: “In some cases, till the life is fixed, the plays can’t get fixed, but that’s not the territory of the dramaturg” (26). Nonetheless, Kareda’s fascination with psychoanalysis is reflected in many of the features of his dramaturgical sensibility, including: his poetics of “personal reminiscence”; his belief in the importance of the unconscious to the playwriting process and consequent efforts to tap this source (with, for example, the oft-employed monologue exercise); and a marked emphasis on character psychology in his dramaturgical feedback.

Returning to Kareda’s praise for the “naturalistic presentation of life” at work in the plays of Harold Pinter, yet another crucial manifestation of this psychoanalytic impulse in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility is revealed. In tension with the verisimilitude of Pinter’s dialogue, Kareda finds the playwright extending his “chilling stare” beyond surface realism to expose “the

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25 Like naturalism/realism, psychologist/psychoanalyst/psychiatrist, and other slippery terms that arise in this discussion, Kareda uses both subconscious and unconscious in various instances, seemingly interchangeably.

26 The quote provided here is from Colleen Murphy’s contribution to Devine’s “Tarragon: Playwrights Talk Back” and is comparable to Don Hannah’s similar—and similarly positive—claim in his own “report card” for Devine, that his experience in the Playwrights Unit “encouraged me to dig deeper than I ever have before” (16)
stark underbelly of ordinary experience.” Recalling his identification, in the introduction to *Leaving Home*, of a “piercing strength of observation” as the mark of a good writer, this celebration of writing that penetrates the facade of conscious human behaviour further refines my evolving definition of Karedian naturalism. Indeed, Kareda offers remarkably similar observations regarding the plays of Chekov27 in his final interview with Rudakoff, nearly thirty years later: “Naturalism is such a tricky thing to talk about. Chekov is one of my favourite playwrights because there’s not a detail wasted in his plays. The work is grounded in naturalism yet every once in a while the inexplicable occurs [….] Great naturalism is […] an explosion. It makes you aware of everything in the world” (*Between* 13). The unpredictable explosion that disrupts the realistic surface is not an exception to or a departure from naturalism or the naturalistic as Kareda sees it; rather, it is a prerequisite of “great naturalism,” generating a tension that Kareda identifies in Pinter as “dangerous as an open razor.”

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27 A recurring theme in accounts of Kareda’s dramaturgy is his background as an academic, which may shed some light here on his dramaturgical sensibility. To rehearse the story of Kareda’s academic past as I have seen it in countless sources, I will quote Judith Rudakoff’s brief bio: Kareda was “[e]ducated at King’s College, Cambridge and University of Toronto” (*Between* 5). Some accounts are more specific, identifying Kareda’s stint at Cambridge as doctoral studies and occasionally clarifying that this was an unfinished degree. The focus of Kareda’s dissertation has been the subject of conflicting reports, made more difficult to verify by the fact that it was never completed. According to Johnston it was “on Chekov and the Theatre of the Absurd” (25); Judith Rudakoff repeats this in her interview with Kareda, treating Johnston’s phrasing as a title, and goes uncorrected by Kareda (*Between* 11). However, although his personal records contain a file titled “Thesis: Chekov: The Wood Demon & Uncle Vanya” and another from the same period containing notes on *The Cherry Orchard*, confirming an emphasis on Chekov in Kareda’s doctoral research, there is no surviving record of any emphasis on the so-called “Theatre of the Absurd.” According to the online Canadian Encyclopedia entry for Kareda, written by Jason Sherman, the dissertation was to be on “Tragicomedy from Chekhov to Albee,” which further complicates the picture. Martin Knelman, a friend of Kareda’s at the time of his studies abroad, offers only the vague recollection that Kareda “moved to England to read modern drama at Cambridge” (9), leaving one to speculate about Knelman’s use of the term “modern.” It could be taken as confirmation that the plays and playwrights deemed Absurd by Martin Esslin, including those of Pinter (plays which may be more comfortably described as Modernist) represented a substantial part of Kareda’s doctoral research, although Kareda’s verifiable focus on the work of Chekov argues for the possibility that Knelman’s is a looser definition of “modern drama.” In keeping with Johnston’s and my own conclusions regarding Kareda’s fluid sense of genre, in particular his praise for the tension between “ordinary” reality and its “stark underbelly” in Pinter or the unpredictable “explosions” which disrupt—and augment—the naturalism in Chekov, I am inclined to read Kareda’s response (or lack thereof) to Rudakoff’s proffered title of the dissertation as an indication of its approximation to the project, although in light of his comments discussed here it is possible to imagine that Kareda’s scholarship sought the naturalistic elements in the “Absurd” plays as much if not more than he sought the absurd in Chekov, as the proposed title might imply.
However, this high praise for danger and unpredictability had its limits. If Kareda’s choice of the psychoanalyst as an analogy for the dramaturg is revealing, his other favourite trope—the dramaturg as editor—is equally salient. In the introduction to *Leaving Home*, Kareda describes the developmental dramaturgy of his predecessor, Bill Glassco, as “editorial assistance for the writer, so that he [sic] can develop and polish his material until it is ready for production” (vi), and this seems to have informed Kareda’s own conception of and approaches to new play development. Among the valuable skills he identifies in 1986 as representative of “the dramaturgical impulse as I have pursued it since I became the artistic director of the Tarragon theatre in 1982,” Kareda lists “editorial understanding” (“They Also Serve” 7). Polishing the script, for Kareda, often means ensuring its clarity and comprehensibility. Moreover, given the naturalistic emphasis on character psychology in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, it is unsurprising that the archival record reveals this emphasis to be frequently tied to psychological through-lines, motivations, and backstories. As I will show in the succeeding case studies, this drive toward traceable and transparent character psychology is revealed in many of Kareda’s notes in the margins of script drafts. As an illustration of this impulse-in-action, I propose to turn once again to a piece of Kareda’s extant correspondence.

Letters often provide an exceptional point of access into Kareda’s dramaturgical practice and its emphases. This is especially true when they are produced as part of his sustained development of a script. In cases where a stage in the ongoing process occurs with Kareda at a physical remove, extant letters provide access to both the style and content of dramaturgical feedback that would otherwise have taken place in person, lost to posterity. One such letter is addressed to Charles Tidler, regarding his script for *The Farewell Heart*, a play that premiered at

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28 Given the number of Governor General’s award-winning plays that emerged from Kareda’s dramaturgical process, it is worth observing the outcome he ties to this process in the introduction to *Leaving Home*: “the most viable scripts of the season purely as written documents” (vi-vii).
Tarragon in November 1983 to a cold reception from audiences and critics. This letter, dated 14 June 1983 and addressed to Tidler in Courtenay, BC, makes reference to the fact that Kareda’s dramaturgical input is restricted by geography: “I do wish that I were there to [sic], to discuss and argue and fight and tell you how wonderful I think it’s going to be,” Kareda writes, in what can be read as an apt description of his dramaturgical approach. The final expression of Kareda’s characteristic enthusiasm is balanced, here, against his willingness to express the (potentially incendiary) strong opinions for which he is equally famous. Kareda’s expression of willingness to “argue and fight” (even if only a rhetorical flourish), reflects the “disarming forthrightness” that distinguished his dramaturgy (Al-Solaylee *Tonight* vii). As Andy McKim—Kareda’s dramaturgy apprentice-turned-long-time associate artistic director—has observed, Kareda was “never afraid of his own opinion” (qtd in Breon 6) and indeed the rest of this letter to Tidler provides a fascinating glimpse into Kareda’s dramaturgical forthrightness in action.

After expressing his regret at not being able to argue and enthuse in person, Kareda’s letter proceeds with the directive “As you go through it [i.e. the script] again, keep the following questions in mind—they’re the ones that return most often to me.” Four lengthy questions follow, and there is much to be learned from their content as well as their interrogative form. That Kareda employed question-asking as a key strategy in his developmental dramaturgy will be discussed in the case studies to follow, particularly in Chapter 2, which aims explicitly to debunk the myth of the non-prescriptive interrogative approach to developmental dramaturgy. In the case of his letter to Tidler, the subjects Kareda interrogates and the preoccupations revealed by these questions are also of value, exemplifying key features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility found elsewhere. They read as follows:

(1) Do we understand the *source*—before the action of the play begins—of Barlow’s power on the island and in the community?
(2) Do we understand the source of the antagonism between Roger and Barlow? Could Roger, in his past, have chosen and become a Barlow, choosing instead to become a Roger? Were they in the past mirror images who have now gone very separate paths? Is the hurt in their current cross-betrayals so angry because they were once so close? Where did it go wrong between them?
(3) Why does Molly love and idolize Duncan? He is certainly more appealing that [sic] he used to be, but I don’t think you’ve quite yet charted the source of her hopeful and enduring passion for him.
(4) Is the language of the play a spoken language? Please fight on my behalf the fight against the literary, please. (And it’s not enough to answer that you can hear yourself speaking it, because that’s not an accurate index. Shelly [sic] must have been able to speak the Cenci, though not many have since.) (Letter to Charles Tidler, original emphasis)

Questions one and two both begin “Do we understand the source....” with the former seeking a backstory for a character’s status and influence in the world of the play, and the latter seeking—through a series of follow-up questions—clarification of a particular character relationship. The third question continues in the same vein, asking (without emphasis this time) for the psychological “source” of a character’s behaviour in her past, this time in the form of a “Why” question. As the case studies to follow demonstrate, “Why” questions are a particular favourite of Kareda’s, and they frequently solicit traceable and transparent psychological motivations—or sources—for the actions and utterances of dramatic characters. What the first three questions share, then, is an emphasis on clarity and comprehensibility for the audience (the implicit “we” who must “understand”) and, relatedly, on the traceability of character dynamics to psychological origins. Signaling, as they do, an expectation for Tidler to supply naturalistic motivation for the actions and utterances of his characters, these questions demonstrate how the sensibilities revealed by Kareda’s favorite tropes of editor and psychoanalyst worked in tandem in his dramaturgical practice.

While these three questions demonstrate the dramaturgical influence of Kareda’s taste for clear and traceable naturalistic character psychology, Kareda’s fourth and final question to Tidler
addresses the descriptor that most frequently accompanies “naturalistic” in secondary accounts of Kareda’s personal taste: “literary.” Given the predominance of this perception in the received narrative, Kareda’s appeal to Tidler to “[p]lease fight on my behalf the fight against the literary, please” is surprising, particularly as the plea comes at an early point in his career at Tarragon. Kareda himself admits, in his last interview with Rudakoff in 2001, that he “used to have a fondness for plays that were literary in a bad sense. They were plays that were too well-written in an airless way” (Between 11). This early letter to Tidler, with its allusion to Shelley’s closet drama, indicates that this personal definition of “literary” as closed or “airless” was at least developing in his earliest years at Tarragon. Nonetheless, like naturalism, literary is a slippery term, with different potential meanings for each person who has applied it to Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, including Kareda himself. Indeed, while Kareda advocates the “fight” against literariness of the airless variety, he elsewhere unashamedly applies this adjective in describing his taste and approaches to play development—even within the same interview. In his conversation with Rudakoff, Kareda balances the admission that he once favoured plays that were “literary in a bad sense” with: “My aesthetic is literary-based and Tarragon, as a result, is a text-based theatre” (Between 11). This alternate definition of “literary”—as a synonym for text-based theatre—is also apparent in his interview with Cottreau in 1996; describing his dramaturgical process at Tarragon, Kareda states, “Most things still begin with text [....] Since we are a playwright’s theatre, we probably still are more script driven than not. More literary than not, before literary became such a dirty word” (8). Following this, Kareda further illuminates the potential meaning of literary as he embraced it as part of his dramaturgical sensibility with the defense of another “old fashioned and unpopular word,” plot, which he
defends as the mechanism by which one may “release[] the play’s meanings, themes, and characters,” the source of “a narrative that will engage us in the issues of the play” (ibid).

The denotative links between *literary, text-based, narrative* and *plot-driven* revealed in these interviews are also reflected in the anecdotal accounts of playwrights who worked with Kareda, especially in those accounts which register complaints. Nigel Hunt, for example, reports that during the 1985-1986 Playwrights Unit, in a discussion of “what was essential in a play,” Kareda proclaimed ‘plot’” and subsequently dismissed Hunt’s suggested exception, Robert Wilson’s *Einstein on the Beach*, stating that it “couldn’t possibly be termed a ‘play’” (Devine “Tarragon Playwrights” 17). However, in my reconstruction of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility such reports must contend with Kareda’s self-described “fight against the literary,” in particular his evolving recognition of the importance of what he describes above as “air” in the script. Indeed, Kareda’s defense of plot to Cottreau makes the tension between these potentially contradictory impulses explicit; having stressed that “[s]omewhat, storytelling has to be in there,” Kareda is quick to return to and evolve an earlier assertion that he “like[s] *open* narrative structures:” “One of my anxieties is dealing with plays that attempt to give the audience the whole experience in the text, leaving not enough for the audience to do, to question, and to respond to. *Airless.* I think I’m probably much more friendly toward plays with gaping holes, rather than nice, neat constructions” (8, emphasis added).

Kareda’s use of the word “airless” here recalls and helps to explicate his admission to Rudakoff, in 2001, of an early weakness for plays that were “literary in a bad sense.” Years before even his 1996 interview with Cottreau, the archival record reflects Kareda’s use of “air” in a description of qualities he sought in assessing and developing scripts. A page in his “Play Development” file, dated 1990, includes Kareda’s handwritten (and therefore largely
unpunctuated) note, “what am I looking for? muscle air passion characters ‘its own world’” (“New Plays: How They Grow,” emphasis added). While the archival record yields no earlier instance of Kareda’s advocacy of scripts which possess this airy quality, I have encountered an early instance of Kareda’s use of the word *muscle*, listed alongside *air* in these handwritten notes and also linked with the airy quality in Cottreau’s interview, where he states, “My taste is for a voice that is muscular, that leaves a lot of air” (7). In an early, undated draft of John Krizanc’s *Prague*, next to a long speech in which Zrak recounts his knowledge of Vlad’s history, Kareda writes in the margin “compress and make more muscular” (F1 729). If this comment seems to indicate that Kareda’s use of the term “muscular” springs from an editorial impulse toward concision, it is striking that this “muscular” quality is something he looks for in connection—in tension?—with “air” by at least the time of his interview with Cottreau in 1996, perhaps earlier. Once again I must acknowledge the dynamic, even paradoxical, nature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility as it may be historically reconstructed. It appears that while Kareda’s dramaturgy, as it evolved over his first several years at Tarragon, privileged such “editorial” imperatives as clarity, comprehensibility30 and “muscular” concision, Kareda also came to value what he describes as “air” or openness, room beyond the text for audiences “to do, to question, and to respond.”

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29 This draft is housed in the *Prague* Performance File of the Tarragon Theatre collection of the L.W. Conolly Theatre Archives, University of Guelph. Here and elsewhere I have provided a brief citation indicating the file folder in which the draft is found (i.e. file 1). Additional information can be found in my list of Works Cited.

30 Extant *Prague* drafts are no exception to the predominance of annotations by Kareda seeking clarity and comprehensibility in the surviving record of his dramaturgy at Tarragon. Many of his questions to Krizanc seek chronological detail and backstory, including many “why” questions (F1 7 and 9) and such questions as “When was he told about the poem? Who discovered the body?” (F1 13). Likewise, comments such as “unclear” (F2 3 and 9, F1 11 and 23), “The nature of the PLOT is unclear” (F2 9), “meaning here?” (F2 2), “what’s he getting at?” (F2 4), and “What does he mean EXACTLY?” (F2 10) reflect a dominant impulse toward clarity and comprehensibility, despite the existence of Kareda’s above quoted call for “muscular” compression and his two extant potentially “air”-seeking comments, “very expository” (F1 2) and “too obvious” (F2 10).
The archival record also affirms Kareda’s related “literary” inclination toward text-based theatre. Extant documentation of Kareda’s dramaturgy, by its very nature, privileges evidence of Kareda’s work with traditional scripts; indeed this study is made possible because so much of his dramaturgy was text-based and consequently survived. Moreover, Kareda’s above-mentioned admission to Cottreau that as a playwright’s theatre Tarragon was fundamentally script-driven confirms this emphasis on the text in his work at Tarragon. It also intimates one of the underlying personal beliefs that informed this inclination, tying Kareda’s script-driven dramaturgy to his commitment to the totalizing expression of the playwright’s vision. Unscripted theatre displaces the primacy of the single author, and although there were exceptions, Kareda’s programming as well as his play development reflect the sense that Tarragon’s construction as a “playwright’s theatre” was founded on a traditional, single-author conception of the playwright as the generator of a fixed text. Moreover, archival traces of the thinking that informed Kareda’s programming decisions also help to reconstruct the priorities that shaped this feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. In a rejection letter to Bill Millerd, dated 29 August 1986, Kareda declines to program the collectively created *Sex Tips for Modern Girls*, which had recently premiered at Millerd’s Revue Theatre on Granville Island, explaining, “my audience likes scripted shows, and SEX TIPS seems to me more of an event” (original emphasis). This striking admission makes explicit Kareda’s perception of his audience at Tarragon as well as the influence of this perception on his programming and, by extension, on his dramaturgical practice.

Alongside the Tarragon’s mandate to “serve the playwright’s vision,” then, a second contributor to the predominance of script-based theatre in Kareda’s selection and development of new works appears to have been tied to another inherited imperative, the cultivation of the Tarragon’s relationship with its audience. As Knowles argues in *Reading the Material Theatre*, 
Tarragon is discursively distinguished from other Toronto “alternate” theatres, particularly the Factory Theatre (Lab), by its emphases on polished productions, fiscal responsibility, and the creation of a loyal audience, figured as members of the Tarragon “family.” Johnston articulates the centrality of the latter imperative in his account of Tarragon’s origins, observing that “[t]he importance the Glasscos placed on their audience as collaborator remained a major distinction between their work and that of the more avant-garde Toronto theatres.” In particular, Johnston argues that Jane Glassco’s “personal contact with her audience, in the lobby and through her newsletter, was to contribute greatly to the way her theatre was perceived” (Up The Mainstream 146-7). Under Kareda, this Tarragon tradition of audience cultivation continued, as extant copies of Kareda-era newsletters, donation brochures, and Kareda’s informational letters to subscribers attest. Moreover, Kareda’s direct correspondence with particular audience members reveals both the limits of his perception of the Tarragon audience “as collaborator,” as well as the dangers of offending the sensibilities of these members of the “Tarragon family.” One letter from Kareda’s first year at Tarragon includes the complaint of a patron who had been “going to plays at Tarragon since its inception.” “[T]heatre is one of my first loves and I have been attending live theatre since before you were born,” writes this loyal audience member to the new artistic director in 1982, continuing, “I feel that I have some insight as to what is an acceptable standard [...] and your first two productions fell short” (Anonymous Letter to Kareda re. Science and Madness and What is To Be Done?). Her letter reflects a personal investment in the Tarragon concept of the “audience as collaborator,” expressing her “hope[] that [her] criticism would be constructive and [that Kareda] might consider his choice of plays more carefully” (ibid). However, the “display of spleen” (in the words of the recipient) of Kareda’s response reveals

31 I have chosen to maintain the anonymity of the letter writer.
that, in this case at least, his adherence to the mandate to “serve the playwright’s vision” outweighed the Tarragon tradition of serving audiences as well (ibid).

Despite this willingness to place limits on the input of Tarragon’s audiences, however, Kareda was aware of the pressures generated by Tarragon’s interrelated discursive and material traditions tied to family and (financial) balance. A donation request circa 1986 features, among a selection of pre-determined Tarragon qualities donators are invited to check off as reasons for their contribution, “the fact that you listen to us” (“Donation Request”). This listening did not always translate into Kareda’s acquiescence to the opinions of individual patrons, as the above-quoted exchange attests, but a mindfulness of what Tarragon’s larger “family” might bear did inform his dramaturgical sensibility over the years. As late as 1999, in a brief letter to Brian Quirt and Julia Sasso regarding The Whirlpool, Kareda cautions, “I think the end of Act 1 ends in too dark a place, and sends the audience out (a) confused (“What is a Thunder Woman?”) and (b) if they do understand, in more of a downer-mood than is helpful for bringing people back” (Letter to Brian Quirt and Julia Sasso 1 Mar 1999). Given that Quirt was acting as dramaturg in the development of The Whirlpool, these notes arise from Kareda’s involvement with the play as artistic director; nonetheless, they are dramaturgical in nature and reveal the ways in which Kareda’s mindfulness of his audience informed his dramaturgical sensibility. In particular, given his “editorial” impulse discussed above, it is worth observing Kareda’s concern in this letter that the first act may leave the audience “confused.” This preoccupation is reinforced in a subsequent letter, later in the development of The Whirlpool, which concludes, “I think it’s worth pursuing

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32 It is perhaps worth observing that this devised dance-dramaturgy production, like other Tarragon productions that marked a departure from the scripted, text-based definition of “literary,” was an adaptation of a novel and thus “literary” in another sense. Interestingly, another letter includes Kareda’s advice to “[b]e wary of the literary. It is a trap, I now recognize, for my own interests, and I recognize it as a trap in others as well. It can cast a pall of ‘literary curiosity’ over a theatre-piece, which doesn’t give it a chance. I would cut, for instance, all of Fleta’s quoted fragments of poems, which start near the end of Part One, and really proliferate in Part Two” (Letter to Brian Quirt).
clarity, coherence, balance and proportion in the story-telling. You can do it” (Letter to Brian Quirt and Julia Sasso 27 Feb 2000). Moreover, the reference to “balance” and “proportion” in this second letter recalls Kareida’s earlier concern with the content and tone of The Whirlpool, signaled by his initial caution to keep the “downer-mood” of the opening act from alienating its audience. This impulse toward a balancing degree of levity has been observed by Judith Thompson, who recalls of Kareida’s dramaturgy, “always, always he would ask, ‘Where are the jokes?’ because humour [...] delights and connects an audience” (“It’s My Birthday” 116).

Indeed, humour is an oft-praised feature in the extant record of Kareida’s dramaturgy.33

Dramaturgical feedback of this kind reflects the two sides of the dramaturg-as-audience trope as it has been used to describe Kareida’s dramaturgical sensibility. In keeping with his characterization as “the archetypal enthusiast,” Kareida is frequently figured as an encouraging, generous “first audience,” the dramaturg whose marginal annotations frequently include “wonderful!” and who concludes his letter to Quirt and Sasso, “You can do it.”34 Just as often, however, the dramaturg-as-audience trope is invoked to figure Kareida as a stand-in for audiences-to-be, anticipating the expectations of the subscribers he knew so well. Thompson, for example, observes the influence of this awareness of his audience on Kareida’s dramaturgical practice: “Urjo was his audience, in many ways, and he was very protective of his audience” (Personal Interview). Given the discourse of (heteronormative, patriarchal) family observed by

33 A representative example from a rejection letter: “you have a flair for some aspects of playwriting: the dialogue often has a nice spin, and your plant your jokes very well” (Letter to Playwright X 28 July 1987). It is also worth observing that Kareida’s taste was restricted to particular types of humour, specifically those types which “connect” the audience. As Kareida once said to Zimmerman, “One of the most depressing sounds you can hear in the theatre is heartless, detached laughter” (“Maintaining” 223).

34 Although ostensibly an expression of support, it is possible to read “you can do it” in this case as more ambiguously inflected; it could be read as a directive masquerading as encouragement. This reflects the potential, perhaps unintentional, double-edged nature of Kareida’s enthusiasm: to be part of his “inner circle,” as writers who belonged to it attest, meant a much-needed and rare position of security and support, while at the same time the preciousness of this support had the potential to make playwrights anxious to retain it. For more on this, see my discussion of Kareida’s unusual position as both artistic director and dramaturg—or “superdramaturg”—below.
Knowles, Thompson’s use of the word “protective” here may also be understood to connote moral paternalism. Beyond Kareda’s sense of his audience’s preference for script-based drama, Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility was also informed by a keen sensitivity to the (relatively conservative) sensibilities of the Tarragon audience. As Kareda once put it, “Tarragon audiences take their theatre very personally. When something upsets regulars at a Tarragon show, they think something is wrong at the core of their family” (qtd. in Ouzounian ““At the helm”).

Evincing the “protective” impulse identified by Thompson, as well as the paternal one identified by Knowles, subjects of potential affront to audiences are often flagged in Kareda’s notes in the margins of script drafts and in his letters to playwrights. These include: gratuitous expletives, the irreverent treatment of religion, explicit depictions of sexuality, and the indelicate discussion of bodily functions. Moreover, extant records reveal how Kareda’s mindfulness of the need to “balance” the alienating potential of taking audiences to “too dark a place” informed not only his feedback to writers but also—often relatedly—his programming choices. For example, while Kareda’s above-quoted letter to Barken includes praise for the playwright’s “command of dialogue” and subtext, Kareda also warns the young writer that his submission is “exceptionally bleak, and it would be tough for an audience.” Archival records show that this “VERY GRIM” quality persisted through Barken’s participation in the 1994 Playwrights Unit and, ultimately, prevented his play from securing a production the following season. Kareda delivers this disappointing news in a letter which reads: “I continued to admire your technical skills with dialogue, and the insights you had into the protagonist. [...] I think you are gifted, but I think you

35 Kareda’s feedback regarding coarse language is discussed in chapter three, as is his dramaturgical imperative away from the irreverent treatment of religious subjects in both Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script and Jason Sherman’s The Retreat. Chapter four also touches on Kareda’s response to sacrilegious content, along with his responses to a sexually explicit scene in Thompson’s White Biting Dog and his feedback regarding Thompson’s dialogue on such indelicate subjects as menstruation.
must struggle against your instinctive desire to jolt and startle and shock” (Letter to Adam Barken 15 February 1994).

Such advice to palliate those elements of a script that may “jolt and startle and shock” is difficult to reconcile with Kareda’s praise for “Great naturalism” as “an explosion” and his celebration of Pinter’s “chilling stare at the stark underbelly” of life, which could be “as dangerous as an open razor.” Such contradictions reflect the complex dynamic of competing priorities and preferences that informed Kareda’s dramaturgy. It is essential, for example, to observe that not all potential affronts to decorum were incompatible with Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility; there are many instances where coarse language, explicit sexuality, or the treatment of potentially offensive subject matter go unremarked in extant drafts annotated by Kareda. In these cases, Kareda’s acceptance of—or at least, indifference to—the potentially shocking material may be tied to other features of his dramaturgical sensibility. Coarse language, for example, may contribute to the closely observed verisimilitude—“stark underbelly” included—that marks Karedian naturalism. In general, Kareda’s mindfulness of audiences did not result in an effort to eradicate this underbelly, but rather seems to have produced an imperative toward balance, with sufficient preparation—often in the form of comprehensible and traceable plot and character motivation—sometimes seen as mitigating the “shock” of potentially disturbing content. The distinction between a shock and an explosion, like many aspects of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, was thus a matter of degree, bound up in his personal hierarchy of sometimes-contradictory tastes, experiences, priorities and preferences. Moreover, as much as the “protective” imperative of Kareda’s audience-consciousness is revealed by extant documents

36 The record of Kareda’s long dramaturgical relationship with Judith Thompson, the origins of which are explored in chapter four, reveals many instances of shocking, dark, and indecorous elements either retained by the playwright in response to Kareda’s questioning or unremarked by Kareda, at least in the surviving record. Indeed, it is worth noting that the relationship began when Kareda sought out Thompson, a playwright already known for her exploration of the “stark underbelly” of Kingston, Ontario in her first play, The Crackwalker.
and in the recollections of playwrights like Thompson, Kareda’s awareness of cultivating an audience was also expressed in his conscious aim to extend intellectual challenges to Tarragon audiences through his programming. It is worth recalling, after all, that Richard Monette’s safe, crowd-pleasing, and box-office-conscious programming choices were at the very heart of Kareda’s notorious critique of the Stratford artistic director in a Toronto Life article in 2000. In his interview with Cottreau, however, Kareda’s expression of faith in the Tarragon audience—“I have to trust the intelligence of our audience… They don’t want to see the same kind of play over and over”—also reveals the persistence of the “protective” imperative discussed above, reflecting Kareda’s awareness of what his audience will “want” as well as an impulse to prepare them for potential shocks: “We give our subscribers lots of information about what they can expect to see before they come so it isn’t a complete surprise” (8).

Moreover, the surviving archival record reveals that a degree of audience-consciousness operated in tandem with Kareda’s playwright-conscious mandate to “serve the playwright’s vision.” A set of notes from 1990 under the heading “Running a New Play Theatre” demonstrate Kareda’s belief in a connection between these two “service” functions. After recording several points on the subject of playwright development, Kareda writes, in point-form,

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37 That audiences in Toronto (and often, implicitly, Tarragon audiences in particular) did want to see the same kind of play over and over was a prominent theme in critiques of Toronto theatre in the period during which Kareda took over at Tarragon. In his 1979 call to arms for a “New Alternate” theatre, for example, Ken Gass observes that Toronto “[a]udiences … want more of the status quo,” and cites Tarragon’s “strong commitment from audiences” earned by development and programming policies, under Glassco, that “tended not to stray too far” from its early successes with plays “rooted in naturalism and in emotional conflicts that are readily identifiable” (389, 392). Moreover, as Gass observes, this period in Toronto theatre history also saw a shift toward government arts funding agencies “adjudicating theatres on the basis of their community support” by “making [government] grants conditional upon box office,” thus generating increased pressure on audience consciousness in programming and play development during the period of transition from Glassco to Kareda (393).

38 It is worth observing that, like other features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, this dual emphasis suggests a connection to Tarragon tradition; “serving the playwright and the audience” is Dennis Johnston’s description of the aims that underlay Glassco’s break with Factory Theatre Lab in order to establish Tarragon (Up the Mainstream 95).

39 The purpose of the notes is unclear. They are not tied by this date to any major publication, although they may have reflected preparation for a newspaper, radio or television interview or perhaps a lecture or talk of which I am unaware.
“audience developed, too= responsiveness/receptive,” “information—help them engage in process” and “not hit or miss—showcase marketing” (original emphasis). Again, Rudakoff’s final interview with Kareda helps to elucidate this archival evidence. Observing once more that “[t]he audience [at Tarragon] take this theatre personally,” Kareda argues for the reciprocal value of his awareness of this investment: “People who feel welcomed tend to welcome what’s on stage” (Between 10). Later in the interview he elaborates on this idea. Reflecting on the annual free-of-charge Tarragon Spring Arts Fair, Kareda describes the new works showcase as “our gift to the immediate community,” but also shrewdly observes, “It also gives audiences a different stake in the plays,” an effect which Rudakoff describes as “Brilliantly insidious!” (Between 18-19). The Tarragon tradition of cultivating a committed, loyal audience is thus conceived by Kareda as serving the playwright as much as it serves the theatre’s coffers. The key to this is to “welcome” audiences into the process of play creation and to cultivate his audience’s tastes, shaping the ways in which patrons receive new work. This theory reflects Kareda’s commitment to the role of “play broker,” which he advocated in the 1981 Toronto Life article that earned him his artistic directorship (Rudakoff Between 6) and which, as Johnston has observed, served as Kareda’s job description at Tarragon (“Archetypal Enthusiast” 300).40 “A play broker,” as Kareda defined it, “could be an artistic director, a dramaturge, a producer, an agent, or a leading actor—anyone who has the taste, authority, and skill to mediate between a play and its prospective audience” (“Dormant Stage” 11, emphasis added). Evidently, this mediation went both ways, with Kareda’s audience-consciousness informing his dramaturgical feedback and his audience cultivation conceived as part of his service to the playwright.

40 Zimmerman, too, emphasizes the role of the article, “Dormant Stage,” in securing and defining Kareda’s role as artistic director of Tarragon, describing Kareda as “the consummate broker of Canadian drama” (212, “Maintaining,” emphasis added).
Despite this pragmatic understanding of the balance of service to audiences and playwrights, the extant record of Kareda’s conscious reflection on developmental dramaturgy places the playwright at the apex of Kareda’s hierarchy of values. Writing in 1986 that “[t]he first production of a new play—the culmination of the development processes—has to be the writer’s production, presenting the writer’s vision of the play,” Kareda goes on to explain, employing his favourite dramaturgical tropes, that his service to the “writer’s vision” extends “far beyond psychological support and editorial nuance. The dramaturg also becomes involved in creating the best possible circumstances for producing the work” (“They Also Serve” 8, 10).

Kareda describes this component of structural support in his developmental dramaturgy in terms of “creat[ing] environments—through residencies, workshops, readings, and commissions—in which playwrights can develop” (ibid 7). Archival records of Kareda’s personal notes on dramaturgy also emphasize this function. Among his handwritten notes on “Running a New Play Theatre,” for example, I find the mandate to “keep writers going” is underlined, linked with observations about the provision of resources, financial and not. In these notes, Kareda observes the importance of “a community” in order to “break down isolation” and stresses the goal of “long-term relationships—not just one play,” both of which are points he raises elsewhere over the years. For example, upon confirming his commitment “[t]o the writer, absolutely” in his interview with Zimmerman, Kareda continues: “And I would add that I am more interested in a long-term relationship with a writer than in any one single play” (“Maintaining” 213). Later in that interview he elaborates on the types of financial support he finds best serve the playwright; rather than commission works, for example, Kareda states that he is “more interested in finding funds to support a writer once he/she has an idea and is already on fire, funds to keep them going

41 As subsequent quotations provided here illustrate, Kareda came in later years to view commissions as less constructive, perhaps due in part to the emphasis he comes to place on combatting isolation as a key feature of his writer development.
in some way, during the two years or so\textsuperscript{42} that it takes to finish it” (ibid 220). To Rudakoff, Kareda adds further detail to this evolving sense of his service to the playwright: “What I want to give people is a type of self-identification as a writer, a sense of discipline and a peer group” \textit{(Between 15)}.

The values which underlay Kareda’s mandate of service to playwrights, then, include financial support tied to long-term, \textit{disciplined} commitment to the development of a script, as well as other forms of support—an (ideally ongoing) sense of “community” at Tarragon, and the encouragement of “self-identification as a writer”—which Kareda conceived as necessary to ignite and sustain this discipline and commitment. As Andy McKim has put it:

He took young writers very seriously, which required them to take themselves seriously. They felt the responsibility of living up to the potential that Urjo showed them they had. Urjo had a rigorous set of standards [...] For young playwrights to be included in this circle of expectation was heady and intoxicating [...] He helped [...] young writers understand their potential. (qtd in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field” 17)

Prominent Canadian playwrights have attested to the crucial role of this “circle of expectation” in their careers. Morwyn Brebner, for example, recalls a period of self-doubt during which she received a letter from Kareda saying “both that I should quit whining and that he believed in me as a writer and was backing me for the long haul. That meant everything to me” (qtd in Breon 6). Certainly, the value Brebner ascribes to this support reveals a key feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility: the confidence-instilling enthusiasm cited not only by Brebner, but also by many other playwrights in their recollections of his process. A succinct and representative example of this effect of Kareda’s encouragement on some playwrights is revealed

\textsuperscript{42} That two years is the expected gestation period for a new play is another of Kareda’s oft-repeated assertions. See, for example: “They Also Serve” 8; Cottreau 5; Devine 17.
in Emma Roberts’ comment, “I think Urjo taught me to have faith in my own process” (Emma Roberts qtd in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field” 17). Likewise, Judith Thompson has written in characteristically evocative language of the nature and influence of Kareda’s dramaturgical support, recalling of his comments, “I would shriek with delight when I read them because he was so on, so there, so right. I felt rescued” (“It’s My Birthday Forever Now” 116).

Not all playwrights, however, were invited into this supportive family circle. Consider Kareda’s above-quoted comments to Adam Barken, which praise the young playwright’s gifts—specifically his ear for dialogue and his command of subtext, both of which are compatible with the emphasis on naturalistic characterization in Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility—but also caution against elements of Barken’s writing that are “exceptionally bleak,” “grim,” or “tough for an audience.” Barken’s case and others like it expose the limits of encouragement and support for playwrights whose position in the circle of expectation was short-lived. Returning to Kareda’s 1987 rejection letter, quoted at length earlier, in which he articulated a perceived incompatibility with the playwright and was particularly candid in acknowledging that the Playwrights Unit “at heart, espouses [his] values and methods,” an illuminating record of these limits is revealed. In addition to Kareda’s above-quoted identification of the “theatre’s strengths” (its intimacy, its humanism, its realism), which he found wanting in the playwright’s work, Kareda’s criticism centers predominantly on “problems... with [the playwright’s] attitude to [his] characters.” “Very little seems to have a human grounding in a recognizable psychology or

43 It is important to note that examples of this effect of Kareda’s dramaturgy are not restricted to those playwrights with whom Kareda formed ongoing collaborative relationships (like Brebner or, even more so, Thompson), but extend to some writers whose exposure to Kareda’s dramaturgy was limited, as in the case of Roberts, who participated in the Playwrights Unit, at Kareda’s invitation, only after Kareda’s death. In fact, this confidence-instilling component of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility consciously informed even his famous rejection letters: “If you’re an amateur playwright, you yearn for that collaborative impulse.... So that’s what I do” (Rudakoff Between 24-25). Of course, as with his more extensive dramaturgy discussed below, it is important to note that this sustaining encouragement was not the universal effect of Kareda’s responses to unsolicited submissions; indeed a survey of the extant letters indicates that encouragement was evidently not always Kareda’s intent.
emotional state,” Kareda writes, citing examples where “the play’s humour was at the characters’ expense” and the events of the play failed to “draw a human response that we could recognize” (Letter to Playwright X 28 July 1987). What makes this particularly detailed letter even more revealing, however, is the existence of subsequent correspondence, including the recipient’s immediate reply:

I agree; the plays have some technical merit, but lack humanity. I lack humanity. From the perspective of your letter I look over my other plays and see that they are diseased with the same misguided intentions and mistreatment of characters [....] I am upset at not being able to work with you in the Playwright’s Unit, not because I think I deserve the opportunity, but because I know my work and my process would benefit from criticisms as concise [sic] as those I have found in your letter. (Letter to Urjo Kareda)

To this humble response, Kareda writes, “I was very moved by your exceptional candor and self-analysis, both about your own nature and about your work and process.... For that reason, I would like to put on ‘hold’ my decision about you and the Unit until we have had a chance to meet and talk at greater length in person” (Letter to Playwright X 31 July 1987). The contents of this conversation are lost to posterity, but the next (and final) surviving letter (dated seven weeks later), which extends an invitation to the Unit, includes substantial criticism, echoing that of the first letter, regarding two scripts the playwright had most recently supplied Kareda. Finding one of the female characters in the script “an unfortunate male fantasy,” Kareda’s feedback elsewhere in the letter seeks greater agency for the character through the (male) playwright’s own “commitment” to her, and indeed Kareda uses the word commitment in this way more than once as he diagnoses the problem that the character was “not imagined from within her own

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44 The letter is undated, but makes reference to Kareda’s original (dated) letter. Kareda’s next letter mentions the postmark date of the response, confirming it was sent within a day.
world.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the assertion in his earliest letter that “playwrights have to earn the audience’s commitment to the characters and the plot with their own commitment” and, most crucially, that “[t]hose are the kind of writers I work best with, both in workshop and production situations,” Kareda’s invitation to the upcoming Playwrights Unit articulates “the challenge we will extend to you: namely, creating a woman character from the inside out” (Letter to Playwright X 13 September 1987). 45 This final letter in the extended exchange reveals that while Kareda’s reservations about the playwright’s approach to dramatic characterization persisted, his disposition toward collaboration was altered by the playwright’s evident receptiveness to his criticism and commitment to the methods of the Playwrights Unit.

This raises a final essential feature of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. Beyond his taste for certain types of plays, it is also important to establish a foundational sense of Kareda’s preference for certain qualities in the playwrights with whom he worked. A page of notes found in Kareda’s personal “Play Development” file includes a list of qualities under the heading “Choosing Writers:” “passion,” “curiosity,” “life experience,” “willingness to work,” and “CHARACTER” are all listed (“Role of the Dramaturg,” original emphasis). To this may be added his desire, quoted above as expressed in his interview with Rudakoff, to cultivate in writers “a sense of discipline” also reflected in McKim’s description of Kareda’s “circle of expectation.” In his interview with Cottreau, Kareda describes his dramaturgy as “character-driven,” not in the sense discussed at length above (i.e., focused on dramatic characterization) but as a process that depends on the strength of character found in its participants. Kareda explains, “Lots of people have talent. But what will make a career is character [...] discipline, [...]”

45 That Kareda is evidently unconcerned with the limits of the playwright’s access to women’s experience is perhaps an indication of his faith in the methods employed in the Unit (and indicative of his methods more broadly), in particular the “monologue exercise.” For more on this see chapter three.
maturity, and life experience to go that distance” (8).46 Indeed, this marked emphasis on character, discipline, and willingness to work can be traced, once again, to that crucial record of Kareda’s early dramaturgical sensibility, the 1972 introduction to Leaving Home. In it, Kareda asserts that his highly regarded “old fashioned, naturalistic drama [is] the most difficult form to master because it requires reserves of self-discipline” (ix); moreover, he emphasizes the role of Glassco’s intensive “editorial” script development process in establishing the conditions for this mastery, observing that, even when it “produced plays of minimal effectiveness, the harrowing process of rewriting provided the young writers with insights into the complexities of their craft” (vii). Here as in later records of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, the stress placed on the playwright’s character, self-discipline and ability to endure the “harrowing” process of rewriting, perhaps especially in the mode of (Karedian) naturalism with its “strict and fascinating formal controls,” reflects Kareda’s awareness of an essential condition of the dramaturgical process: the playwright’s own strength and commitment to her “vision.” Recall, for example, Kareda’s assertion, in his exceptionally candid 1987 rejection letter, that his list of “diverse” Tarragon playwrights “share that basic principle of playwriting that puts their own stake in their work first.” Commitment thus emerges as yet another multifaceted, even contradictory, tenet of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, conceived simultaneously as both the playwright’s strength of vision and conviction—the requisite character and discipline to “go that distance”—and as the playwright’s “willingness to work,” implicitly in ways and toward aims compatible with Kareda’s tastes, priorities, and assumptions. As the succeeding case studies will reveal, Kareda’s most fruitful dramaturgical collaborations arise when the former manifests in tension with the

46 As he elsewhere put it to Zimmerman, “Finally, character may be as important as talent” (“Maintaining” 222).
latter, when the playwright’s stake in her work produces an essential dynamic of dramaturgical resistance.

At the same time, McKim’s observation that writers invited into Kareda’s circle “felt the responsibility of living up to the potential that Urjo showed them they had” intimates the considerable influence Kareda’s support positioned him to exert over the development of his selected playwrights, their plays, and their processes. Following Kareda’s death in 2001, Brebner observes, “The thought of what he would think of whatever I’m working on is still operational and motivational. Strangely, because of that, while I do feel lost as a writer sometimes without him, I also have a much stronger sense of how to work on my own because of him. So I am very much aware of his continual presence in my writing life” (qtd in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field” 16, original emphasis). Likewise Thompson writes posthumously to Kareda, “I know you are watching me.... I can feel your hand on my shoulder as I write. I can hear your voice and see your eyes looking right through the woman I seem to be to the soul, to the well, the muck, that is where the plays come from. The plays that will always be for you” (“It’s My Birthday” 117).

What Brebner and Thompson describe as a benevolent haunting recalls the trope with which I began: The dramaturg as ghost. Kareda’s ongoing influence over Brebner’s writing is described by the playwright as not only “motivational” but “operational.” Shaping her sense of how to work, Kareda’s shadowy presence, to borrow Rudakoff’s term, haunts her ongoing writing process despite the fact that she is now on her own. In this way, the developmental dramaturg who is involved with new playwrights, working with them at an early stage in their establishment of a sense of how to work (and in their development a self-perception as a writer), leaves some trace of this work on the scripts that emerge from this foundation. If this imprint is faint, a barely detectable shadow, Kareda’s more marked, palpable ghost presence registers in Brebner’s
memory of a script which she and Kareda developed in his lifetime. Recalling Kareda’s response to an early reading of her *Music for Contortionist* at the Rhubarb festival in 2000, Brebner offers Kareda’s comment “Cut the tight rope walker and the trapeze artist and we’ll do it” as a “terrific example of his concise way with practical dramaturgy” (qtd. in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field” 16). Not only does this recollection illustrate the degree to which an invitation from Kareda (to production, but also, crucially, into the “circle” of the Tarragon family, with its attendant support systems and expectations) was tied to considerable dramaturgical influence; Brebner’s manner of framing the exercise of this dramaturgical influence as benignly practical reveals the degree to which these forms of support (motivational and emotional as well as financial) can exert influence that is invisible to the participants in the development process.

These forms of implicit and explicit—conscious and unconscious—dramaturgical influence were made possible (in some ways inevitable) by Kareda’s role at Tarragon as both dramaturg and artistic director, a position which allowed Kareda to extend considerable support to those playwrights whose work was compatible (and continued to be compatible) with his dramaturgical sensibility. That Kareda viewed this as an ideal circumstance for new play development is evident from his writing and interviews. In his 1986 article, “They Also Serve,” Kareda identifies the obstacles to developmental dramaturgy that can arise when the roles of artistic director and dramaturg are occupied by two parties: a difference in sensibilities (in the ideal relationship, according to Kareda, “[t]he dramaturg must [] shape the theatre’s thrust in collaboration with the artistic director, so that their energies are focused in the same direction”); and, in the case of such a rift, a compromise in the “dramaturg’s credibility” with new playwrights (“If, for instance, a playwright disbelieves that his or her commitment to a script can actually affect production, if the dramaturg’s enthusiasm cannot persuade the artistic director to
program the work, then [...] the dramaturg becomes a glorified literary receptionist”). Operating as “both artistic director and dramaturg, or, more accurately, the dramaturg as artistic director,” Kareda argues, “eliminate[s] the problem” (ibid 7). Here and elsewhere, Kareda’s emphasis is on the enhanced “effectiveness and freedom” his position affords him to develop and promote his chosen scripts, but it is significant that Kareda does not explore the limits or implications of this unilateral power.

A journalist referring to Kareda’s dual position as both artistic director and dramaturg once described him as a “superdramaturg,” a turn of phrase which unintentionally but illuminatingly calls to mind the superstructure, highlighting the hegemonic operation of this position of dramaturgical influence (Wagner “Gilbert”). As Knowles argues in *The Theatre of Form and the Production of Meaning*, “dramaturgical form[s] and structure[s]” themselves operate “as theatres, or forums, for the social negotiation of cultural values” (15). That Kareda’s sensibility was inflected by many features Knowles identifies as “the standard structural unconscious of dramatic naturalism in Canada” is of considerable significance, given Knowles’ essential observation that “the meanings and ideologies that it [i.e., this standard structure] inscribes, fundamentally conservative and patriarchal [...] constitute the primary and affirmative social impacts of the plays that use it, whatever their (conscious) themes or subject matters” (ibid 31). Similarly, Beth Herst has argued that dominant theatre-making processes, in what Herst

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47 Ten years later he makes the same case in his interview with Cottreau, again with the careful phrasing of his dual role as “the dramaturge as artistic-director.” He emphasizes the value of this dual role for his function as play broker, observing that “[o]ne of the most important things for dramaturges in any theatre structure is to have the artistic director’s ear. If a dramaturge has a script or a writer that he believes in, he can persuade the artistic director this is something that should be programmed. I’ve eliminated that leap. If I’m persuaded by a script I don’t have to persuade anybody else to do it” (5).

48 In the context of the article, the journalist appears to have intended to liken Kareda’s position to something closer to a superhero.

49 As I discuss in a footnote to chapter one, Herst was a participant in the 1989-90 Playwrights Unit and the script she developed there, *A Woman’s Comedy,* was ultimately produced at Tarragon (with Kareda in a rare turn as co-director) in 1992. The quoted piece, “Opting In,” was written a few years later, in 1995, and may draw on Herst’s
identifies as “mainstream” Canadian theatres informed by “linear orthodox[y]” (51) and the “ideology of mastery and meaning” (48), can be “structurally inimical to ‘alternative’ creative projects” (50) that fall outside of the “implicit norm: character-based, narrative driven, ‘realistic’ dramas, emphasizing spoken text and illusionistic effects” (48 “Opting in”). Kareda himself seems not to have considered the material and ideological constraints imposed by the dominant theatre-making processes and structures that informed his dramaturgical sensibility. Instead, his assessment of the strengths of his role as both artistic director and dramaturg reflect the belief, asserted in his 1986 article, “They Also Serve,” that “[a]ny good theatre reflects very vividly the personality and tastes of its artistic director” (7). Having established a foundational sense of the dominant features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, including those which overlap with the “implicit norm” outlined by Herst, the case studies that follow will trace the nature and implications of Kareda’s dramaturgical influence.

Of course, as this account has demonstrated, a dramaturgical sensibility cannot be conceived as monolithic, fixed, or consistent, but rather must be understood as part of a dynamic—even contradictory—complex of tastes, priorities, and preoccupations. In denying the existence of the so-called “Tarragon play,” for example, Kareda and others have pointed to the eclecticism of his taste, which found its strongest expression in the seasons he programmed in his capacity as artistic director. As he perceived it, Kareda’s dual role as “dramaturge as artistic director” left him “freer to have a much wider range of taste, and [] be more excited by diverse work” (6). Nonetheless, in Kate Taylor’s appraisal of Kareda’s programming in the latter years of his artistic directorship, she observes not only departures from but also crucial continuities with the naturalistic, script-based traditions of the Tarragon’s formative years:

experience working with Kareda in the Unit and beyond, although it is perhaps significant that Herst does not explicitly mention Tarragon or Kareda in the article. It is worth noting that Herst was a Playwright-in-Residence at Tarragon from 1990-1995.
Urjo certainly continued the text-based tradition of Bill Glassco, but he enlarged the Tarragon’s style beyond naturalism so that the theatre could not only stage what we might think of as classic Tarragon plays—Joan McLeod’s 2000; John Murrell’s *New World*; or David French’s *Soldier’s Heart*—but also plays as surreal and symbolic as Carole Frechette’s *Four Lives of Marie* or Morris Panych’s *Earshot* [...]. Tarragon remained a playwright’s theatre under his tenure and with the stellar exceptions of *Two Pianos, Four Hands* and Kristen Thomson’s *I, Claudia*—this was a theatre driven by script rather than performance.” (qtd in Breon 7)

Likewise, Kareda’s own thoughts on the breadth of taste reflected in his programming also contain affirmation of the dominant features of his dramaturgical sensibility. In response to Rudakoff’s observation, for example, that “playbills at Tarragon reflect a depth and breadth of content and form,” Kareda offers the following telling observation: “We’ve recently done musical theatre and dance pieces and combinations thereof, but what’s sexiest to me is still the word on the page. We try to make it sexy for the audience when they come to see it. To hear it” (*Between 10-12*). The emphasis on language here, the spoken word which originates on the page, recalls the dominant features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility from his earliest days at Tarragon and even before.\(^50\) Likewise, in a subscriber newsletter from the 1984-85 Tarragon season, Kareda promotes the premiere of David French’s *Salt Water Moon* by quoting his introduction to *Leaving Home*.\(^51\) Writing, “I don’t think I need to amend what I wrote about this playwright a dozen years ago, in my introduction to the printed version of *Leaving Home*,”

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\(^{50}\) Recall, for example, the high praise Kareda issued for Glassco’s editorial dramaturgy of the early 1970s, which “provided the most viable scripts of the season purely as written documents” (vi-vii).

\(^{51}\) The quoted passage: “David French handles the [naturalistic] form with great maturity, confidence and honesty; nothing is generalized, everything is specific, and yet from personal reminiscence comes a universal—dare I say national?—experience. Because he doesn’t lie, David French has found a way to speak to us all.”
Kareda affirms key continuities in his dramaturgical sensibility into at least the period studied in the succeeding chapters.52

The second epigraph to this chapter, Shamrayev’s hybrid proverb, offers both an admonishment to “speak well of the dead” and the observation that “there is no disputing taste.” Through an analysis of the archival remains of Kareda’s dramaturgical practice in this chapter, my aim has been to “speak well” of Kareda’s taste, closely analyzing a range of key—and in many cases unexamined—primary sources, in order not to simply affirm or deny the established narrative, but to do justice to the complexities of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. My efforts in this chapter have been to explore the archival remains of Kareda’s dramaturgical practice directly, not to prove or refute the received narrative but rather to attend more closely to the dominant features of this narrative and their implications—for the practice of developmental dramaturgy and our understanding of its operations—here and in the case studies to follow.

Indeed, to Shamrayev’s already amalgamated proverb I might add yet another adage: “there’s no accounting for taste.” To a certain extent, another’s personal sensibility is difficult to positively determine or define—it resists absolute claims, it is changeable, chaotic, conflicting—and yet out of the range of available primary sources some features emerge as predominant: Kareda’s fascination with psychology, for example, which informed his treatment of dramatic characters as well as his wider understanding of the playwriting process; his affinity for closely observed, believable and even autobiographical detail and the related illusionist bias in his conception of theatrical setting; his celebration of the poetic and impressionistic as access points for the “universal”; his anticipation of the sensibilities of Tarragon audiences, which informed aspects of his own dramaturgical sensibility, including a “protective” imperative and a marked emphasis on traceable causality in plot and character as well as a high value ascribed to

52 In later years, it is worth noting, Kareda did reject scripts submitted by French (Rudakoff Between 20).
dramaturgical openness or “air”; his pursuit of tension between the ordinary and the extraordinary, including the “stark underbelly” beneath the surfaces of human behaviour; his script-driven approach to play development and his predominant inclination toward single-authored plays; and his committed extension of enthusiasm and support and attendant expectation of a “commitment” on the part of the playwright, defined in terms of discipline and conviction as well as a willingness to work (implicitly according to Kareda’s methods). The surviving record reveals key priorities and preoccupations that shaped Kareda’s dramaturgy, key strategies for engaging with new plays and playwrights that manifest in various records of his practice. In the case studies to follow, my analysis will draw this dramaturgical sensibility out of the shadows, examining its shaping influence in greater light.
CHAPTER TWO

Interrogative Feedback and the Myth of Neutral Dramaturgy
Rachel Wyatt’s Chairs and Tables
(1983-1984)

“Dramaturgs do it in the form of a question.”

-Bob White, 2013 Playwrights Guild of Canada workshop
“A Delicate Balance: Examining the Playwright and Dramaturg Relationship”

The dirtiest word in developmental dramaturgy is prescriptive. Discussions of play
development often stress the imperative to maintain creative distance and avoid interfering with
the playwright’s vision. This preoccupation underlies many of the common tropes in the
discourse surrounding developmental dramaturgy, from the inanimate and reflective sounding
board to the detached and objective outside eye. The perhaps most frequently posited solution to
this anxiety of influence is a methodological one; according to common wisdom, prescriptive
dramaturgy may be avoided by framing one’s feedback in the form of a question. This logic is
captured by Jason Sherman in his account, in the Toronto Star, of a panel which brought together
representatives from Toronto theatres to discuss new play development at the end of the 1980s.
According to Sherman’s report, the ghastly spectre of prescriptive dramaturgy was raised by Sky
Gilbert, who asserted a “controversial position on the playwright-dramaturge relationship,” “one
that sees power resting entirely in the hands of dramaturges.” In response, Brian Richmond\(^53\)
reportedly offered the following: "the point of dramaturgy is to ask dynamic questions. When
solutions are suggested, you're into dangerous territory. It's dangerous for playwrights to think of
themselves as powerless" (Sherman, “The play's the thing”). In this way, concerns regarding the
balance of power between playwright and dramaturg are often contained by consigning creative
imposition to bad play development practices, dramaturgy which misses “the point.” A good

\(^53\) Sherman’s article attributes this comment to “Brian Richard of Theatre Passe Muraille,” which is likely a
misprint. Brian Richmond was artistic director of Theatre Passe Muraille from 1987-1991.
dramaturg, the argument goes, may avoid the danger of prescriptive dramaturgy through the best practice of asking questions.

The prevalence of this logic extends beyond 1980s Toronto. The recorded proceedings of a Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas panel, convened in Chicago in 1990 and titled “How to Talk to a Playwright,” include a similar invocation of the corrective powers of interrogative dramaturgy: “In trying to help a writer make a play better,” asserts John Glore, “you should be inquisitive.... You should ask questions.... Above all, don’t prescribe” (183).

Likewise, University of Iowa professor/dramaturg Art Borreca, writing in 1997 of the need to work against the particularly stark “system of power relations” attendant on his work with student playwrights, asserts that “[t]he only way to do this is to ask questions, questions, and more questions, in order to establish that they [i.e. the playwright-students] are proceeding from their own instincts, interests, ideas, and images” (66-67). Drawing on his informal survey of North American dramaturgs at the turn of the millennium, Geoffrey Proehl observes a prevailing focus on “the importance of framing comments as questions not criticisms; how, in general, to forward the vision and not block it” (“The Images Before Us” 129). As recently as 2011 American scholar and dramaturg Leonora Inez Brown, in her book *The Art of Active Dramaturgy*, offers a more systematic examination of the dramaturgical interrogative. Contrary to anecdotal invocations of the power of the dramaturgical question, Brown’s support is qualified. Not all questions are created equal. Rather, Brown establishes four categories for interrogative feedback, from the least successful “vague” and “closed” forms to the superior “neutral” and “open” questions. Like others, however, Brown ultimately affirms the dominant perception of achievable neutrality via interrogative dramaturgy as revealed not only by the names assigned to her preferred types of questions, but also explicitly in the language of her
endorsements: “quite simply, an open question raises an idea, issue, or observation in a way that avoids prescribing the solution or revealing an agenda/personal bias” (35); “By definition, neutral questions avoid shrouding comments in bias or hinting at how the artist should address the concern” (39); “Both the open and neutral questions avoid prescribing” (39).

Brown’s systematic account of interrogative forms, including the endorsed neutral and open questions, affirms the prevailing perception of the neutralizing function of interrogative dramaturgy internationally; closer to home, it also continues to circulate in recent, informal discourse. A final example of the endorsement of the interrogative approach as a countermeasure against prescription arises out of a 2013 Playwrights Guild of Canada workshop titled “A Delicate Balance: Examining the Playwright and Dramaturg Relationship,” which I attended. Citing an amusing slogan he had once seen on a button, the leader of the session—prominent Canadian dramaturg Bob White—offered a motto for non-prescriptive dramaturgy: “Dramaturgs do it in the form of a question.” After the laughter had died down (so not long after), White elaborated: “A good dramaturg is a dramaturg who’s going to be continually asking you questions.” As White began to improvise examples of good dramaturgical questions, however, the elusiveness of the non-prescriptive query became apparent. Casting about, White offered only three examples: “I wonder if....?”; and the interrelated questions “What is the intention here?” and “What kinds of effects do you want this scene to have?” The first example rests on the evidently erroneous assumption that an interrogative preface is sufficient to neutralize the prescriptive potential of whatever observation or suggestion might follow. At first glance, however, the latter two questions appear to more fully express the ideal of non-prescriptive dramaturgy advocated in White’s seminar. For White, asking “What is the intention here?” or “What kinds of effects do you want this scene to have?” allows the dramaturg to establish and
subsequently serve “the playwright’s aspirations.” In particular, White identifies this knowledge of the playwright’s “vision” as crucial to his reflective function as dramaturg. Reading ongoing drafts of a script, White’s role is both to “project [him]self as an audience member,” registering “how [he] responded to the work” at each stage, implicitly with the aim of negotiating any discrepancies between “the playwright’s aspirations” and his own responses to the work.

It is here that I perceive a particularly troubling blind spot. In White’s account, the dramaturg’s responses to a developing script—including his questions—are imagined as reflective and neutral rather than, as they must necessarily be, subjective and personal, like those of any “audience member”; moreover, the “aspirations” they aim to verify or serve are still developing. In practice, the playwright’s intentions are rarely static or even, at an early stage, fully articulable; rather they emerge, at least in part, in and through the dramaturgical process. As the play evolves, so too does the vision, and this process of evolution is shaped by many factors, including the ongoing negotiation of dramaturgical feedback. What White’s cursory examples elide is the framing work of all other questions and comments that necessarily emerge in dramaturgical negotiations, some of which are shaped by the dramaturg’s own (often unexamined) intentions. In a 2001 interview with Judith Rudakoff, asked to identify his “greatest strengths as a dramaturg,” White reveals not only the subjective nature of his own contributions to such negotiations but also his blind faith in the corrective powers of interrogative dramaturgy to preserve what he sees as an independent and inviolable playwright’s vision:

I have an instinctive sense of a play’s structure, even if that structure might be latent in the material. I can read a draft and sense what the playwright intends it to be. From that template, I can then come up with questions and address where the script either does or doesn’t match those goals. If I’m wrong about the structure, then from the asking of
questions... I can move toward understanding what the play and playwright want and how to get them there. (Between 61, emphasis added)

Thus, White, like others, ascribes to interrogative dramaturgy an insupportable neutrality, overlooking the ways in which his questions—which are born of his own (unexamined) instincts and are imagined unproblematically to reveal the playwright’s “latent” creative goals—exert their own shaping influence over the playwright’s evolving choices and intentions.

What is particularly striking about the persistent invocation of the dramaturgical question as an antidote to prescription is that outside of the discourse of new play development the determining function of the interrogative form has long been acknowledged. As philosopher Susanne K. Langer wrote in 1942, “the way in which a question is asked limits and disposes the ways in which any answer to it—right or wrong—may be given” (3). Why, then, the collective attribution of special, corrective powers to the dramaturgical question as a countermeasure against bias, interference, or prescription?

It is my contention that the dominant discourse surrounding interrogative dramaturgy—from widespread informal discussion to Brown’s more systematic analysis—functions to perpetuate what can rightly be described as the myth—in the Barthesian sense—of an achievable dramaturgical neutrality. To explain, I see the equation of good dramaturgy with interrogative dramaturgy as a first order meaning, one which might be represented by White’s aphorism, “dramaturgs do it in the form of a question.” This primary meaning, however, also functions as a mythological signifier (or form), and is thus made to bear the weight of the second order signified of a neutral, non-prescriptive ideal for developmental dramaturgy. In this way the myth takes on its complete signification, generating and naturalizing the idea that it is possible and desirable to achieve neutral dramaturgy. The myth of neutral dramaturgy hails the dramaturg—
You believe in this ideal and strive for it in your own work, do you not?—belying the lived experience of developmental dramaturgy itself, which necessitates a dramaturg’s subjective shaping influence, however neutral or open such a process strives to be. The myth, as in Barthes’ account of the “big wedding” of the bourgeoisie, “becomes the very norm as dreamed, though not actually lived” (253), creating a blindness among dramaturgical practitioners to the ways in which their own rich experiences with play development—including via the interrogative approach—defy the myth of neutrality, a blindness that extends more problematically to the power dynamics which, as the myth would have it, good dramaturgy aims to neutralize. As Barthes puts it, “The form [in this case, interrogative dramaturgy emptied of its contingency by the co-option of myth] has put all this richness at a distance,” in order that the myth “be able to hide there” (227).

To collapse the distance generated by myth’s co-option of interrogative dramaturgy, to restore a sense of historicity and specificity to dramaturgical question-asking and dislodge neutral dramaturgy from its hiding place, I propose to draw on archival records to reconstruct the shaping influence of questions posed by Urjo Kareda as part of his developmental dramaturgy of Rachel Wyatt’s Chairs and Tables, produced at Tarragon in 1984. An analysis of Kareda’s work is ideally suited to the task of debunking the myth of neutral dramaturgy. In the preceding chapter I quoted Don Hannah’s articulation of Kareda’s self-effacing service to the

54 Barthes also writes that “in myth, the first two terms [i.e. the form and the concept, e.g. interrogative dramaturgy and neutral dramaturgy] are perfectly manifest... one of them is not ‘hidden’ behind the other.... However paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing: its function is to distort, not to make disappear” (231). In other words, neutral dramaturgy is readily identifiable as the supposed underlying imperative of interrogative dramaturgy; the consequence of this transparency is precisely to distort the fact that dramaturgy is always already personal and prescriptive—that the dramaturg’s input, however it is framed, is subjective and enacts a shaping influence on the development process. It is this contingency and richness of specific developmental processes which disappears through the conversion of interrogative dramaturgy into the form of the myth. In this way, Barthes’ assertion that “myth hides nothing” is misleading, if it is misread. The myth which emerges from the correlation of form and concept in this case—as in the famous examples put forward by Barthes himself—is ideological, insidiously invisible, conferring upon the perceived achievability—and desirability—of neutral dramaturgy the status of unquestioned common sense and rendering its constructedness—its distortion—effectively hidden by the operation and circulation of the myth.
playwright, which also emphasized the place of interrogative dramaturgy in this approach: “It would never say on the poster ‘Dramaturgy by Urjo Kareda.’ He was very respectful of playwrights. Because he knew he wasn’t one. His objective was to ask the right questions, say the right things, and be useful” (Personal Interview, my emphasis). In my interviews with other playwrights Kareda is likewise praised in these terms. For Joan MacLeod, who recalls Kareda’s (in her case, predominantly orally delivered) feedback as “just ask[ing] questions.... and just encouraging me,” Kareda’s dramaturgy is remembered as “never prescriptive” (Personal Interview). Likewise Wyatt describes Kareda’s responses to her work as “more suggestions” than prescriptions, explicitly praising his interrogative approach: “I preferred Urjo’s [style] because it was more the question and answer” (Personal Interview). Wyatt’s next comment, however, highlights the inescapable, if often invisible, influence of dramaturgical feedback, even in an ostensibly non-prescriptive form: “It may have been in my explanations of the things that he was asking,” Wyatt suggests, “that I might have gone in the wrong direction” (Personal Interview).

That Wyatt perceived a degree of misdirection in her development of Chairs and Tables contributes to the usefulness of this case study for the present analysis. As she put it to me in our interview in 2011, “it’s not as it should be, that play.” Extant drafts confirm that the script underwent substantial shifts over its relatively short period of development. The nature of these

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55 The earliest full draft of Chairs and Tables is dated 6 June 1983. The bulk of Wyatt’s work on the script takes place over a period of nine months leading to the March 1984 premiere. Many of the drafts of Chairs and Tables are undated. As with the other case studies examined in this dissertation, I offer my considered chronology of the extant drafts, reached through careful reconstruction of multiple concurrent trajectories of revision over the development process. The drafts are identified according to the numbered file in which they are found (i.e. F9 for File 9); multiple drafts contained in the same file are lettered according to their position within the folder, from front to back. The following is my reconstructed chronology: F1; F9; F2; F3; F5A; F5B; F8; F5C; F4; F7; F6; F1. In the analysis to follow, quotations drawn from the drafts will be cited according to these file numbers (e.g. F6 17 will indicate a quotation taken from page 17 of a draft to be found in File 6). All of these drafts are housed the Tarragon collection of the L.W. Conolly Theatre Archives, University of Guelph. Additional bibliographic information is provided in my list of Works Cited.
shifts is worth establishing before analyzing the negotiations which brought them about. To offer a preliminary sense of these shifts, here is a summary of the plot of *Chairs and Tables* in its earliest drafts: Set in the present (then early 1980s Toronto), the play centers on Susan, who is living a double life. Susan and her childhood friend, Alix, both former 1960s activists, are engaged in political espionage involving the transmission of messages to their compatriots in Eastern Europe via mistranslations of obscure Canadian poetry; at the same time, Susan maintains a domestic relationship with a government minister named Leo, about whom she experiences mixed emotions. On one hand, Susan finds her relationship with the decidedly paternalistic Leo constraining, intimating an incompatibility not only with her covert activism but with her feminist politics as well; on the other hand, Susan exhibits affection for Leo, and hints at a desire to allow her domestic life to supplant her political one. In these early drafts, Susan occupies a position of potential resonance among Baby Boom generation Tarragon audience members in the early 1980s: she is both drawn and resistant to the life of domestic security that Leo represents and struggles to reconcile the dissonance between the political inheritances of her past and the personal complexities of her present. Ultimately, the early drafts’ engaging—if somewhat rough—exploration of the potential hypocrisies and dissonance confronted by an aging ‘60s generation culminates with Susan affirming her political and personal agency, ending her relationship with Leo to return to a life of political activism. As the play develops toward production, however, *Chairs and Tables* evolves—or, arguably, devolves—into a very different play, becoming essentially a domestic comedy about a happy, sedate couple (one half of which is still the paternalistic government minister Leo) whose life is thrown into upheaval by the sudden arrival of Susan’s old friend Alix, now a charismatic activist-pretender. In the later versions, Alix coerces Susan into participating in the espionage,
motivated either by a desire to impress her latest activist-lover or by pure maliciousness, and the remorseful Susan ultimately reconciles with Leo. The politics of the early drafts are ultimately subdued, with reviewers largely recognizing the play as simply a “riveting look at friendship and loyalty” (Felix), or a “sporadically amusing comedy [that] puts a contemporary slant on the two’s-company, three’s-a-crowd adage” (Brown).

These striking shifts in the development of Chairs and Tables are particularly salient in light of Wyatt’s assertion, looking back, that the play is “not as it should be.” Indeed, extant correspondence reveals this perception much earlier than our 2011 interview. In a letter to Kareda dated 17 November 1985, Wyatt writes, “Perhaps I let myself go soft during the writing of Chairs and Tables. I’m not sure. But yes, I think I did. In the pursuit of any work of fiction the writer must remain constant to the central core of the thing.” As with her much later reflections on the play, Wyatt’s comment registers a sense of having veered off track during the script’s development. Crucially, however, despite her more recent speculation that “it may have been in my explanations of the things that he was asking that I might have gone in the wrong direction,” it is clear from Wyatt’s recollection of Kareda’s dramaturgy that she does not attribute this derailment to any overt (mis)direction—or prescription—on Kareda’s part. Rather, Wyatt draws on her experience as a writer of novels and short fiction to explicitly endorse Kareda’s interrogative method for its noninterference: “Like any good editor, he would ask questions. That’s the way to work. You know, I talk a lot to other prose writers and I’m appalled sometimes at how much they are edited. I mean, ‘Whose book is this?!’” (Personal Interview).

As discussed in the preceding chapter, Wyatt’s editorial analogy is in keeping with Kareda’s own descriptions of the work of the dramaturg; moreover, Wyatt’s identification of Kareda’s interrogative approach as the best “way to work,” set in opposition to editors whose
interventions verge on co-authorship, corresponds with Kareda’s own conscious aim to preserve
the playwright’s creative autonomy. In a set of personal, handwritten notes on the “Role of the
Dramaturg,” Kareda articulates his view that the dramaturg “can’t ‘create’ the play” but instead
works to “bring it out.” To do this, Kareda records, the dramaturg must have “no ego,” operating
to “not impose but ‘call forth’ [or] suggest” (emphasis added). What is obscured by Kareda’s
distinction between imposing and calling forth, however, and what is often also invisible to the
playwrights with whom he worked, is the shaping influence of the suggestions and, crucially, the
questions employed in the work of bringing out the play. Some questions are raised, others are
left unasked, and the distinction arises from the personal tastes and priorities that, as established
in the preceding chapter, comprised Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility. These questions serve as
a parameter within which development happens; they frame the playwright’s immediate
responses and, often, her subsequent thinking about the script. While this is true of all three of
the case studies to be examined in this dissertation, the case of Chairs and Tables is
exceptionally well suited to tracking the trajectory-shaping force of seemingly innocuous
dramaturgical questions. This is due to the particularly marked shifts in—even divergences
from—what Kareda and other dramaturgs might describe as the playwright’s vision.

In order to examine the influence of Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback—especially his
questions—I will begin with an analysis of Wyatt’s very earliest, tentative responses to Kareda’s
invitation (sometime in late 1982 or early 198356) to write a new stage play for Tarragon.
Although these initial efforts pre-date the earliest drafts whose trajectory of development I

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56 The earliest of these, a set of “scene fragments,” seems to have been produced in late 1982 or early 1983; although
Wyatt’s accompanying letter to Kareda is undated, she asks after her “Xmas cake.” Both ur-drafts discussed here are
housed in the Urjo Kareda fonds of Library and Archives Canada. Full bibliographical information is listed under
Wyatt’s Ur-drafts of Chairs and Tables.
describe above, both of these ur-drafts\textsuperscript{57} include revealing intimations of Wyatt’s inceptive impulses and preoccupations, and thus may shed light on the “central core of the thing” from which she believes herself to have strayed. The earliest of these ur-drafts is a set of scene “fragments” for a play called \textit{Chairs and Tables} which, despite its title, features a plot and characters that are soon abandoned; the other is a “skeleton” of a play featuring a version of the plot that Wyatt ultimately developed toward production, albeit with different character names and a different title, \textit{Cover Story}. Following these two ur-drafts, the first full draft of the play features all three characteristics of the final script—plot, characters, and title—and, most significantly, shows signs of developing interests expressed separately in the two ur-drafts. As these early preoccupations are ultimately de-emphasized over the course of Wyatt’s development of the play with Kareda, it is worth beginning by examining the light that each of the ur-drafts shed on the “central core” of Wyatt’s early vision for the play.

The earliest ur-draft, which features the title \textit{Chairs and Tables},\textsuperscript{58} bears limited resemblance to the script as it came to be. The plot and characters are entirely different; only the title allows for recognition of this as Wyatt’s earliest work on the newly commissioned Tarragon play. The “fragments,” as Wyatt refers to them in an accompanying handwritten note to Kareda, include character descriptions and seven brief, unpaginated scenes. The character description indicates that “\textit{Chairs and Tables} is a play for two women.” These are: June, “in her late thirties,” “independent, assured, glossy-looking, well-dressed [and] having an affair with a married man from the office [that] is not very satisfactory”; and Merrilee, “in her early twenties,” “quite frivolous, waiting for Ronnie, her boyfriend, to propose [and] drawn to June as she sees

\textsuperscript{57} All quoted or cited elements of this draft are taken from a script housed in the Urjo Kareda fonds of Library and Archives Canada, Vol 11, \textit{Chairs and Tables} file 2 of 2.
\textsuperscript{58} All quoted or cited elements of this draft are taken from a script housed in the Urjo Kareda fonds of Library and Archives Canada, Vol 11, \textit{Chairs and Tables} file 2 of 2.
her as the perfect modern woman.” In one scene fragment June attempts to give Merrilee career advice: “if you want to get on, you’ve got to work long hours. Let them [the two off-stage male bosses] see that you’re not afraid of overtime.” Merrilee, however, is preoccupied with reading a copy of *Cosmopolitan*—she defensively observes that “fifty million women read it every week”—and ultimately responds to the older woman’s career advice with the announcement that she is “going to get married and devote [her]self to the home.” In a later fragment June sits alone in her apartment waiting in vain for her married lover. She sets the table and carries on an imaginary conversation with her absentee date, the contents of which reveal that June is as trapped by conventional gender roles as she perceives Merrilee to be. According to the stage directions she “HELPS ‘HIM’ TO SOME OF THE FOOD. TAKES VERY LITTLE FOR HERSELF.” Then, adopting his side of the conversation, she utters, “Nowhere in the world I’d rather be. You’re so gentle, so understanding, so much a woman....” Although only a series of “fragments,” then, this earliest precursor to *Chairs and Tables* reveals Wyatt’s initiatory preoccupation with the inheritances, contradictions, and dissentions of contemporary feminism.

The second ur-draft, titled *Cover Story*, is a “skeleton” of a play, as Wyatt puts it in her accompanying note. Penny and Fran, prototypes for Susan and Alix respectively, are engaged in an espionage plot similar to that which unfolds in the first full draft of *Chairs and Tables*. Penny is married to an ambitious politician, named Leo here as in later incarnations of the script, as part of a “show of a normal life” that Penny explains as what “they”—the unnamed “movement” for which the women work—“told [her] to do.” Although only a “skeleton,” *Cover Story* reveals Wyatt’s initial interest in developing the wider political espionage plot as an extension of her preoccupation with the contemporary implications of the women’s movement. In an early exchange of dialogue, Penny calls into question the choice she and Fran have made to devote
their lives to a political cause, wondering whether they should “both have been happy mother [sic] of families, all that.” Fran’s response argues for the importance of the cause for which they are working, which she indicates is a feminist one: “Since you started translating the novels five thousand and several hundred women have joined the movement” (emphasis added). By the end of the play, Penny affirms her choice of a life devoted to feminist political engagement rather than domestic complacency, defending her covert activism to Leo: “[I]t was something I wanted to do. And I still believe in it. And if I can find a way, I’ll go on with it.” Thus, while the ur-drafts register Wyatt’s drastic re-conception of the plot and characters for her proposed play, the playwright’s interest in exploring the political legacies of the 1960s, with particular emphasis on feminism in the 1980s, emerges as a prominent feature of her earliest work on the script.

Significantly, this emphasis on women’s issues continues to be a marked feature in Wyatt’s first full draft of the play, which brings together the espionage plot of the second ur-draft (with the names of the women now changed to Susan and Alix) and the title of the first, Chairs and Tables. Indeed, the re-adoption of the initial title may signal a desire on Wyatt’s part to return to the personal politics of her earlier effort. Where the feminist politics of Cover Story were implicit in the espionage plot, the succeeding drafts of Chairs and Tables bring the issue of women’s rights home, into the domestic life depicted between Susan and Leo. Thus, while the Leo of Cover Story had his moments of condescension, Susan’s struggle to maintain autonomy in her domestic relationship is established more prominently in the early drafts of Chairs and Tables. The opening scene, for example, features Susan and Alix engaged in a covert conversation, playing tape-recorded sounds of a typewriter so that Leo will believe Susan is working. That this secrecy has feminist implications beyond the espionage plot is evident in the

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59 At one point, for example, the Leo of Cover Story announces that his political consultants have deemed acceptable the personal interest newspaper column which Penny has maintained as part of her “show of a normal life” and thus she “may go on writing it and keep our name on it” now that the two are married.
dialogue of early drafts: Susan explains that Leo only understands her need for privacy when she is working, “Not when I just need to be on my own to think or read or…” (F2 17); the earliest version of the scene ends with Leo’s offstage announcement that her “ten minutes are up” (F1 4). Moreover, the issue of autonomy for women in lifelong, committed relationships surfaces elsewhere in the early drafts: The initial draft features two separate discussions of a double standard regarding work-related travel in Susan’s relationship with Leo (F1 8, 17); unlike Penny and Leo in Cover Story, the couple in Chairs and Tables is unmarried, and when Leo proposes to Susan he does so citing his proprietary fear “of somebody luring you away, abducting you, taking you off somewhere to a castle” (F1 15 and others⁶⁰); finally, as I observe above, the earliest drafts conclude with Susan asserting her independence and bringing the relationship to an end (F1, F2⁶¹).

Despite this pervasive emphasis on women’s issues in the earliest stages of Wyatt’s writing, however, Kareda’s questions repeatedly seek some other explanation for the discord between Susan and Leo, ultimately with the effect of robbing Susan’s dissatisfaction of its political implications. Responding to Wyatt’s second (partial) draft of Chairs and Tables, for example, Kareda asks the following three questions in response to the couple’s first scene together: “Something seems to have happened the last time they spoke—some tension—what is it?”; “Already seem to see Susan and Leo in discord—Alix’s influence already—do we need to see their fuller, happier state before?”; and “Susan seems melancholy from the start—divided as a ‘giver’?” (F9 unpaginated handwritten notes, original emphasis). The shaping effect of Kareda’s first question lies in both what it ignores—Wyatt’s current explanation for the tension

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⁶⁰ All other drafts include a version of this line, with only minor variations (e.g. “dark castle” or “sinister castle,” “in a forest”). See F9 4; F2 15; F3 15; F5A 21; F5B 21; F8 21; F5C 17; F4 8; F7 7; F6 7. A version of the line remains in the published script (7).

⁶¹ The first (F1) and third (F2) drafts both feature this ending: between these comes a partial draft (F9) which does not include a final scene, although presumably this is the outcome Wyatt imagined at that stage.
in the Susan-Leo relationship (that Susan finds the relationship constraining)—and in what it frames for subsequent development: a new explanation. With his second question, Kareda further establishes the parameters of this trajectory for revision, not through what the question overlooks but rather what it chooses to see (or to prescriptively assume): that there ought to be some “fuller, happier, state” that came “before.” The implications of this assumption for the final script are twofold: First, the question ultimately prompts an opening portrait of a happy couple—one whose union audience members are, by this restructuring, encouraged to support; at the same time, it re-envisions the domestic discord as a recent phenomenon rather than a reflection of longstanding, inherent dysfunction in the relationship, and thus produces the need to introduce a clear source of this tension in some outside, disruptive force. Kareda’s second question privileges Alix as a potential source for this tension, and his third question hints at how this disruption might be further developed. In suggesting that Susan’s attentions are “divided,” Kareda fuels the play’s trajectory towards the “two’s-company, three’s-a-crowd” theme identified by reviewers, implying that the source of “tension” between Leo and Susan might be located in Alix, as it ultimately is. Moreover, Kareda’s suggestion that Susan is a “giver” is particularly salient. Although there is not much basis for this reading of Susan in the draft to which Kareda is responding, as the play subsequently develops the once autonomous Susan is indeed transformed into a much weaker “giver” type, struggling to please both Alix and Leo. Kareda’s question-asking here, and elsewhere, thus establishes the parameters of the play’s development with considerable implications for its politics and style.

Of course this shift is not informed by these few questions alone. Rather, the trajectory of Wyatt’s development of *Chairs and Tables* in the direction of a domestic comedy is the cumulative product of multiple negotiations over the development process. One influential area
of dramaturgical emphasis is established in an early exchange of letters between Wyatt’s second and third drafts. Kareda initiates the correspondence with a string of questions:

I keep thinking very happily, and inquisitively, about our CHAIRS AND TABLES. (You may note or ignore that ‘our.’)...and I am becoming increasingly attached to its four characters. Where, I wonder, will its big scenes (and I mean Big Scenes) come? And about what? What will be the source and the texture of these confrontations? And will they be Susan and Leo? Or also Susan and Alix? Or Alix and Leo? I can hardly wait until you tell me.” (Letter to Rachel Wyatt 17 June 1983)

Kareda’s inquisitive response to Wyatt’s emerging script demonstrates how dramaturgical questions are formed by the tastes and preoccupations of the asker. Kareda’s “attachment” to dramatic characters, established as a cornerstone of his dramaturgical sensibility in the previous chapter, informs his request for “Big Scenes,” the “source and texture” of which are imagined (or assumed) to be grounded in the dynamics of interpersonal relationships—rather than, for example, political dissension. As with his responses to the preceding draft, Kareda’s Big Scene inquiries are also preoccupied with identifying a new source for the tension between Leo and Susan; he asks what it “will be.” Notably, too, Kareda’s string of questions posits Big Scenes of confrontation between pairs of characters—a line of inquiry which ultimately privileges the development of the relationship triangle.

The shaping influence of this personal and subjective line of dramaturgical questioning is incremental. In a letter postmarked ten days later, Wyatt describes her plans to address Kareda’s

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62 Beyond Susan, Alix, and Leo, early drafts of Chairs and Tables feature a fourth character, Heather, the childhood nemesis of Susan and Alix. Like other substantial changes to the script, the ultimate excision of this fourth character is the combined effect of many of the trajectories traced in this chapter (i.e. the shift toward a “two’s company, three’s a crowd” dynamic; the realignment of solidarity from the relationship between Susan and Alix to the relationship between Susan and Leo; and the increasing depiction of Alix as a negative force from Susan’s past). It is worth observing that despite his expression of attachment to all four characters, Heather is absent from the potential Big Scenes proposed in Kareda’s questions—and from Wyatt’s response. Such omissions are far from neutral. Two drafts later this fourth character is reduced on the page to an off-stage voice (see F3).
questions, writing: “Big Scenes? Between Susan and Alix when Susan must do what Leo wants. Between Leo and Susan when he finds out what’s going on. That will be a scene, seen, not done off stage. Scenes of betrayal” (Letter to Urjo Kareda 2 July 1983). Certainly, this response confirms the immediate influence of Kareda’s requests for Big Scenes; moreover, Wyatt’s placement of Susan in both proposed conflicts—with the notable omission of any confrontation between Alix and Leo—demonstrates how these questions operate in tandem with Kareda’s earlier, interrogatively phrased suggestion that Susan may be “divided as a ‘giver.’” Despite the triangular inter-character dynamic negotiated through this exchange of questions and answers, however, it is important to observe that in the Big Scenes first introduced by Wyatt the domestic relationship is not sympathetic, as it is in the final, “two’s company, three’s a crowd” version of *Chairs and Tables*. Rather, Wyatt’s third draft includes two separate (and largely redundant) scenes in which Leo confronts Susan and, crucially, in which Susan rejects Leo. In the first, longer version, Leo attributes the theft of his government documents exclusively to Alix, wanting to believe that Susan is innocent and “that you’ll marry me next week and we’ll move to Ottawa and take the dog. And live happily ever after in the fast lane of life, only moving onto the median frequently to make love.” Strikingly, in light of Kareda’s request in the preceding draft for a sense of the couple’s “fuller, happier state,” Susan’s response is to unequivocally reject the mawkish domestic future conjured by Leo: “Those dreams were your own affair. I can’t be responsible for dreams I didn’t help to imagine” (F2 42). Later in the play, a second Big Scene features a contracted version of this dialogue, in which Leo’s simplified longing “to spend hours with you in our sunny little breakfast nook” prompts Susan’s succinct response: “That was your dream.” Wyatt’s reworking of this dialogue indicates its centrality, at this stage, to her vision for the Big Scene. While Leo’s sense of betrayal serves as the impetus for the confrontation, the real
“source and texture” of the conflict in both versions is Susan’s rejection of a domestic “dream” which she identifies as a fantasy of Leo’s sole construction.

In subsequent drafts, however, this “central core” of the domestic confrontation disappears as Susan’s dissatisfaction—along with her agency—is subsumed by the emergence of a more sympathetic portrait of the domestic couple. A look at Kareda’s marginal annotations in response to each of these initial Big Scenes reveals the cumulative influence of his dramaturgical feedback in shaping this trajectory. In the margin next to Susan’s first, longer rejection of Leo’s domestic fantasy, Kareda’s handwritten question registers confusion: “Where does this come from?” Like his earlier questions, which seek alternative sources of domestic tension and envision the couple’s “fuller, happier state,” this query seems to overlook Susan’s carefully established personal and political dissatisfaction with the relationship. In the context of this draft in particular such an oversight is surprising. The third draft features many details which support Susan’s refusal to be conscripted into a dream she “didn’t help to imagine.” This is the draft in which Susan’s right to privacy is contingent on Leo’s perception that she is working, “Not when I just need to be on my own to think or read or….” It also, like all other drafts from the beginning to the end of the script’s development, features a marriage proposal framed by Leo’s proprietary fear of Susan being “lured” away. Moreover, new developments in this draft, including allusions to Susan’s ex-husband Jack, “a tyrant,” and a description of Susan’s overbearing father (F2 7, 8), seem deliberately introduced to highlight the significance of Susan’s rejection of Leo and assertion of agency in defining her own goals or “dreams.” As in previous drafts, however, Kareda’s dramaturgical attention is evidently directed elsewhere, framed by other preoccupations, assumptions, and preferences arising from his own subjective
position as a reader. In this case, the prevailing preoccupation underlying Kareda’s response, “Where does this come from?” is his persistent assumption of the couple’s “fuller, happier state.”

In the case of Wyatt’s second version of the domestic Big Scene, Kareda’s feedback is informed by another, ultimately related, dramaturgical preoccupation. Here, the reiterated—and truncated—dialogue in which Susan rejects Leo’s domestic dream is left unremarked; rather, Kareda’s attention is caught by a new detail in this version of the confrontation—a speech in which Leo articulates his personal feelings of betrayal: “I thought I was patriotic, didn’t aspire to be noble, only wanted to put my country first before anything. And then, when this happened, I saw—I knew—that I was deeply injured—not because you betrayed Canada but because you betrayed me. Me. In that instant I was an ordinary man” (F2 55-56). Next to this new speech Kareda’s comment is uncommonly imperative: “This needs to go on.” Given that these new lines offer an unprecedented depiction of a character’s internal thoughts and feelings, Kareda’s unrestrained encouragement reflects his dramaturgical sensibility, particularly his firmly held conviction that dramatic characters must be developed “from within.” Beyond this, however, it is worth considering the implications of the particular character whose introspection elicits Kareda’s call for further development. Originally a relatively minor role, Leo evolves over the course of the play’s development into a much more fully drawn, potentially sympathetic, character. Wyatt’s inclusion of Leo’s new speech in her Big Scene—and, crucially, Kareda’s enthusiastic response to it—marks the beginning of this trajectory, which is also imbricated in the transition toward Kareda’s suggested “fuller, happier” portrait of domesticity. In the case of his response to the second Big Scene, then, Kareda’s enthusiasm may be linked not just to his general inclination toward expressions of psychological interiority, but also to other features of his personal dramaturgical response, including his assumptions about the domestic couple and
the source of their discord, and even identifications informed by his subjectivity.\textsuperscript{63} The assumed importance of Leo’s character development may reflect Kareda’s gendered identification with the only male character in the script. Such subjective responses demonstrate the importance of acknowledging the shaping potential of dramaturgical feedback, particularly in cases of dramaturgy across difference, where the myth of neutral dramaturgy can be most insidious. In this case, Kareda’s desire to hear more from Leo exerts considerable influence over Wyatt’s subsequent development of the play. The final script of \textit{Chairs and Tables} contains not only a revised version of Leo’s introspective betrayal speech but also two longer monologues delivered by the character, one of which is introduced in Wyatt’s next draft. The expanded character does a lot more talking in the final script; he takes up more space on the page and onstage. This more fully drawn Leo does indeed “go on,” but not, as I demonstrate below, without substantial consequences for what was once, in its earliest ur-draft, a “play for two women.”

Unlike questions, an imperative statement like Kareda’s “This needs to go on” is transparently prescriptive. Crucially, however, it does not operate alone. The trajectory which led ultimately to a fuller and more sympathetic depiction of Leo was also shaped by the questions that preceded this directive. The groundwork for the “scene of betrayal” that includes Leo’s new, wounded monologue can be traced back to Kareda’s earliest inquiries regarding the domestic tension in the play as well as the string of questions contained in his subsequent correspondence, which presuppose the centrality of interpersonal conflict to the anticipated Big Scenes. Moreover, as his “Where does this come from?” attests, Kareda’s reading of the script continued to be informed by his failure to register Susan’s personal (and political) discontent. Significantly,

\textsuperscript{63} It is worth observing, for example, the uncanny biographical similarities between Leo and Kareda that may have fueled his identification with this particular character (and with the character’s expression of patriotism): Both immigrated to Canada from Soviet-occupied countries at a young age (Leo was born in Hungary in 1940 (F5 timeline); Kareda in Estonia in 1944); and both hold strong nationalist convictions which inform their work as adult Canadians (Leo’s legislative and Kareda’s cultural).
developments in the character of Leo evolve concurrently with the emergence of a more sympathetic domestic relationship. By the subsequent (fourth) draft Kareda’s early suggestion, “Do we need to see their fuller, happier state before?” is fully realized. In the opening scene, Leo attentively professes to Susan “not wanting ever to stop hearing you talk about you, about me, about anything” (F3 4) and Susan lovingly “SMOOTH HIS FOREHEAD” when he falls asleep (F3 5). Soon after, Susan tells Alix, “He’s a wonderful guy. You know, decent, hardworking, upright... there’s nothing wrong with my life” (F3 18), and the fourth draft is the first to end without Susan leaving Leo. Alongside these changes, both instances of Susan’s rejection of Leo’s domestic “dream”—originally a central feature of Wyatt’s thinking about the relationship and its Big Scene of confrontation—are absent in the fourth draft. In the wake of revisions which produce a more sympathetic opening portrait of happy domesticity, Kareda’s “Where does this come from?” is retroactively legitimized; by the fourth draft, Susan’s cold dismissal of Leo’s dream would indeed appear unmotivated. In this way, a single, seemingly innocuous question—“Where does this come from?”—may be seen to operate in tandem with multiple convergent and cumulative dramaturgical negotiations to shape crucial revisions of the script. Strikingly, when a similar sign of (albeit potentially playful) resistance resurfaces, a few drafts later, in Susan’s scoffing response to Leo’s proposal, “That might be the greatest nightmare of all,” Kareda’s interrogative marginal annotation recalls the consternation of his earlier response: “so cruel?” (F5B 21). In the subsequent draft, this line, too, is excised, further demonstrating how a dramaturgical question can unconsciously regulate the trajectory of a script’s development in ways that are informed as much by the dramaturg’s vision as that of the playwright.

64 In the fourth draft the omission is part of Wyatt’s experimentation with a cyclical structure. The draft begins and ends with the same scene of domesticity, while the interim plot with Alix—and Susan’s related choice of personal and political allegiances—remains unresolved. By the next draft, this experiment with temporality and structure has been abandoned, but the closing scene of domesticity remains, re-imagined as an explicit reconciliation between Susan and Leo, becoming the happy ending to the play’s “two’s company, three’s a crowd” plot.
Arguably, there is greater truth in the playfulness of Kareda’s reference to “our” *Chairs and Tables* than in the implied neutrality of the conclusion to his string of questions, “I can hardly wait until you to tell me.” The cumulative influence of Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback, from his earliest questions, to his requests for Big Scenes of interpersonal conflict, to his very different responses to Wyatt’s earliest implementation of the domestic Big Scenes, has been traceable thus far in several incremental and inter-related developments: Leo’s introspective speech becomes the springboard, at Kareda’s encouragement, for further character development; meanwhile, Susan’s initially central rejection of her life with Leo gives way to the emergence of a happier portrait of settled domesticity, an alteration informed both by the explicit encouragement to “go on” with a deeper characterization of Leo and the implicit discouragement underlying such questions as Kareda’s “Where does this come from?” These revisions, in turn, contribute to further shifts in the politics which once comprised the “central core” of Wyatt’s script. While these larger shifts do not take their full effect as immediate consequences of individual questions, they are the traceable result of cumulative playwright-dramaturg negotiations which draw on and extend trajectories shaped by the sensibility so often expressed through Kareda’s interrogative dramaturgy.

One considerable consequence of these negotiations is traceable through the drastic alteration in the feminist politics which marked Wyatt’s earliest drafts. As I discuss above, revisions contributing to a more sympathetic portrait of the domestic relationship add substantially to this trajectory. Another key component to this shift is the related transformation of the relationship between Alix and Susan from one of solidarity to one of toxicity. In his

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65 It is perhaps worth recording Wyatt’s response: “Definitely they are ‘our’ *Chairs and Tables!* We can pinpoint the moment of conception.” (Letter to Urjo Kareda 2 July 1983, original emphasis). The “moment of conception” to which Wyatt refers appears to be tied to the revamped conception of the play between the two ur-drafts. In a note accompanying the “skeleton” of the espionage plot, then titled *Cover Story*, Wyatt describes the draft as “aris[ing] out of our dinner conversation on Tuesday” (Ur-drafts).
earliest extant questions in response to Wyatt’s second draft, Kareda registers his assumption that the “discord” between Susan and Leo is the result of “Alix’s [implicitly negative] influence,” rather than a consequence of pre-existing flaws in the domestic relationship. Before the changes which establish the couple’s “fuller, happier state,” however, Wyatt’s view of Alix is not as a malevolent sower of discord but rather a catalyst—and a support system—for Susan’s determination to make vital changes in her life. In her earliest response to Kareda’s inciting request for Big Scenes, Wyatt’s description of the planned confrontation between Susan and Alix reveals the persistence of this positive vision for “Alix’s influence.” At that point, Wyatt imagines any conflict between the two women as a consequence of the constraints of Susan’s domestic relationship; the confrontation arises “when Susan must do what Leo wants.”

Significantly, however, the Big Scene between Susan and Alix as described in Wyatt’s letter fails to materialize in the subsequent (third) draft. Instead, Wyatt’s initial work on the Big Scenes is focused on Leo and Susan—a choice which may have been influenced by the emphasis, in Kareda’s earlier questions, on the development of the domestic relationship. However, as I discuss above, Wyatt’s earliest domestic Big Scenes do establish Susan’s rejection of Leo as a reaffirmation of personal agency; accordingly, any changes to the third draft involving Susan and Alix continue to demonstrate solidarity between the two women. One such revision is a new (and subsequently excised) scene, set in the past, in which a high-school aged Susan shows Alix a pair of high heels she intends to wear on a date with Jack, who would later become her “tyrant” ex-husband. Alix’s response is to urge her, “Don’t wear them, Susan. They will throw your spine off balance. And your head and your life and....” (F2 22). If this new scene offers a somewhat trivializing representation of Alix’s feminist convictions, it is nonetheless reflective of Wyatt’s continued preoccupation, at this stage, with contemporary inheritances of
second wave feminism. At this point in the script’s development, the “divided” position occupied by Susan emerges as, at least in part, one in which Alix represents an ally in Susan’s struggle for autonomy; it is only Leo (and, notably, Kareda) who views Alix as a disruptive force.

As demonstrated above, however, negotiations surrounding the earliest Big Scenes between Susan and Leo have the effect of reshaping Wyatt’s vision for the relationships in the play. By the fourth draft, Wyatt begins to depict the relationship between Susan and Leo in a more positive light, beginning and ending the play with scenes of domestic unity. Consequently, when the first Big Scene between Alix and Susan is belatedly introduced in Wyatt’s fifth draft, the impetus for the confrontation is not that “Susan must do what Leo wants.” Rather, the Big Scene takes the form of a flashback in which a university-aged Susan diligently plans a weekend getaway for their “network” of activists (F5A 9). At the last minute, Alix announces that she will not be in attendance; instead she is meeting with a group of visiting revolutionaries—“Experts in LPR techniques”—with Susan’s getaway serving as a convenient alibi (F5A 8). Alix’s desertion is presented, from Susan’s perspective, as a “scene of betrayal” from their past; moreover, it is identified as the catalyst for Susan getting “heavily into drugs” and ultimately suffering a “breakdown” (F5 timeline), a new development in the fifth draft which not only diminishes the solidarity between Susan and Alix but also reframes Leo’s role as protective—if still paternalistic—and potentially more sympathetic. When Susan’s flashback concludes, she continues her anecdote in the present, sharing with Leo that she “didn’t see [Alix] again for three months. I was nearly out of my mind. Was getting to be out of my mind. I couldn’t cope.” Stage directions call for Leo’s response to be “soothing”: “Don’t think about that now love. It’s all over” (F5A 9). In this way, the flashback establishes a precedent for Leo’s view of Alix as a threat, further informing the realignment of the relationship triangle. Alongside the trajectory

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66 The meaning of this acronym is unclear. One possibility is that it stands for Libertarian Party of Russia.
leading to a fuller and happier domestic relationship, “Alix’s influence” thus emerges as the
disruptive source of “discord” envisioned in Kareda’s earliest questions. While Wyatt’s early
drafts imagine this discord as a catalyst for the recovery of Susan’s personal and political agency,
later drafts frame Alix’s entry into the lives of Susan and Leo as a destructive invasion.
Crucially, this occurs at the expense of the political conflicts—and wider political contexts—
observable in Wyatt’s earliest drafts of *Chairs and Tables*.

Thus far, I have traced the consequences for the feminist politics of Wyatt’s early drafts;
beyond this, playwright-dramaturg negotiations also contribute to considerable shifts in the
play’s exploration of other legacies of the 1960s and political realities of the 1980s. In order to
examine the trajectory of changes to this “central core” of Wyatt’s early vision, it is worth
revisiting her earliest work on the espionage plot. The details of the espionage and the cause to
which Susan and Alix are devoted are somewhat ambiguously defined in the first full draft of
*Chairs and Tables*. As Wyatt admits in a letter accompanying the draft, “I haven’t worked out
the intrigue element yet” (F1). The subsequent, partial draft—a collection of five scenes and a
one-page prose summary—demonstrates Wyatt’s efforts to “work out” this part of the script.
First, the summary provides a new background for the women’s history of activism: “Even when
they were at school, Alix and Susan belonged to a Human Rights movement.... They joined
Peace in Our Time,” a branch of the same movement which tried to help free imprisoned people
in Eastern Europe” (F9 summary). Wyatt goes on to describe how this backstory relates to the
espionage plot of *Chairs and Tables*, also revealing additional details about Leo’s position in the
government: “Now that [Susan] is with Leo, who works for Immigration and Foreign Affairs and
is busy trying to set up a new immigration system, a new approach to dealing with Communist

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67 It appears that this is a fictitious movement, although the logic of Wyatt’s choice of name is unclear. An ironic reference to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s phrase "Peace for Our Time," uttered in a speech regarding the Munich Agreement in 1938?
countries, she has access to material that is helpful to the movement” (ibid). Most significantly, Wyatt uses the prose summary to explore the thematic potential of these new developments, speculating about how Leo’s legislative work might serve as a foil for the activist efforts of Alix and Susan: “In effect, what Leo might be trying to do legally and slowly, they have been doing indirectly and secretly thus destroying his work in a way” (ibid). Despite the uncertainty signaled by her “might” and “in a way,” Wyatt’s work on the prose summary indicates an emerging conception of the espionage plot as a device for exploring opposing models for political action.

Likewise, the accompanying scene sketches reveal Wyatt’s experimentation with both the specific details and the thematic significance of the political plot at this early stage. In particular, the details of the women’s activist history and their convictions about it emerge to varying and even contradictory degrees in the five scenes that comprise Wyatt’s second draft. In one scene, Alix and Susan discuss their early activist days in the late 1960s and early 1970s. When Susan mentions that Alix “gave up going to the marches,” Alix explains that “it achieved nothing” (F9 “discarded scene one” 4). Another scene reworks and reverses this new dialogue, with Alix telling Susan, “When you stopped coming to the marches... I thought, you know, that you’d gone respectable” (F9 9). Despite the uncertainty regarding which character should voice her dissatisfaction with public protest as a form of political expression, Wyatt’s reworking of this dialogue affirms her continued interest in examining changing attitudes to and models for political engagement. Elsewhere in this partial draft, contradictory scenes show Wyatt working through the logistics of the intrigue plot, particularly the nature and extent of Susan’s involvement in it. Although the summary alludes to Susan’s human rights activism while “at school,” and indicates that her life with Leo leaves her in a position to be “helpful to the movement,” the extent of Susan’s involvement in the interim is less clear than in the ur-draft,
Cover Story. In one scene, after reminiscing with Alix about her activist past, Susan indicates that she has recently been politically inactive, prioritizing Leo’s needs over her erstwhile political engagement: “Of course since I’ve been with Leo I’ve kept a low profile. There’s his wrk [sic] to think of” (F9 “discarded scene one” 4). In another scene, however, Alix explicitly identifies Susan’s ongoing commitment to the movement as one of considerable significance and risk:

So look what you do. For one government you are translating what they think of as their secret documents into [French is excised on the page] so that they can be read by every secret service everywhere. For another government, you translate her stuff [i.e. the obscure Canadian poetry] and insert the said secrets into it to pass on.... How long do you think you can do that without going crazy? It’s different for me, I’m only a courier. I can pretend to be merely a messenger, all-unknowing. You have all this knowledge in your head. (F9, scene 4, page 9)

Admittedly, the speech is rather inelegantly expository; it is also not present in any subsequent draft. Nonetheless, the speech is significant not only as Wyatt’s most detailed description of the logistics of the espionage and each woman’s involvement in it, but also as the site of Kareda’s only two comments—both interrogatively phrased—in response to Wyatt’s considerable “working out” of the “intrigue element” in this partial draft: In the margin next to Alix’s speech he asks, “would one person translate all of a document?” (ibid); elsewhere, in his general notes on the scene, Kareda flags the phrase “every secret service everywhere,” asking “In Canada? In Europe?” (F9 notes).

These questions register Kareda’s concern with the plausibility and specificity of Wyatt’s intrigue plot, a preoccupation in keeping with dominant features of his dramaturgical sensibility,
including his taste for believable onstage worlds and his editorial impulse to ensure clarity and
comprehensibility. As I discuss below, subsequent changes to the plot of *Chairs and Tables* are
traceable to the concern with plausibility expressed in these and other questions posed by
Kareda. Beyond this, however, a shaping influence is also enacted by the narrow scope of this
dramaturgical response—in other words, by the questions Kareda *does not ask*. Neither Wyatt’s
thematic interest in comparing modes of political action nor her indecision regarding the nature
and extent of Susan’s involvement in the espionage prompt responses from Kareda, at least in the
surviving record; likewise, there are no traces of any comment on Wyatt’s allusions to Cold War
tensions.68 Like questions, silences generate the *illusion* of neutrality, while nonetheless exerting
their own shaping influence. In the end, Kareda’s restricted response to the intrigue is
overshadowed by his predominant focus on character relationships; the second draft prompts
Kareda’s more substantial inquiries regarding the source of “tension” or “discord” between
Susan and Leo, and is followed immediately by the exchange of correspondence concerning Big
Scenes of interpersonal conflict. In this context, Kareda’s relative inattention to the espionage
plot serves to de-emphasize Wyatt’s initial working out of the intrigue, including the unremarked
thematic preoccupations. These areas of dramaturgical emphases and de-emphasis establish
parameters for Wyatt’s subsequent development of *Chairs and Tables*, with considerable
consequences for the politics of the script.

Unsurprisingly, Wyatt’s next draft reflects limited development of the intrigue plot; on
the contrary, much of the detail regarding the translation scheme and the cause to which the

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68 This omission is noteworthy in light of Kareda’s personal stake in these tensions as a childhood immigrant from
Estonia. It should also be observed that this period of development roughly corresponds with Kareda’s work on John
Krizanc’s *Prague*, set in communist Czechoslovakia; as Kareda’s work with Wyatt on *Chairs and Tables* begins
after his dramaturgical involvement with *Prague* is underway, it is possible that Krizanc’s script had either
exhausted Kareda’s interest in the subject or established a standard for its treatment which Wyatt’s script failed to
meet.
women are devoted is scaled back, evidently as part of Wyatt’s redirected focus on Big Scenes of interpersonal confrontation. In response to this lack of detail, Kareda’s feedback persists in its restricted emphasis on clarity, specificity, and believability. The most common annotations in the margins of Wyatt’s third draft are Kareda’s single-word comments “vague,” “confusing,” and “more” (meaning, essentially, more exposition) in reference to the political plot. Elsewhere, Kareda echoes the emphasis on plausibility that characterized his inquiries in the preceding draft; next to a description of the translation scheme Kareda writes, “Seems too difficult—publication time” (F2 34). The effect of this ongoing emphasis on clarity and plausibility—combined with the concurrent redirection of Wyatt’s creative energies toward the domestic plot—is revealed in a letter from Wyatt to Kareda following the third draft: “A simple stealing of Leo’s papers will be the centre of the plot,” Wyatt writes, “rather than too much foreign stuff” (Letter to Urjo Kareda 2 July 1983). Beyond addressing Kareda’s concerns over the clarity and plausibility of the espionage plot, this simplification has significant consequences for the ways in which the script engages with contemporary politics. By removing the “foreign stuff,” for example, Wyatt withdraws from the nascent preoccupation with Cold War era geopolitics implicit in her allusions to Communist Eastern Europe in the second draft. As I discuss below, the removal of “foreign stuff” also has stylistic implications for the play. Perhaps most influentially, Wyatt’s simplification of the espionage plot, including her removal of the implausible translation scheme, is tied to significant changes in the depiction of opposing modes of political action in the script. The latter consequence is traceable through revisions to all three characters in *Chairs and Tables*.

For Susan, the nature of her involvement with the intrigue is directly affected by Wyatt’s simplification of the plot. While in earlier drafts Susan is an active participant, as translator, in
the espionage—in some variations having worked in this capacity for years—\textsuperscript{69} the simplified plot of the fourth draft revises Susan’s occupation to graphic designer, a role that is entirely unrelated to the espionage; Susan’s involvement with the activist network and its covert operations is now limited to the “simple stealing of Leo’s papers,” which she does at Alix’s insistence. This revision has the effect of diminishing the strength of Susan’s political convictions and lessens the potential for the play to productively examine the gap between committed activism and settled complacency. In earlier drafts, even when the duration of Susan’s involvement in the espionage is restricted to Alix’s reappearance in her life, Susan’s decision to deploy her translation skills in the service of the cause represents a renewed commitment to the convictions of her youth. In the newly simplified espionage plot, Susan is depicted as a \textit{reluctant} participant in the intrigue, a “giver” manipulated in the service of Alix’s interests. This change in Susan is tied not only to the simplification of the plot but also to concurrent shifts in the relationship dynamics of the play; the revision appears in the fourth draft, alongside major developments in the “fuller, happier” trajectory, and supports the emerging depiction of Alix as a disruptive source of conflict.

Moreover, Susan is not the only character whose politics become less serious in the wake of such revisions as the simplified espionage plot and the changing relationship dynamics in the play. Once a committed activist as well as a stalwart friend, Alix is increasingly developed into a disingenuous and petty activist \textit{poseur}. Ambiguous details concerning the political movement behind the espionage—including those which prompt Kareda’s requests for clarification, particularly in the third draft—are never developed through greater specificity or exposition; rather, the vagueness of the intrigue becomes a reflection of Alix’s increasingly capricious and

\textsuperscript{69} The definitive restriction occurs on the page in the third draft, which includes a reference to Susan’s “two years” of involvement; “years” is crossed out and revised in Wyatt’s handwriting to “weeks” (F2 52).
superficial character, contributing to the impression that Alix’s affiliations are either invented or short-lived. While the Alix of the fifth draft still warrants Leo’s alarm upon “punch[ing] her name into the system,” legitimizing Alix’s status as a person of interest to the government and thus confirming her political commitment (F5A 40), in later drafts the same background check prompts only derision: “She’s a camp follower. An embarrassment to them [i.e. the “real” activists]” (F6 45).

Likewise, revisions to the Big Scene of past betrayal between Susan and Alix reflect the changing depiction of Alix’s political convictions. In its initial iteration, the flashback scene presents Alix as an unreliable friend, but her rationale for deserting Susan is political; she is leaving town for reasons related to her activist work. In later drafts, however, the scene is revised to demonstrate not only the limits of Alix’s friendship but also the shallowness of her principles; by the sixth draft, Alix’s reason for abandoning Susan is simply that she would rather attend an Arts Ball (F5B 7); in the published script she is keen to attend her cousin’s lavish wedding (17). Increasingly, Alix’s activism is characterized as driven by personal rather than political interests; worse, in light of the feminist politics of the early drafts, Alix’s motivation to perpetrate the espionage is reduced to a desire to please her compatriot/lover, Steve. In the sixth draft Alix tells Susan that “Steve would give his eye teeth for a look at [Leo’s] report” (F5B np); two drafts later, her response to Susan’s delivery of the documents is “Steve’s going to be thrilled with this” (F4 47); by the rehearsal draft Alix, “almost in tears,” reports that she has been abandoned by Steve, who “wasn’t impressed” with the stolen documents (67-68). This diminished portrayal of Alix’s activism, which evolves concurrently with the imperative to make her a source of domestic disruption, has considerable implications for the political themes of Chairs and Tables, particularly in light of changes to its third character, Leo.
While the political convictions of both Susan and Alix are diminished over the course of the script’s development, Leo’s politics become steadily stronger—and more disturbing. In her second draft, Wyatt conceives of Leo’s ambiguously defined role in Immigration and Foreign Affairs as serving, “legally and slowly,” interests similar to those pursued “indirectly and secretly” by Alix and Susan’s covert translation scheme. In the wake of subsequent negotiations concerning both plot and character, however, Leo’s role in government is revised to “part of a three-man commission on the Fight against Terrorism” (F5 timeline). New lines of dialogue in the fourth and fifth drafts not only establish the strength of Leo’s convictions—“What we’re doing will make a difference.... The country needs new legislation about terrorism” (F3 10)—but also explicitly highlight the troubling implications of the legislation to which Leo is devoted.

Wyatt’s fifth draft has Susan ask Leo, “It doesn’t bother you that some of it is repressive?” Leo’s response, “No. And it isn’t,” prompts Susan’s potentially provocative scene-ending question, “Canada right or wrong?” (F5A 18). Moreover, a soliloquy introduced in the fourth draft intimates a disturbing connection between Leo’s new legislative convictions and the repressive potential in his protective treatment of Susan. Alone on stage with a bouquet of flowers in hand, Leo rehearses his marriage proposal while simultaneously reflecting on his governmental powers: “There’s this new anti-terror legislation to work on [....] I’m going to knit up loop-holes, seal up escape hatches, tighten borders, make the place SAFE, Susan” (F3 32). By the rehearsal draft a second soliloquy is added, strengthening this parallel emphasis on Leo’s domestic and legislative paternalism. In it, Leo reads aloud from the law he is drafting while intermittently thinking of Susan:

“Peaceful and lawful agitation.” She ought to have been home by now [...] “...is not considered a threat unless...” Maybe she’s had an accident. Maybe she can’t get to the
phone. “...it constitutes an overthrow by violent means.” If I don’t hear from her
tomorrow, I’ll fly back. Make some excuse. “In which case stronger measures may be
taken. And the decision of the minister becomes...” Find out what’s going on.
“...paramount.” (F6 33)

Certainly, Wyatt’s revisions to Leo’s occupation and politics, starting with the fourth draft and
culminating in the late-stage implementation of this disturbing soliloquy, contribute to an
available reading of the character as an antagonist.

What is most striking about these changes to Leo is that they evolve concurrently with
other, more sympathetic revisions related to the character. The fourth draft is the first to feature a
markedly “fuller, happier” opening portrait of a loving couple; it is the first that does not end
with Susan leaving Leo; and it is the first in which Alix’s past betrayals are established as
contributing to a “breakdown” in Susan’s past, a development which has the effect of potentially
reframing Leo’s paternalism as benevolent care and concern. As I have shown, these revisions
are traceable to several sustained lines of inquiry introduced in Kareda’s earliest questions.
However, even as Wyatt implements changes which address and respond to Kareda’s requests
for a fuller, happier domestic relationship and a more fully developed Leo, her revisions also
evince her ongoing retention of aspects of the “central core” distinguishable in her early drafts.
Thus, the concern with contemporary politics that goes largely unremarked in Kareda’s feedback
finds new expression in revisions to Leo’s character, even as it is excised from other areas in the
script; moreover, these changes have the effect of complicating the sympathetic portrait of Leo—
and of Leo’s relationship with Susan—to which many of Wyatt’s concurrent revisions
contribute. The implementation of Leo’s first soliloquy in the fourth draft—with its “tightened
borders” and “seal[ed] escape hatches”—may be read as one such site of complex dramaturgical
negotiation. Given Kareda’s comment in the preceding draft that Leo’s first introspective speech “should go on,” Wyatt’s provision of a new soliloquy for Leo may in part reflect the direction of her energies toward additional character development. At the same time, the content of this speech generates considerable room for audiences to find Leo’s protective impulses—both as a domestic partner and now as a federal legislator—deeply troubling, an effect which Wyatt’s writing seems to intentionally highlight. In developing the character’s parallel obsession with national and domestic security, Wyatt’s ongoing revisions disrupt audience sympathies with Leo—and with the Susan-Leo union—rather than affirm them, despite the softening of this relationship elsewhere in the script.

Ultimately, however, these potentially disruptive or provocative elements are subsumed by other changes to the characters, their relationships, and their politics. As the relationship triangle—and, as well, the character of Leo—is developed, the simplified plot of Chairs and Tables follows a domestic relationship in jeopardy rather than a woman’s reaffirmation of political conviction. Alix no longer represents a path to personal and political agency but rather an alternative person to whom Susan—now the “giver” Kareda once imagined—might subordinate herself. Worse, Alix becomes the less sympathetic of Susan’s two choices, leaving audiences positioned to favour the Susan-Leo relationship and the conservative values it

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70 As I discuss in chapter one, extant records of Kareda’s dramaturgy (specifically his work in the context of the Tarragon Playwrights Unit) reveal his frequent assignment of a monologue exercise to flesh out less developed characters. There is no surviving evidence of such an exercise leading to Wyatt’s creation of the monologues for Leo, although these revisions follow the pattern of addressing a character perceived by Kareda to be underdeveloped. At the same time, it is possible that Kareda had yet to adopt this exercise as a mode of character development. As I discuss in chapter four, Kareda’s affinity for the monologue exercise is likely to have been informed by the playwriting methodology of Judith Thompson, who he began working with on White Biting Dog only months before commencing the dramaturgy of Chairs and Tables. Whether or not Wyatt was assigned a monologue exercise, the imperative to “go on” with Leo’s earliest introspective speech may be viewed as a precursor to this defining feature of Kareda’s dramaturgy. For more on this, chapter three includes an analysis of a verifiable case of the monologue exercise in the development of Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script.
represents. As Carole Corbeil puts it in her review of the Tarragon production, “Alix, who is made to stand for all women activists, is shown to be a fraud” with the consequence that “[r]esponsibility and dullness win the day” (“Dull characters”). Of course, as I have demonstrated, the Leo of the production script represents much more than responsibility and dullness, at least on the page. Indeed, the published production script goes even further in revealing the disturbing content of Leo’s legislation, with Alix reading aloud a particularly alarming section, accessed through Steve: “‘Citizens under suspicion may in these circumstances be detained without hearing for sixty days....’ That’s from Part One of his report” (40).

Moreover, the final script features a new line for Leo, late in the play: “If a handful of bleeding heart liberals get their hands on this and take phrases out of context, they could do enormous harm with it” (64-65). That audiences have already heard unequivocally alarming phrases from the legislation, some from Leo’s own mouth, opens up considerable space for audience members to bristle at Leo’s chauvinism, and perhaps to find their own political resistance awakened, as Susan’s was in the early drafts.

Reviews of the play, however, indicate that this provocative potential in the final script of Chairs and Tables failed to take effect in production. Of the eight professional and student newspaper reviews I have consulted, not one discusses the alarming rights-restricting legislation on which Leo is working; in fact, Leo’s role in government is never explicitly identified as related to counter-terrorism. Three reviewers mention in passing that his work has to do with “national security” (Felix, Brown, Horenblas “Latest Tarragon”); the rest identify Leo as merely a benign “civil servant” (Brown, Pennington, Portman, Corbeil “Dull characters”)71, often alongside descriptions of him as “nice, placid” (Portman), “dull and earnest” (Corbeil “Dull

71 Those readers keeping count will be wondering about the eighth reviewer. While Peter Gruner, in the student newspaper Medium II, does not explicitly deploy the popular label “civil servant,” his tepid description “Leo works for the Canadian government” amounts to the same.
characters”). One reviewer praises the “dignity” of the “sober public official,” observing that Leo “makes a fine foil to the antics of Alix and Susan” (Felix). For this reviewer, as for others, the function of this foiling is not to explore opposing ideologies and modes of political action in the contemporary political landscape, as in Wyatt’s earliest drafts; rather, the comparison is perceived by reviewers to set the sober dignity of Leo against the childish antics of Alix and Susan: “Before, their playing closet revolutionaries was harmless, but Leo becomes the x-factor that exposes the pettiness of their convictions” (Felix, emphasis added). Jamie Portman’s review is particularly telling in light of Wyatt’s early preoccupation with the political inheritances of the 1960s. Describing Chairs and Tables as “refreshingly mature in reflecting our changing social and political perceptions,” Portman commends the play in the following terms: “It buries the once-trendy mythology that dedicated political activists are the salt of the earth; instead it suggests that such people can on occasion be deceitful, manipulative egomaniacs.” Of all three characters, originally conceived as representing opposing modes of political action, Leo’s increasingly repressive politics are, by the trajectory of the play’s revisions, positioned as the only option to be taken seriously—despite the prevailing-yet-invisible details which might have troubled audiences’ identification with him.

A similar lack of impact on reviewers is registered in relation to remaining aspects of the script which might have served to trouble the sympathetic portrait of its domestic relationship. These include the striking parallels established in Leo’s soliloquies as well as other late stage revisions which revisit the feminist politics of the earliest drafts. The most striking of these last minute revisions is made to the denouement. Another revision made at this late stage involves a new response for Susan when Leo identifies Alix as a “camp follower,” dismissing the motives of her activism with, “It’s all sex with her.” In the final script Susan denounces this “old-fashioned line,” challenging him with: “So, because she likes sex, she can’t have political views” (46).
the production script presents a less recuperative portrait of the domestic relationship; Susan, asserting partial autonomy from Leo, grants him only a provisional return to their former domestic life. The final lines of the play, regarding a secret password to be used to gain access to the apartment, have been changed from the harmonious “We’ll change it every day” (F6 70) to Susan’s “I’ll change it every day,” followed by Leo’s “Will you tell it to me?” and Susan’s response, “On some days” (80). Despite this revised ending, which also includes the new line for Susan, “I’m sick of being taken care of” (76), reviewers fail to observe any source of disharmony between Susan and Leo beyond the unwelcome intrusion of Alix. Likewise, none of the reviewers observe the disturbing parallel, established in Leo’s monologues, between the protectionist policies that inform his legislative work and domestic life. Far from perceiving an oppressive relationship, reviewers evidently received an impression of perfect—if dull—domestic harmony; far from perceiving Leo as a figure of oppression, several reviewers explicitly express sympathy for the character, whose “secure world is disrupted” (Gruner).73 Thus, Leo’s paternalism—both domestic and legislative—operates differently in the context of wider changes to the script. Initially framed by considerable discussion of freedom and constraint as well as by the evidently serious political convictions of the women, Leo’s paternalism registers as a problem, the subject of the play’s critique; later, Leo’s paternalism comes to be more easily read as a pragmatic, rational adult worldview contrasted with the youthful reckless idealism (and dependency) of the revised Susan and Alix characters. On the whole, no substantial politics—feminist or otherwise—are perceived in a play which is widely received as

73 It is worth noting that reviewers who explicitly express sympathy with Leo—Gruner, Brown, and Pennington—are all men. Only one of the eight reviews consulted was written by a woman, Carole Corbeil, whose impression of Leo is restricted to his dullness (“Dull characters”).
“about the mayhem which can be caused in a couple’s relationship by an intruder from the past: its obvious motto—beware of old schoolgirl friendships” (Portman). 74

A number of factors, from the actors’ performances to the reviewers’ own biases, undoubtedly contributed to this reception of *Chairs and Tables*. Beyond these, however, it is clear that Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback (including its assumptions, its emphases, and, yes, its questions) was a key condition of production that rendered certain meanings less available to Tarragon audiences. Far from neutral, Kareda’s earliest dramaturgical questions, as well as his most dominant ongoing lines of inquiry, were shaped by a marked focus on character relationships, the plausibility of the plot, and the domestic world of the play. A final traceable consequence of these areas of emphasis in the development of *Chairs and Tables*, and one which may also have contributed to the affirmative rather than interventionist ideological work of the play in its final form, is the form itself—that is, the conventional structure and style of the script as it came to be in its final drafts. Making his case for “the latent content of form: ideology,” Ric Knowles has persuasively argued that the “dramaturgical unconscious” informing play creation for theatre makers who came of age in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s produced a powerful “tradition of poetic naturalism” in Canadian theatre in these and subsequent decades (*Theatre of Form* 25, original emphasis); most importantly, Knowles demonstrates that while scripts emerging from this tradition often include “social concerns or criticisms [in] thematic content,” these are often contained or undermined by their “inherited and essentially conservative” form (ibid). Tellingly, Knowles quotes Kareda’s 1972 introduction to *Leaving Home* as a formative expression of this generic tradition in Canadian theatre (ibid); indeed, the dramaturgical

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74 Two variations on this estimation of the play’s significance are quoted above (Felix’s “riveting look at friendship and loyalty” and Brown’s description of the play as “a contemporary slant on the two’s-company, three’s-a-crowd adage”). See also: Horenblas, whose review titled “Predictable Rehash of Old Theme” describes the play as “about a happy lover’s relationship threatened from without by the woman’s best friend”; and Pennington, for whom the play is about “the lasting, though unhappy, effects of school loyalties in adult life.”
sensibility I establish for Kareda in chapter one features many correlates to the “dramaturgical unconscious” outlined by Knowles. These include Kareda’s inclination toward determinist causality in dramatic structure, his character-centred understanding of dramatic action, and his penchant for localized, realistic dramatic setting. Tracking negotiations related to the structure and style of *Chairs and Tables* reveals the operations of this dramaturgical sensibility in unconsciously regulating the play’s form and, as a consequence, its politics.

Once again, it is useful to return to Wyatt’s early drafts of the play. Initially, Wyatt’s work on the script reflects an interest in moving away from the traditional form of her previous (and first) stage play, *Geometry*, a comedy of manners depicting the professional and romantic entanglements of a math teacher at an exclusive Toronto private school and staged in a realist style. *Geometry* was an adaptation of Wyatt’s radio drama by the same name, commissioned and dramaturged by Kareda for his inaugural season at Tarragon; in the wake of its success, Kareda invited Wyatt to write an original stage play for a future season. Wyatt’s early work on *Chairs and Tables* reflects her exploration of the theatrical potential in writing for the stage, and includes experiments with both nonlinear dramaturgy and nonrealistic design. In the early drafts, scenes shift fluidly across time, space, and memory, and Wyatt envisions design elements to accommodate these shifts; a letter accompanying her first draft proposes that actors wear “black leotards with accessories added as costume” and envisions an open, unlocalized set comprised of an “arrangement of chairs and tables, rearrangeable as needed” (F1 letter). The intended effect, as Wyatt recalls, was to be “almost of a ballet, you know, and thinking of these chairs and tables, these people moving amongst them, and remembering things” (Personal Interview). Together, then, Wyatt’s interrelated experiments with structure and design make the primacy of the past part of the theatricality of the play, potentially serving the “central core” of Wyatt’s early
fascination with the political legacies of the past for an aging sixties generation. Had these early impulses been further developed, Wyatt’s instincts may have contributed to a more complex examination of this theme than was possible for the play in its ultimate form.

Crucially, however, Wyatt’s early ideas for the design and structure of *Chairs and Tables* go almost entirely unremarked—and undeveloped. Next to Wyatt’s description of the “scene changer outfits,” Kareda has penciled in simply “No” (F1 letter), and production photos reveal costumes in the predominant Tarragon style of realistic street clothes. Conversely, the set design produced for *Chairs and Tables* retained the nonrealistic fluidity—if not the gravity—of Wyatt’s original vision. Wyatt describes the unlocalized set design, which consisted of pastel-coloured striped chairs strewn about the stage and suspended from the ceiling, as “too light,” evoking “a feeling of…lightness. I’d envisioned them on the floor; not these, um, pretty chairs hanging from the roof.” Tellingly, she reflects that “it would have been nice” if Kareda or one of the other “experienced people” at Tarragon “had said to me, you know, this doesn’t really match your play. But nobody did” (Personal Interview, original emphasis). The surviving record confirms this inattention to design on Kareda’s part; there are no direct comments on Wyatt’s initial suggestions for the set. As with other areas of de-emphasis discussed in this chapter, however, this dramaturgical silence is not neutral. A question unasked—or asked less often—can be as influential as a sustained line of inquiry.

The surviving record includes a pair of questions, in the margins of Wyatt’s third draft, which constitute Kareda’s most explicit (and final) response to Wyatt’s nonrealistic treatment of theatrical time and space. The first appears next to the stage direction “THIS SCENE IS NOT

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75 It is unclear at what stage the “scene changer outfits” are replaced by the realistic costumes evident in production photos. The eighth draft (out of eleven) includes the stage direction “SHE PUTS ON WRAPAROUND SKIRT OVER HER LEOTARD” (F4 37), although this may be simply a vestige of an already-abandoned vision. Looking back after decades, Wyatt is unable to recall the how this particular design choice was made.
REAL. THERE IS A STRANGE LIGHT. THE MUSIC IS OFF-KEY. SHADOWS FLIT ABOUT IN THE BACKGROUND.” Kareda asks, “Is this fantasy?” adding, “We need preparation for this style” (F2 24). Later in the third draft, next to a temporal-spatial shift, Kareda asks, “What’s happened here?” (F2 55). The latter response, which attends most explicitly to Wyatt’s structural experimentation, is reflective of the preference for linear dramatic structure that marked Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, particularly in this period. Moreover, like the call for “preparation” in his preceding annotation, Kareda’s “What’s happened here?” registers his relative inattention, in this and earlier drafts, to Wyatt’s experiments with the theatrical treatment of time and space. Instead, as I have shown, Kareda’s attention was focused elsewhere, specifically on the plausibility of the intrigue plot and on the development of character relationships. As with other areas of de-emphasis established by the predominant foci of Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback, this restricted attention contributes to a redirection of Wyatt’s

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76 The limits of Kareda’s appreciation, at this stage in his career, for what Knowles has described as “quantum dramaturgy” can be established by looking briefly at Kareda’s work with Knowles’ two exemplars of playwrights working with this form, John Mighton and John Krizanc (Theatre of Form 215). Mighton developed his play Scientific Americans in Kareda’s 1986-87 Tarragon Playwrights Unit, although the acclaimed play was ultimately produced not by Tarragon but by Theatre Passe Muraaille. Despite the fact that Scientific Americans is less experimental in its structure than Mighton’s later works—even “more or less naturally conceived” (Knowles ibid 219)—Joan MacLeod, who participated in the 1986-87 Unit in her capacity as Playwright-in-Residence, concedes the incompatibility of Mighton’s work with Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility: “Scientific Americans wasn’t his thing.... With Mighton, I don’t think it’s that Urjo missed the boat. It’s just I don’t know if he saw as immediately as some of us did what an interesting writer he is” (Personal Interview). Asked to describe his experience in the Unit, Mighton diplomatically avoids any personal anecdotes; however he does recall a fellow participant whose swift transitions in time and space were discouraged by “someone” in the Unit. Whether the directive came from Kareda is unclear, but the advice to “cut all the scene changes and concentrate on the central relationship” (Devine “Tarragon Playwrights” 20) is in keeping with Kareda’s single response to Wyatt’s experimentation with nonlinear structure—“What happened?”—as well as the predominant focus of his other dramaturgical questions on what he viewed as the “central relationship (i.e. the domestic one) in Chairs and Tables.

Krizanc’s sole collaboration with Kareda, which occurred during a period partially overlapping with the development of Chairs and Tables, is significant due to the anomalous nature of the resulting play, Prague, in Krizanc’s body of work. Both his earlier play, Tamara, and his subsequent one, The Half Of It (which is the subject of Knowles’ analysis of quantum dramaturgy), experiment with theatrical form, defying conventional dramaturgy of time and space. Indeed, Krizanc has been quoted as saying he “always hated traditional theater [and] was always interested in form” (“Tamara Interview”). His admission, five years after Prague, that “it's very hard for me to write a proscenium play” (Wagner, “It's a long way”) seems to affirm the anomalous nature of his work with Kareda; it may also be read as affirmation of Kareda’s influence. By Kareda’s own account, his earliest meetings with Krizanc resulted in a substantial revision of the original concept from a work of very broad scope to the beginnings of the localized, realist proscenium stage play that would be Prague (Kareda, Introduction to Prague 10-11).
energies in subsequent revisions. The “NOT REAL” scene which prompts Kareda’s first question is visibly cut on the page, while the offending temporal-spatial shift disappears in subsequent drafts as part of larger changes in Wyatt’s thinking about the script. Once again, these larger changes can be traced to Kareda’s predominant, taste-driven preoccupation with deterministic linearity in both plot and character development.

A salient example of how these characteristic preoccupations exert an indirect shaping influence over the formal development of Chairs and Tables is Kareda’s request, early in the process, that Wyatt generate a timeline to clarify the backstories of her characters. This request—a dramaturgical question of a different sort—was delivered orally. As Wyatt recalls, “He kept asking me for a timeline,” and although she neglected the assignment at first, “[h]e kept asking and asking. And he wasn’t exactly—well, he was getting a bit annoyed that I never turned one in, actually, like not doing your homework!” (Personal Interview). However playful, Wyatt’s invocation of a teacher-student dynamic underlines the power relations that ultimately impart to Kareda’s request an imperative force. In the end, Wyatt does produce a timeline, with significant consequences for the content and structure of the play. The timeline appears sometime around the fourth draft, coinciding with such pivotal developments as the expansion of the role of Leo, the realignment of the relationship dynamics, and the simplification of the plot. Tellingly, Wyatt recalls of the timeline exercise that it activated “the prose writer in [her]” (Personal Interview), leading to many developments in the psychological motivations and backstories of the characters and also carrying naturalistic implications for the structure of the script. As Knowles has

77 The timeline may have been generated just before, just after, or even during the composition of the fourth draft. It is filed among a set of partial drafts (in F5), two of which immediately follow the fourth draft in my reconstructed chronology, however the timeline’s inclusion in this particularly disorganized file is not necessarily indicative of when it was produced. Given that many of new details introduced in the fourth draft coincide with those included in the timeline, I’m inclined to view the imperative to generate this timeline—including the work of establishing backstories for the characters—as linked to these fourth draft revisions, whichever was produced first.

78 At the time of their collaboration, Wyatt was already an established writer of prose fiction, having published two novels: The String Box (House of Anansi, 1970) and The Rosedale Hoax (House of Anansi, 1977).
observed, naturalism can be described as “essentially novelistic in its understandings of individuals and cultures, particularly in its linear use of time as an organizational principle” (Theatre of Form 213). As a dramaturgical exercise, the act of generating a timeline inherently privileges linear causality not only in character development, but also in the conception of plot and structure. By the final, production script all that remains of Wyatt’s early temporal experiments are a series of rather conventional flashbacks which, in the words of one reviewer, “are used to introduce the characters and define their relationship[s]” (Felix).

As I observe above, the timeline exercise also coincides with Wyatt’s decision to simplify the espionage plot. In light of Denis Johnston’s conclusion, affirmed in chapter one, that “[t]o Kareda it is naive to think of theatrical realism as simply an illusion of reality onstage; rather, realism/naturalism is a sophisticated system of conventions that root humanist themes in a particular setting” (297, emphasis added), it is worth noting that this revision includes the excision of the “foreign stuff” associated with the intrigue, including multiple foreign settings. With scenes in Paris (F1 45), Frankfurt (F1 17), and Budapest (F2 57) removed, Chairs and Tables ultimately takes place in a small number of Toronto locales. This, too, is reflective of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility; notably, all three of the plays examined in this dissertation are set in Toronto.

Moreover, the revision is in keeping with other, related lines of inquiry traceable in Kareda’s extant annotations. One of these is his preoccupation with the private lives and conflicts of the characters, most specifically the domestic couple. Arguably, this dramaturgical emphasis may be seen to fuel a trajectory of development that brings the locale of

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79 To be more specific, the plays examined here are set in in predominantly domestic locales within Toronto. As I discuss in the next chapter, by the end of its development process Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script is set entirely on the back porch of a home in the east Toronto neighbourhood of Riverdale. Likewise, Judith Thompson’s White Biting Dog takes place with increasingly specificity in the Rosedale home of its central characters. While the precise location of Susan and Leo’s apartment within Toronto is never identified, and a few scenes take place in other locales (e.g. the symphony, a cafe), most of the action in Chairs and Tables ultimately occurs in the domestic setting.
the play “home”—to a largely domestic, Toronto based setting. Additionally, Kareda’s notes in
the margins frequently seek the detailed specificity and recognizable familiarity which, as I
discuss in chapter one, Kareda included in his personal catalogue of “naturalistic techniques.”
These include his request that the University attended by Susan and Alix be named—“at York?”
(F5B 6)—as well as his interrogatively phrased suggestion, next to Susan’s mention of the
fictional publishing company for whom she’s employed, “why not use real publisher?” (F5B 3).
In response to these and other inquiries, Wyatt’s revisions to the script increasingly ground the
play in the “real” and recognizable details of its Toronto setting. Along with other markers of the
“tradition of poetic naturalism” that evolved through Kareda’s development of Chairs and
Tables, this “particular setting” contributes to the play’s reception, producing conventional
expectations for and, by extension, conservative readings of the play.

Tellingly, reviews of the play invariably treat it as a realistic domestic comedy; several
describe the surviving traces of Wyatt’s early, non-realist vision—both the set design and the use
of the flashbacks—as “confusing” or “inconsistent with the style of the play” (Felix, Horenblas
“Latest Tarragon”). One confounded reviewer wonders “what all those chairs and tables are
doing on the stage” (Brown), while another observes that although the set design is “part
expressionistic and part surreal…nowhere in the script are there any surreal elements”
(Horenblas, “Latest Tarragon”). The latter observation is particularly illuminating in its
establishment of the script as the metric by which the form of the play is determined. Kareda’s
text-based dramaturgy, which emphasizes naturalistic techniques in plot and character
development and seeks to ground the setting in familiar details, is influential in producing the
recurring assumption, on the part of reviewers, that the play is to be evaluated in terms of its
verisimilitude. Thus, critiques of Wyatt’s use of flashbacks rest largely on their perceived
disruption to the play’s believability. One reviewer complains of the “unconvincing flashback” in the play’s opening, observing that the subsequent “series of jerky sequences” “continued to defy plausibility” (Pennington). A more favourably disposed review cites the flashbacks as a source of “shaky footing” in an otherwise “fine script,” which the author aligns specifically with the wider “Tarragon tradition” (Felix). This invocation of tradition is echoed by Portman, who describes *Chairs and Tables* as a “return to form” for Tarragon, responding explicitly to the features of character-driven naturalism in the script. In terms which resonate with Kareda’s famous praise for David French’s *Leaving Home* (discussed at length in chapter one), Portman describes Wyatt as “a keen observer of the contemporary human condition”; “the best plots,” Portman goes on to enthuse, “arise naturally from character.” Other reviewers commend the play’s “convincing” characters (Gruner) and “engaging” depiction of character relationships (Felix). In the context of these familiar features of the “dramaturgical unconscious” of Tarragon tradition, the “conventional” (Corbeil “Dull characters”) or “predictable” (Kaplan, Horenblas “Latest Tarragon”) form of the play is assumed, if not praised, while reviewers ignore—or regard as aberrant—any elements that defy the “tradition of poetic naturalism.”

This reception of the play as a naturalistic or realistic domestic comedy has considerable implications for the meanings generated in performance. Elin Diamond, in her renowned feminist critique of dramatic realism, *Unmaking Mimesis*, argues that the realist form often functions to “universalize[] but one point of view.... In the process of exploring social (especially gender) relations, realism ends by confirming their inevitability” (xiii). Although the recent work of Bennett and Solga usefully troubles this argument, the critical reception of *Chairs and Tables*, which was written at a time when the feminist critique of realism was first emerging, supports

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80 While *Unmaking Mimesis* was first published in 1997, Bennett and Solga locate the arrival of feminist critiques of realist form in the early 1980s (186).
the view of Diamond and others that this play, shaped by a dominant tradition rooted in realism-
naturalism, “pass[es] off as ‘universal’ the monolithic perspective of educated, white, hetero-
xexual men” (Bennett and Solga 185). As I have observed, many reviews of Chairs and
Tables express sympathy not only for Leo, but also for the patriarchal and conservative values he
represents. Thus Portman, who finds that “[t]he great virtue of Chairs and Tables is that it is an
effective study in character,” is the same reviewer whose above-quoted praise for the play’s
politics is that it “buries the once-trendy mythology that dedicated political activists are the salt
of the earth.” Even for more resistant audience members, those features which position the play
within a “Tarragon tradition” work to subsume its challenges to socio-political convention. Thus
Jon Kaplan, who regrets Leo’s failed potential to operate as “an antagonist,” overlooks the
feminist resistance restored to the play’s denouement; having discerned a “predictable pattern”
early in the play, all Kaplan sees in the play’s final moments is the anticipated—and lamented—
“sentimental outcome.” Like the remnants of Wyatt’s experimentation with design and structure,
the play’s politics are contained by the predominant perception of Chairs and Tables as a “return
to form.”

As this case study has demonstrated, the version of the script produced at Tarragon was
the result of multiple incremental, cumulative revisions arising out of the combined and
constantly negotiated dramaturgical sensibilities of both Wyatt and Kareda. For Wyatt, a veteran
writer but nonetheless new to the theatre, some of these sensibilities were still emerging. Of
Chairs and Tables, Kareda appears to have been expecting something closer to their previous

81 In later years, Wyatt would revisit her experiments with form in her play, Crackpot, an adaptation of a novel by Adele Weismann produced at Calgary’s PlayRites Festival in 1995. It is worth noting not only that Crackpot was Wyatt’s greatest self-described success, but also that she initially proposed the adaptation to Kareda, who cited, as she recalls, the shifting temporality and “unwieldy” structure of the novel in his determination that it “can’t be staged” (Personal Interview).
collaboration, and these expectations, along with a foreshortened development period,\textsuperscript{82} may well have contributed to both the nature of his feedback and its effects. That the trajectories of development shaped by Kareda’s dramaturgy generated a play that privileged ideologically conservative readings does not appear to have been an effect of which Kareda was wholly conscious. Indeed, the extant record provides two dramaturgical questions that complicate the portrait I have constructed of Kareda’s trajectory-shaping feedback. The first of these, found in the margin of Wyatt’s third draft, indicates Kareda’s early recognition of the importance of maintaining the strength of Susan’s political convictions. When Susan’s story, recounted to Leo, of a university bake sale “to raise money for the Prisoners Fund” devolves into jokes about her terrible cooking, Kareda astutely observes: “it somehow defuses the sense of commitment” (F2 4). Much later in the development process, a second question addresses a similar concern. The rehearsal draft includes new dialogue for Susan in her Big Scene of confrontation with Leo, in which she offers an explanation for her betrayal: “It was a game” (F6 56). This line is a far cry from earlier versions, such as “You have to get it straight, Leo, that... it wasn’t childishness. It was something I wanted to do” (F2 55),\textsuperscript{83} effecting an undeniable contribution to the diminishment of Susan’s convictions. In response, Kareda records the following question on the back cover of the rehearsal draft: “WHY does Susan think it’s a game—why is she so naïve—if not naïve, why does she do it?” (F6 back cover).

In both cases, Kareda’s questions prompt revisions from Wyatt: the early dialogue, flagged by Kareda for “defus[ing] the sense of commitment,” is cut; likewise revisions between

\textsuperscript{82} Originally commissioned for the 1984-85 season, scheduling issues arising in June 1983 prompted Kareda to move up the production date for \textit{Chairs and Tables} to March 1984. Wyatt speculates that “given another year, it would have been a different play” (Personal Interview), and indeed this experience may well have contributed to Kareda’s belief, frequently asserted in later years, in a requisite two year gestation period for new plays.

\textsuperscript{83} It is worth observing that this much stronger assertion of conviction has its origins in the second ur-draft, \textit{Cover Story}, in which Penny tells Leo, “[I]t was something I wanted to do. And I still believe in it. And if I can find a way, I’ll go on with it.”
the rehearsal draft and the final script include both the excision of Susan’s “It was a game” and the related removal of dialogue in which Alix proposes the espionage as a bet or dare (F6 37). Despite these conscious attempts to address the seriousness of Susan’s convictions, however, reviews attest to the prevailing trivialization of the politics of both Susan and Alix, who are tellingly described as “game-playing schoolgirls” (Kaplan) “playing closet revolutionaries” (Felix). Thus the cumulative effects of Kareda’s trajectory-shaping feedback—from his early questions regarding the domestic relationship to his delayed and restricted attention to the politics in the script—are revealed to exert greater influence than any single question or revision. To quote Langer again, “the way in which a question is asked limits and disposes the ways in which any answer to it—right or wrong—may be given.” Crucially, this is also true of the order in which questions are asked, and the ways in which predominant emphases—or de-emphases—privilege some responses over others. The most compelling flaw in the perception of interrogative dramaturgy as a countermeasure against bias, interference, or prescription is the failure to recognize the cumulative, shaping influence of the dramaturgical process. While a single question might be tenable as neutral or open, the same cannot be said of the process as a whole. As this case study has shown, Chairs and Tables is demonstrably shaped by the cumulative impact of Kareda’s dramaturgical input, which is often interrogative but always also subjective. Crucially, this stronger, cumulative influence of the dramaturgical process has greater potential to be invisible to the participants in the play development process—and to be shaped by the dramaturg’s unexamined preferences and preoccupations.

Which returns me to the wider myth of dramaturgical neutrality, of which the widespread advocacy of the interrogative approach is only one manifestation. To modify Barthes, I can find
a thousand images which signify to me dramaturgical neutrality.84 Beyond the misperception of the interrogative approach as inherently non-prescriptive, the myth of an achievable dramaturgical neutrality underlies another related and widely held conception, observable in the descriptions of dramaturgy offered by Kareda and White in the introduction to this chapter. Both Kareda’s assertion that the “Role of the Dramaturg” is to not “impose” but “call forth” the play and White’s more recent endorsement of questions as a way to determine “what the play and playwright want” rests on the presupposition of what White describes as a “latent” playwright’s vision. What such assertions overlook is the shaping role of the process itself. As my analysis of the development of Chairs and Tables has demonstrated, the playwright’s vision emerges in and through the process of development, not as a latent fait accompli waiting to be simply “called forth” but rather as an evolving construction shaped by the emerging itself; in other words, what is conceived as the “playwright’s vision” is actually informed by the ongoing contributions and negotiations of both playwright and dramaturg. Thus the notion of a purely neutral and responsive dramaturgy—determined entirely by the perfectly reflected needs and intentions of the playwright—enacts a potentially dangerous effacement of the real and unavoidable shaping influence of the dramaturg’s sensibility. So, too, does White’s striking reliance, in the above-quoted description of his interrogative approach, on his “instinctive sense” of “what the playwright intends it to be.” This invocation of instinct, which is echoed by other dramaturgs, including Kareda,85 is perhaps the most troubling manifestation of the myth of neutral

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84 As Barthes observes of the “mythical concept: it has at its disposal an unlimited mass of signifiers.... I can find a thousand images which signify to me French imperiality” (229).
85 In his final interview with fellow dramaturg Judith Rudakoff, Kareda responds to Rudakoff’s assertion, “For me, dramaturgy is an instinct-driven process” with “Me too” (Between 21). Moreover, this view is traceable to Kareda’s earliest interview, with Robert Wallace and Cynthia Zimmerman, in which he explicitly describes his dramaturgy as based on “instinctive response” (27).
dramaturgy. An *instinctive* response may be experienced—often by both parties\(^8^6\)—as a spontaneous reaction to the needs of the moment (i.e. the needs of play or playwright), but this renders invisible the fact that the spontaneous or instinctive is often also hegemonic.

In order to address, rather than efface, such real concerns as the balance of power between playwright and dramaturg, the challenges of dramaturging across difference, and the potential to veer dangerously into the *prescriptive*, it is essential that dramaturgical influence be acknowledged, examined, and negotiated openly, through what Canadian dramaturg Brian Quirt has recently identified as a dramaturgy of “informed subjectivity” (qtd. in Orr 244).

Acknowledging with refreshing candour that “My approach to a work and my opinions about it are infused with my own preferences about theatre, storytelling, and form (among many other things),” Quirt advocates:

> go[ing] to great lengths in discussions to state what my preferences and interests are, as a way of helping me and my collaborators filter and understand my opinions about the work at hand.... Doing so illuminates the nature of what each of us brings to the project... and brings to light what can often be hidden assumptions about a theatre piece or our perception of it (ibid).

Quirt’s “informed subjectivity” is promising in its disruption of the myth of neutral dramaturgy, a disruption to which I hope to contribute with this case study and those to follow. That Wyatt’s script underwent the most drastic changes of the three plays examined in this dissertation has made it particularly easy to trace the nature and implications of Kareda’s dramaturgical influence. As the succeeding case studies will reveal, each playwright negotiates this

\(^8^6\) Jason Sherman describes Kareda’s style of working in his *Globe and Mail* eulogy as follows: “He had no method, unless you count a piercing intelligence, a quick wit and the uncanny ability to say precisely the right thing at exactly the right moment a method” (“Urjo Kareda: An Appreciation”). Likewise Joan MacLeod offers the following description of her experience: “His approach to my work was *so* personal.... his whole approach was one of support” (Personal Interview, original emphasis).
dramaturgical influence differently, with different degrees of acquiescence or resistance, enacting different collaborative dynamics with different creative outcomes. Nonetheless, what remains true in all three cases is that dramaturgical influence occurs. Questions make their mark, as do calls for clarification, reflective (but also, necessarily, subjective) observations, and even silences, all of which can nonetheless be mistakenly perceived and pursued as dramaturgically neutral. In demonstrating the shaping force of dramaturgical questions through this case study, my aim has been not only to expose the flawed perception of a particular dramaturgical method—the oft-touted and most easily traced interrogative approach—but also, more importantly, to debunk the larger myth of an achievable dramaturgical neutrality. Whatever form it takes, the myth of neutral dramaturgy produces and simultaneously obscures the void into which the tastes, training, preoccupations and preferences of the dramaturg slip unnoticed. The danger of the myth of neutral dramaturgy is that it generates a blindness to the ways in which the dramaturg must necessarily—and unavoidably—influence developing work, for better or worse.
CHAPTER THREE

Context and Confluence:
Dramaturgy In and Beyond the Tarragon Playwrights Unit
Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script
(1984-1986)

“[O]ne might be forgiven for wondering if the cluster of images around family, balance, stability, and sales [in the discourses surrounding Tarragon] works to construct a context within which it is more possible theatrically to ask, or hear, some kinds of questions than others, in which deconstructions of liberal humanist values and social structures centering on the patriarchal, capitalist economy of the family might be difficult.”

-Ric Knowles, Reading the Material Theatre 134

“Ultimately it seemed that Kareda had to be interested in spawning Tarragon Writers.”


Having just traced the shaping influence of interrogative dramaturgy—of questions raised by the dramaturg over the course of a play’s development—Ric Knowles’ observation, quoted above, raises the equally important issue of what a play comes “theatrically to ask” on its emergence from the development process. As the preceding analysis of Chairs and Tables affirms, the types of questions raised by a play can shift considerably in response to the trajectory-shaping processes of developmental dramaturgy. However, as Knowles’ argument suggests, dramaturgical influence is also informed by the discursive and material conditions of the theatre in which these processes take place. In chapter one, I establish Urjo Kareda’s relationship to the institutional inheritances of the Tarragon theatre, which Knowles links to the discourses of “family, balance, stability, and sales” and which also include a naturalistic theatrical tradition and a predisposition toward single-authored, text-based drama. Such legacies are closely bound up in the dominant approaches to developmental dramaturgy practiced by Kareda during his time at Tarragon. These include both his one-on-one work with individual
playwrights, explored in all three case studies in this dissertation, as well as another mode of script development tied specifically to the case of Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script*: the Tarragon Playwrights Unit (TPU).

The TPU was instituted by Kareda in 1982, during his first year as artistic director; within four years, he described it as “[t]he most extensive dramaturgical process I undertake at Tarragon” (“They Also Serve” 9). Each year, Kareda invited six or seven playwrights to participate in regular meetings as a Unit. Participants were provided a stipend to support their involvement in the TPU, which included dramaturgical exercises and the requirement to regularly table and discuss ongoing writing. Dramaturgical feedback was exchanged among fellow playwright-participants as well as representatives of Tarragon, including writers-in-residence and, of course, Kareda. Recalling the impetus for creating the Unit, Kareda emphasizes support for writers and professional development as the primary goals of the TPU: "It seemed to me a useful way of getting writers together... just to see how far they could take their work, and to give them a connection with the theatre" (qtd in Al-Solaylee “Forced”). Carefully maintaining, over the years, that the TPU was designed “to give people ... a type of self-identification as a writer, a sense of discipline and a peer group,” Kareda consistently de-emphasizes the function of the program as a potential seeding ground for Tarragon productions, asserting that “[t]he success or health of our Units is not measured by the plays that we get to produce at Tarragon, but the number of people who have a clearer sense of themselves as writers. It’s about self-knowledge” (Rudakoff *Between* 15-16).

As I discuss in chapter one, however, Kareda’s support for writers produced a “circle of expectation” (McKim qtd in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field”) that was experienced differently by different playwrights. Despite Kareda’s view of the Unit’s purpose as “not measured by the plays
that we get to produce at Tarragon,” the potential of a Tarragon production was, for many TPU participants, a formative influence—for better or worse—on their “sense of themselves as writers” and on their work. Recalling his time as the “golden boy of the Unit in 1987” (Al-Solaylee “Forced”), Daniel MacIvor captures both the positive and negative potential of working in this developmental context. Of the Unit itself, MacIvor describes a system of remarkable support, stating, “They loved me, they loved my play. They nurtured me and encouraged me,” (qtd in ibid), but he also acknowledges the implicit pressures attendant on inclusion in the Tarragon family: “All the Canadian plays I had ever studied as a student seemed to have been done at Tarragon, so for me to get a production there... made me think I had arrived”; and this heady excitement could mean “trying to please the people at Tarragon instead of saying what I wanted to say” (qtd in Ouzounian “Changing course”). Significantly, for the proceeding case study, MacIvor recalls that the gap between his own and “The Tarragon[’s] ideas” became “tricky” not in the TPU but in “taking the play from the Unit into production” (qtd in Al-Solaylee “Forced”). For some participants, however, the pressures of conforming to what is often described as the “Tarragon aesthetic” were felt in the Unit itself.

These pressures within the TPU form the basis of the critique put forward in Michael Devine’s 1988 article, “Tarragon: Playwrights Talk Back,” in which the author—himself a disgruntled former Unit participant (a fact which the article does not divulge)—offers an analysis of the TPU, alongside eight brief playwright “report cards,” reproduced in full. While the reports from individual playwrights range from glowing to damning, Devine’s analysis emphasizes the claim made by some participants that the TPU—and, by extension, Kareda—rewarded and actively encouraged the development of plays towards “the narrative, character-

87 Devine was a participant in the 1986-87 TPU. It may be worth noting that he was one of two playwrights in this iteration of the Unit whose work was not picked up for production by Tarragon or any other theatre (“Past Playwrights Unit”).
based aesthetic already at work at Tarragon” (16). As Robyn Butt puts it in her contribution to the article: “Ultimately it seemed that Kareda had to be interested in spawning Tarragon Writers.” The implicit pressure exerted by the promise of production is captured by David Demchuk, who describes participants’ “secret hope of impressing the group’s facilitator—who in the end might be able to give one of the group his or her first major showing” (in Devine 15). For Butt, this eagerness to please is generative of a “Guru-Disciple Dynamic,” the dangerous operations of which she delineates in her appraisal of the TPU:

If your work suited a Tarragon esthetic, that was great. (And it is.) If your work violated a Tarragon esthetic and you couldn’t or wouldn’t change, you were sloughed off.... But if Unit members’ work was CLOSE to a Tarragon esthetic, they were nudged to bring it into line. It’s the writers in this grey area whom I worry about. The Tarragon has premiered some of them. Their plays, inherently provocative, never quite provoke. (ibid 14)

Against such claims, Kareda maintained his view of the TPU as a space for playwrights to develop “a clearer sense of themselves as writers”—whatever their style. In a radio interview in 1987, for example, he describes his selection of playwrights for the Unit as aiming at “balance... so that everyone isn’t writing a naturalistic play or everyone writing an epic play” (Ritter). In his final interview in 2001 Kareda emphatically asserts: “The one thing the Playwrights Unit is not is a Tarragon play production factory” (Rudakoff Between 15).

This marked discrepancy in perspectives on the TPU signals more than sour grapes on one side or blind naïveté on the other. In chapter two, I address some of the ways in which the myth of neutral dramaturgy informed Kareda’s approach to new play development, obfuscating his awareness of the cumulative, shaping influence of his dramaturgical feedback. Beyond this,
contesting claims regarding the TPU are also bound up in the wider matrix of forces that exerted pressure over new play development in this period. Considering the historical context of the foundation of the TPU (1982), the publication of Devine’s article (1988), and the present case study (1984-1986), it is worth briefly revisiting the firestorm of controversy surrounding play development workshops that arose by the end of the 1980s. A proliferation of workshops in this decade were the consequence of a private funding initiative, the Laidlaw Foundation Arts Program, which introduced grants in support of “research and development” in 1981 (Tomc “Laidlaw”). These grants appeared during a period of financial and creative crisis for many Canadian theatres. Government funding structures that had cropped up in earlier decades to fuel the development of “the Canadian playwright” were becoming contingent on box office success and “community support,” increasing the impact of private funding initiatives like the Laidlaw grants and corporate sponsorship, as well as heightening the imperative for theatres to cater to the established sensibilities and expectations of audiences. Many theatres experienced the challenge, predicted by Factory Theatre founder Ken Gass in 1979, of “trying to find the Canadian middle road,” with “[m]eaningful experimentation on one hand; public acceptability on the other” (393). Despite the aim of “research and development” underlying their formation and funding, the workshops that emerged in the 1980s were widely criticized for doing little to assuage the threat to experimentation anticipated by Gass. By the end of the decade, recurring critiques characterize the play development workshop as “no longer a means but an end in itself;” merely “an important and desirable commodity” for small theatres starved for funding (Tomc “Laidlaw” 15).

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88 It should be acknowledged that there are play development workshops that predate (and also inform) this proliferation, perhaps most notably the Banff Playwrights’ Colony, established in 1974.
Arguably, the changing conditions for new play development in this period exerted the strongest impact not on theatre companies but on a new generation of untested playwrights. More conservative programming policies at established “new play” theatres produced a scarcity of production opportunities for unknown writers, limiting their access not only to audiences but also, crucially, to income and experience. In this context, Kareda’s conception of the TPU as a system of support and self-discovery may be understood as both a prudent response to contemporary financial constraints and an admirable—if idealistic—expression of his mandate to “keep writers going” (“Role of the Dramaturg”). Nonetheless, for many playwrights this benevolent “end in itself” was inadequate; whatever financial, social, and professional support the Unit provided, opportunities for production remained an undeniable—and largely impossible—outcome sought by playwrights in the TPU. The pressures and frustrations expressed by some TPU participants can thus be understood in relation to the larger controversies concerning new play workshops in the 1980s. Many plays in this period languished in an interminable cycle of what came to be known as “workshopitis,” moving from workshop to workshop with the promise of production a golden carrot, perpetually deferred; in this climate of scarce opportunity for production, a related concern was the heightened pressure to conform to an established—and often conservative—theatrical style in those workshops operating as in-house programs tied to particular theatres. Widespread frustration with the workshop model for new play development was at its apex when Devine published “Tarragon: Playwrights Talk Back” in 1988, and these historical conditions inform both Demchuk’s observation of the

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89 cf. Elliot Hayes’ “Stasis: The Workshop Syndrome” (1986); Sandra Tome’s “The Laidlaw Report” (1988); Kathleen Flaherty’s “Where’s the Thrust?” (1989) and “Table Stakes” (1992); and Beth Herst’s “Opting In,” which was published in 1995 but draws on Herst’s earlier experiences in workshop programs, including the 1989-90 TPU (although the TPU is never explicitly cited in her essay).
“secret hope of impressing the group’s facilitator” and Butt’s identification of a “Guru-Disciple Dynamic” in the TPU.

Critiques of the workshop model for new play development persist in contemporary debates in Canadian theatre. In his 2012 manifesto against the “Theatrical-Dramaturgical Complex,” for example, Alex Lazardis Ferguson rails against “the endless workshopping of plays,” asserting that “the dramaturge-led workshop process in Canada is failing badly” (72). More than two decades after Butt observed the diminishment of provocative potential when a workshop participant is “nudged” to bring her script “into line,” Ferguson laments seeing “many plays that had real potential crushed by dramaturges” in his recent experience at Vancouver’s Playwrights Centre (ibid). Ferguson is not the only contemporary theatre artist to express ongoing frustrations with the legacies of the workshop system and the financial changes that produced it. Alex MacLean, also writing in 2012, pronounces that today “our theatre is mostly colour-by-number,” a result of “the bland leading the bland,” motivated by the “fear of losing [a] piece of the [funding] pie” (9-10). Such strong critiques of “the narrow and lifeless code of storytelling that stultifies Canadian theatre” (ibid 11) reflect the persistence of concerns over institutional and workshop-based dramaturgy that have been circulating in Canadian theatre for decades. However, like the wider discourse surrounding developmental dramaturgy, both past and present critiques of these conditions for new play development are largely anecdotal, telling us little about how the potentially suppressive nudging first identified by Butt actually occurs.

Through the careful examination of surviving drafts and other contextualizing evidence, the proceeding case study will trace the operations and implications of workshop-based dramaturgy in the particular context of the TPU, and in the case of a particular play, Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script. My aim in this case study is not to affirm or refute existing
critiques of the TPU and other workshop processes. Rather, the reconstruction and analysis of ongoing changes to *The Wedding Script* will offer a new way into thinking about the shaping effects of dramaturgy in this developmental context. To do this, I propose to introduce a conceptual alternative to the range of *c-words* circulating implicitly or explicitly in the discourse surrounding the TPU. While accounts of the Unit often describe an explicit imperative to *conformity*—perhaps, even, a form of *coercion*—it is equally common to find the invocation of a value-free *compatibility* between playwright and dramaturg in the supportive *community* Kareda envisioned for the Unit. Both extremes are potentially misleading, invoking unilateral dramaturgical imposition on one side and impartial dramaturgical neutrality on the other. Instead, I propose to theorize the operation of multiple converging pressures in and beyond the TPU through the concept of *confluence*.  

In one sense, *confluence* denotes a meeting or a merging and thus describes the structure and experience of the TPU, which was founded on the premise of “getting writers together” and enacted through the regular assembly of the group as a Unit. Crucially, too, *confluence* can also mean the *product* of such a coming together. In this way, the concept accommodates the notion of a “Tarragon play production factory,” affirming the link between process and product. At the same time, however, *confluence* may be understood as an alternative—even a corrective—to the assumption of unilateral *influence* often attached to this critique; *confluence* acknowledges and makes visible the range of pressures—both institutional and interpersonal—that fuel and shape the development process. Finally, *confluence* carries the connotation of fluidity, which signals the challenge of delineating the shaping effects of these multiple converging forces. Ultimately,

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90 It seems prudent to distinguish my use of the term from R. Murray Schafer’s concept of the *Theatre of Confluence*, a term he coined as an alternative to *total theatre* or *absolute theatre* as a means to articulate his idyllic vision for a non-hierarchical “*kind of theatre in which all the arts may meet, court, and make love,*” exemplified by his own work, *Patria* (28).
dramaturgical confluence is a slippery business. The range of factors that shape Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script* are cumulative and inter-related, drawing from and fueling a complex of interests which come together over the development of the script. This can make the influence of any single contribution difficult to pin down. However, as historian Thomas Postlewait has written, there is much to be learned from acknowledging this slipperiness: “Instead of divide and conquer, whereby we remove the intentions of two [or more]91 makers in order to attain the true aims and actions of a single maker [i.e. the playwright], we need to come to terms with the full complexity of texts and their mingling of intentions in order to see how and why such texts are delivered to us in this way” (40). The proceeding analysis will thus acknowledge the shaping influence enacted by multiple, often inextricable, and potentially invisible forces in and beyond the TPU.

The case of Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script* is ideally suited to examining the nature and implications of dramaturgical confluence in this development context. First conceived in the Unit and shaped, initially, by its particular dynamics and ways of working, *The Wedding Script* also underwent substantial changes in a second, post-TPU phase, overseen by Kareda and leading to the Tarragon premiere. Each phase of this development process involves its own dynamics and pressures; at the same time, the latter phase recognizably builds on confluences and trajectories established in the TPU. Examining changes over both phases of the development of Hannah’s *The Wedding Script*, this chapter will track the shaping contributions of multiple converging interests and pressures, asking: What role does the Unit play in shaping confluence between playwright and dramaturg? How does the context of production feed into the confluence

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91 In Postlewait’s example, the “two makers” are performers and printers, whose “multiple agendas” have shaped the surviving plays of Shakespeare (40). Applying Postlewait’s historiography to this case of developmental dramaturgy will draw in a different set of “makers”—from the dramaturg to the designer and beyond—acknowledging their multiple and overlapping agendas as contributors to “how and why” the play changes over the development process.
of sensibilities that shape the developmental trajectory of The Wedding Script? And, finally, how do these contexts and confluences affect the provocative potential of the play, including the questions the play comes to ask?

Beginning with an examination of a predominant TPU writing exercise, the proceeding analysis will first trace the ongoing effects of key areas of emphasis in the Unit as they are tied to developments related to a particular character in Hannah’s script. Tracking developments related to a single character both within and beyond the Unit will demonstrate the ongoing trajectory-shaping force of a confluence of sensibilities between playwright and dramaturg, one that is fostered through the TPU process. Following this initial analysis, I will address further changes to the script that emerge during the immediate transition between the Unit and post-Unit phases of development. These changes, tied to a period of one-on-one development between Hannah and Kareda, reveal more direct forms of dramaturgical influence, demonstrating how Hannah’s receptiveness is informed by and extends collaborative confluences developed in the TPU. Finally, I will analyze how the demands of an impending production also come together to shape The Wedding Script. This will involve demonstrating the dramaturgical influence of key production decisions, such as casting and design. These factors will also reveal the fluid and overlapping contributions of additional collaborators, from actors to designers and even audiences, demonstrating how a confluence of forces beyond playwright and dramaturg may be understood to shape—or “nudge”—the trajectory of a script.

To begin, here is a brief summary of the plot, which emerges early in the extant Unit drafts: Rupert is a young Brit about to be deported and in love with Chantelle, the nineteen year old daughter of wealthy Toronto elites who voices her anti-Establishment views early and often in the script. In the opening scene, we learn that Chantelle is unwilling to marry Rupert, despite
the solution this poses to his imminent deportation, because she loves him: “Marriage kills love,” as she puts it, “Maybe it’d be different if I didn’t love you” (492). Enter Louise, a thirty-something woman stuck in a stagnant relationship with bland, conservative businessman Bob. Louise and Rupert are housemates in an East Toronto home where they live with their divorced transgender landlady and friend, Alex. The action of the play centres on the decision of Rupert and Louise to marry, an arrangement that offers each of them what they need: Rupert secures his Canadian citizenship; and Louise gains an escape from her dull existence (the two take a post-wedding trip to England in order to shore up the legitimacy of the union). The bulk of the play leads up to the wedding night, when the question of whether to consummate the marriage (ostensibly as a measure of legal prudence) presents a threat to the tidiness of this pragmatic arrangement. Following this cliffhanger, the play picks up months later, as the return of Louise and Rupert approaches. The final scene is the homecoming, in which all five characters—including the two original couples—are reunited at Alex’s home.

Over the course of the script’s development, this basic plot remains consistent; what changes most substantially is how the play engages the subject matter signaled by its title. In its earliest iterations, The Wedding Script is marked by a humorous and potentially provocative irreverence concerning marriage, among other institutions. This cynical tone is born out in the play’s depiction of dysfunctional love relationships in the early drafts—from the opening scene

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92 This quotation is taken from the published, post-production script (PUC 1986). Elsewhere in this chapter I draw quotations from this script as well as from earlier drafts. As elsewhere in this dissertation, citations for quotes drawn from drafts are identified by file number (e.g. F6 17 will indicate a quotation taken from page 17 of a draft to be found in File 6 of the archival collection listed in my Works Cited). As with other case studies, I also offer my considered determination of the chronology of the extant drafts, divided here into the two phases of the development process: Drafts F10D*, F10A, F10B, F10C, and F7B were generated in the Unit, likely in that order (all are undated, leading to some ambiguity); Drafts F1, F4A, F2/F3 (both identical), F4B, F6, F5, F8/F7A (both identical) and F9 were produced in that order during a subsequent phase of eleven months leading to the opening of The Wedding Script on April 8, 1986.

*As with the other two case studies included in this dissertation, multiple drafts contained in the same file are lettered according to their position within the folder, from front to back.
argument of young lovers Chantelle and Rupert, to the settled misery of Louise and Bob, to the various offstage marriages discussed by the play’s characters. Rupert and Chantelle both spend considerable time, in the early drafts, lamenting their parents’ dismal unions; while Alex, whose own marriage ended as a result of her gender transition, shares her dissatisfaction with her wife’s remarriage as well as the marriage of her son. In the sardonic early drafts, the depiction of marriage in *The Wedding Script* serves more to illustrate than to recuperate the characters’ views on the institution, expressed in such lines as Chantelle’s above-quoted “Marriage kills love” or the following variations on a pronouncement made by Louise in the TPU drafts: “marriage? I think it's a crock” (F10A 9); “as far as I’m concerned it's a crock of shit” (F10B 14); and “Look. We both think marriage is an absolutely worthless, old fashioned crock” (F10D 21). In its earliest iterations, the world of the play—including the attitudes of the characters and the depiction of their circumstances—seems designed to invite audiences to interrogate the hegemony of the traditional “wedding script.” As the play develops, however, space for critique of the institution is diffused by shifts in the characters’ attitudes to their circumstances and in the tone of the play’s humour. Many dramaturgical negotiations contribute to this overall shift, both in the Unit and post-Unit phases of development. I propose to begin my analysis of these changes in the TPU, examining the implications of one of the “prescribed dramaturgical exercises” regularly employed in the Unit (Kareda “They Also Serve” 10).

As I discuss in chapter one, the “monologue exercise” was a cornerstone of the TPU process, employed in the early stages of the Unit each year.93 Colleen Murphy, in her enthusiastic contribution to Devine’s “Tarragon: Playwrights Talk Back,” describes the exercise

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93 That this exercise was central to the TPU is confirmed by my consultation of the Urjo Kareda fonds at Library and Archives Canada, where lists of the monologue assignments for various years, as well as Kareda’s notes on the value of this process, survive (Playwrights Unit Files). Drawing on his experience in multiple iterations of the Unit (first as a participant and later in a leadership role as a Playwright in Residence), Hannah also confirms that “a big focus of the early part of the Unit was the monologue” (Personal Interview).
as follows: “writing a 10-minute monologue for the weakest character in the script, then having to PERFORM it in character and answer everyone’s questions while still in character” (21, original emphasis). Although some Unit participants report that the “insistence [on] developing characters before form and image and ... justifying ...writing in terms of psychological motivation is both narrow and unhelpful” (Nigel Hunt, qtd in ibid 17), Hannah may be counted among those playwrights who embraced the monologue exercise. Using the opportunity to respond to his sense that “the marriage of convenience needed an outsider, a landlord or lady ... to comment on this act of misrule” (qtd in Czarnecki “Going down the road” 13), Hannah wrote and performed his Alex monologue in the first month of the TPU. That the exercise was influential not only in the development of the character but also in shaping Hannah’s conception of the writing process is revealed in his description of the experience: “it was so easy seeing things through her eyes. It was like 1,000 explosions going off in my head at the same time” (ibid 14). This enthusiastic account conveys Hannah’s affinity for the exercise and also indicates an early point of confluence in the dramaturgical sensibilities of Hannah and Kareda; as I argue in chapter one, the implicit imperative of the exercise to explore a character’s psychological interiority—to see things through a character’s eyes—is definitively Karedian.

Born out of a foundational TPU exercise, then, the character of Alex continues to reflect the operations of confluence between playwright and dramaturg through subsequent revisions. One salient example involves an early revision that marks a turning point in the play’s reorientation toward the subject of marriage. As Hannah recalls, “Something Urjo said that made a huge difference [was] ‘there’s no conflict at all in this for Alex’” (Personal Interview). Kareda’s suggestion at the time involved developing tensions with an off-stage character, Alex’s recently divorced son. Instead, Hannah produced a different source for the conflict,
experimenting with the potential for Alex to object to her tenants’ decision to marry. “Early on,” Hannah recalls, “Alex was on side for the wedding; she just thought it was the greatest thing ever” (ibid); but in the wake of Kareda’s request for conflict, TPU drafts reveal substantial changes to Alex’s stance on the proposition. In the earliest iteration of this new development, the conflict is driven by her practical concerns: “You two had better be awfully clear about the boundaries of this thing. What I am talking about here is finance, money. It's not a sacred institution for nothing” (F10A 19). Soon, however, Alex’s objections take on a more personal—and, crucially, moral—dimension: “I think it sounds...a little hasty and...immoral,” Alex states, adding, “I used to be married. It's a sacred institution... like Mom and apple pie.” (F10B 13). As Hannah recalls, Kareda embraced the change in Alex’s stance on the wedding “because it was funny and because it made things messier, emotionally speaking, for her” (Personal Interview).

   Significantly, the favoured emotional messiness is particularly evident in the latter of the TPU versions of this scene, where the sacredness of the institution is invoked not as a facetious reference to the financial stakes of the marriage contract but rather as a more earnest, if still playful, reflection of Alex’s feelings and experience. Alex’s “I used to be married” grounds her convictions in her personal (and, increasingly, sentimental) memories of her own lost marriage. Certainly, the choice to link Alex’s behaviour with her backstory is in keeping with the penchant for traceable character psychology that marks Karedian naturalism. It is also reflective of the shared fascination with emotional complexity and psychological interiority that was fostered through Hannah’s receptive engagement with Kareda’s monologue exercise. Unsurprisingly, it is this version of the dialogue that is developed toward production. By the penultimate draft, the scene unfolds as follows:

   RUPERT: But it is just a bloody legal institution.
   ALEX: It is not! It's a sacred institution!
LOUISE: Oh don’t be so old fashioned.
ALEX: Just because I had a sex change doesn’t mean I’m not old fashioned.
ALEX EXITS INTO THE HOUSE.
(F8 and F7A19-20)

Alex’s intensified objections represent the culmination of a trajectory which originates with Kareda’s inciting request for conflict. Tellingly, these new lines also heighten the praised features of humour and emotion. Alongside these deliberate effects, however, revisions to this scene also render the conflict more explicitly ideological. Alex’s exit line is among the “good one-liners that are delivered with relish” commended in Robert Crew’s *Toronto Star* review of *The Wedding Script*. Significantly, Crew misremembers the line: “‘Just because I have had a sex change,’ remarks Alex tartly, ‘that doesn't mean I am not *conservative’” (emphasis added).

Conceived from the outset as “an outsider” whose function is to “comment” on the action of the play, Alex occupies a privileged position in relation to the audience, framing the examination of marriage offered by *The Wedding Script*. While the change in Alex’s values is ostensibly intended to generate conflict and humour, the revision ultimately performs ideological work as well, producing an indirect—and perhaps unexamined—effect on the script’s provocative potential.

The incremental shifts that produce this reversal in Alex’s position reveal the problem of delineating dramaturgical influence in this developmental context. Ostensibly, the decision to invest Alex’s reaction to the “act of misrule” with moral indignation—even an invocation of

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94 The experience of writing Alex “from within” may have contributed to the imperceptibility of the ideological consequences of Hannah’s ongoing revisions to the character. Recounting his experience of writing Alex, Hannah tellingly states that “when I began exploring that role, she ended up defining herself” (Kaplan “Crafting characters,” emphasis added). Elsewhere, Hannah has described this process as “mystical” (Czarnecki “Going down the road” 13), a characterization which indicates a decontextualized perception of unfolding changes in his vision for the character. Hannah’s conception of a “mystical” creative inspiration reflects a potentially dangerous perception of the development process as natural or neutral, belying the shaping, ideological impact of wider forms of influence. In other words, the constructive unconscious that informs the writing of Alex is not that of the character—or of any single creator—but rather the collective product of dramaturgical confluence forged in the TPU.

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tradition—is Hannah’s, not Kareda’s. Indeed, recalling his experience working with Kareda, Hannah stresses his creative agency in playwright-dramaturg negotiations:

If he [i.e. Kareda] pointed out something in a script that needed work—and if I agreed with him, which I usually did—often what I wrote would surprise him. It usually wasn't what he had expected. It wasn't the solution or the clarification or the whatever that he might have been thinking of. My rewrites were mine, and that's what was important. He loved it when I would respond to a note of his in this way. (Personal Interview)

Despite Hannah’s confidence in the autonomy of his revisions, however, the decision to alter Alex’s moral standpoint was not made in a vacuum. Rather, like other key trajectories in the development of this play, the shift is actually shaped by a fluid and incremental merging of visions for the direction of the script. First prompted by Hannah’s “usual” agreement with Kareda’s feedback (in this case regarding the need for dramatic conflict), the unexpected revision also produced an enthusiastic response. In chapter two, I demonstrate both the cumulative influence of ongoing dramaturgical negotiations and the imperative effect of dramaturgical enthusiasm. In the context of the TPU, it is particularly easy to imagine that getting a laugh from Kareda—taking him by (happy) surprise—might ignite a playwright’s “secret hope of impressing the group’s facilitator” and thus fuel the trajectory of a particular development.

A final change to the character of Alex demonstrates how the second, post-Unit phase of development serves to sharpen the emphasis on Alex’s “old fashioned” values and, especially, the emotional and psychological motivations for her sentiments on marriage. This shift occurs through changes to Alex’s final speech, which operates as an epilogue to The Wedding Script, representing Alex’s last—and most extensive—comment on the play and its subject. From the earliest TPU drafts, the reconciliation of the play’s two couples is followed by a closing
monologue in which Alex contemplates her loneliness. During the post-Unit phase, however, the content and significance of this speech undergoes a substantial shift. In the earlier drafts, in which most of the monologue is delivered by Alex “to herself,” the speech concludes with a single line addressed to Alex’s (absent) ex-wife: “I hate this [] Susan. This going on alone” (F10D 90). In the post-Unit drafts, however, variations of a longer monologue, now addressed directly to the audience, centre more prominently on Susan. Increasingly, Alex’s epilogue becomes a sentimental lament for the loss of her marriage, which concludes, in the final script:

I always imagined we’d end up together, she and I. Despite everything. Despite me, and despite the divorce, and despite [Susan’s new husband] Walter, and despite, well, despite everything.
Because I love her so much....
My wedding day was the happiest day of my life. It was. Despite everything. (90)

Significantly, the line “My wedding day was the happiest day of my life” is transplanted, here, from an early part of the play in the TPU drafts. In the original context it registers as facetious, just another of Alex’s snappy one-liners. However, in the wake of other changes to Alex’s character, including her revised “old fashioned” view of marriage as a “sacred institution,” it reads very differently. As Hannah recalls, “it started off as a joke—‘my wedding day was the happiest day of my life’—and then it became more than that” (Personal Interview).

The transformation in the tone and significance of this line returns me to the ways in which this play opens up space for audiences to think about the institution of marriage. Set against the final scene reconciliation of the two original heterosexual couples, Alex’s final expression of longing for her lost marriage “despite everything,” serves ultimately to affirm rather than to resist the traditional “wedding script.” One might argue that the union Alex seeks with Susan expresses a challenge to heteronormativity, but what is to be made of the near-incantatory repetition of the preposition despite? Or of the fact that Alex’s gender transition,
implicit in her “despite, well, despite everything,” is deflected, precluding the chance to make Alex’s transgender subjectivity an explicit part of the conversation at this crucial moment?

Ultimately, the union Alex seeks is presented as an impossibility, and the epilogue fails to actively provoke audiences to recognize this exclusion as a matter of public, social and political concern; instead the alienation articulated by Alex is presented as personal and ahistorical while at the same time her longing, charged with a sentimental nostalgia, invites universalist, culturally affirmative identification. Of course there is still room, potentially, for the play and its final moments to invite reflection on the institution of marriage—what it means, how it works, whom it excludes. Looking back on its earliest incarnations, however, the space for this social critique is considerably diminished by revisions leading to the production script.

This containment of the provocative potential in *The Wedding Script*, including its final moments, is registered in reviews of the Tarragon production. Crew, who takes delight in what he misremembers as Alex’s self-description as conservative, seems certain in what he identifies as an explicitly recuperative moral in the play’s resolution; “Hannah’s point,” he argues, “is that however light-heartedly and casually one enters into an arrangement such as marriage, there is a price to be paid.” Ray Conlogue, by contrast, describes his disappointment with the denouement: “after so ably setting [the] characters up for profound changes [...] the resolution is somehow tame and unsatisfying” (“Tarragon’s”). For Mark Czarnecki, the unsettling gravity of the conclusion enriches the play, “conjuring up darker and subtler undercurrents of loneliness and alienation” (“Going down the road” 13). Perhaps the most salient response to the final moments of *The Wedding Script* is to be found in an *Arts Atlantic* piece written by Jeffrey Round, founder of the *Church-Wellesley Review*, Canada’s first annual journal of creative writing for the LGBTQ community. Round observes that although
Hannah prefers to think of *The Wedding Script* as a comedy [...] it is a comedy that ends with a lot of unanswered questions, and a disturbing monologue that makes us ponder the tricks of fate life may have for all of us, despite our carefully-laid plans and dreams. He admits the ending is a depressing thought for him, “that someone can have made all the right choices in life and still end up alone.” (50)

This is the closest any published account of *The Wedding Script* comes to recognizing the latent potential for social critique in the play and its final moments. Nonetheless, it stops short of pressing explicitly on the political and social implications of the speech or of the character, echoing Alex’s “despite” in its apolitical invocation of “tricks of fate.” Later, in articulating the significance of Alex’s transgender subjectivity, Round’s analysis similarly stresses the individual rather than political: “Alex is a transsexual [sic] because she wants to be like Eve Arden, not because she wants to make a statement about the human condition” (53).

Such published responses to *The Wedding Script* recall Knowles’ suggestion that the contexts for production at Tarragon can make plays, play-makers, and consequently audiences more likely “to ask, or hear, some kinds of questions than others.” It is worth noting that although the central focus of Knowles’ analysis is on the conditions of production tied to the staging of plays at Tarragon, his discussion of Jason Sherman’s *The Retreat* (premiered at Tarragon in 1995), briefly touches on the shaping influence of the TPU “at the level of the

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95 This understated account is potentially attributable to the venue for which Round was writing—*Arts Atlantic* rather than the *Church-Wellesley Review* or *Xtra!* magazine, the bi-weekly gay and lesbian publication of which Round was then-assistant editor. While this discursive context may have subdued Round’s account of Alex’s “disturbing monologue,” the discourses and practices of the Tarragon may also have influenced his reception of the play’s final moments. As a former TPU participant (1985-86), Round’s apolitical reading of Alex—along with his notable assignment of signifying power to the character rather than to the author (“Alex is a [sic] transsexual... not because she wants to make a statement about the human condition”)—may be understood to draw on his own experience of the exercises and emphases characteristic of the Unit.
generation of the script” (Reading the Material 141). Moreover, Knowles’ assessment of the subdued provocative potential of The Retreat resonates with records of audience response to The Wedding Script: while the play presented “the tools for a critique […] within the Tarragon context it failed to push the point, or to challenge the audience to in fact make such a critique” (ibid 144, original emphasis). It is important to note, however, that as playwrights working within the discursive and material contexts of the Tarragon, Sherman and Hannah were differently positioned as participants in the development process. Sherman came to his work on The Retreat as a seasoned playwright, with eight plays already produced and previous experience working at Tarragon. Hannah, like many of the TPU participants over the decades, was new to playwriting when Kareda invited him to join the Unit. Hannah had written one earlier play on his own, Rubber Dolly, and his description of this first foray into playwriting is revealing: “I had no concept of what I was doing—I didn’t understand the process of writing a play at all” (qtd. in Czarnecki “Going down the road” 14).

Where Hannah first learned “the” process for writing a play, then, was in the TPU, to which he was invited on the strength of potential Kareda perceived in Rubber Dolly, specifically, “a real writer’s [ability to] make you see a character from different angles” (Kareda qtd. in Czarnecki “Going down the road” 14). As illustrated in the development of the character of Alex, Hannah’s experience in the Unit served to foster a shared fascination with dramatic subtext and interiority, informing a confluence between playwright and dramaturg which extended into and fueled the subsequent phase of development. This post-Unit phase officially began at the

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96 Sherman was a participant in the 1992 TPU and took part in later iterations of the Unit as part of his role as a Tarragon Playwright in Residence. During his first experience as a TPU participant Sherman worked primarily on his sixth play, Three in the Back, Two in the Head, but Kareda’s extant correspondence also confirms that “it was while he was a member of the Unit… that Jason began developing the play that has now grown into The Retreat” (Letter to Valerie D’Antonio et al.).
Recalling the shift between the two phases of the development process, Hannah offers the following description: “During the Unit, there was not always time to read everybody's work and discuss it, which could be frustrating. What was great about Banff or about talking with Urjo one-on-one was how immediate and focused it all was” (Hannah email).

From the first extant draft of the post-Unit phase of development, this intensified dramaturgical focus is evident; I find more questions—as well as explicit suggestions—in the margins of these drafts. In this phase, changes to the script follow a pattern of inquiry and revision akin to that which is traced in the preceding chapter. Strikingly, many of these negotiations also reflect similar dramaturgical preoccupations—and in some cases produce similar outcomes—to those that occurred in the development of Chairs and Tables. This is particularly noticeable in Kareda’s responses to the relationship between Louise and Bob. In the earliest drafts of The Wedding Script, the opening scene highlights Louise’s dissatisfaction with the relationship at multiple points in the dialogue, including her quite explicit statement: “[S]ometimes I just wish I could end it all. Just say, ‘Sorry, but the last five years of our lives have been a total mistake” (F10B 10). The first Banff draft expands this depiction of a dysfunctional relationship. Establishing literary aspirations for Louise, Hannah includes an indication that Bob is unsupportive of her writing: “Bob calls it my hobby,” she reports in the opening scene (F1 15). Despite these details, Kareda’s notes in the first Banff draft include the observation that Louise’s “relationship with Bob tends to disappear” (F1 9), signaling an interest

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97 The 1984-85 TPU ended in late March or early April of 1985. Records confirm that the 1985 Playwrights’ Colony ran from April 22 to June 7 (Parkinson). The first post-Unit draft of The Wedding Script (F1) is dated just two days after the start of the Colony, April 24 1985. Two subsequent drafts were generated there: F4A (dated May 13 1985) and F2/F3 (both identical and marked “Banff draft: 1 June, 1985”).

98 The opening scene also establishes that Louise “moved out [of her shared apartment with Bob] three months ago” because it “was never home” (F10 B 10).
in some further development of this aspect of the script. Elsewhere, Kareda’s question “why does she want to come back to Bob?” (F1 101) intimates the expectation that developments in the relationship might serve not only to make it more visible but also more sympathetic.

Subsequent revisions reflect a shift in Hannah’s conception of the relationship, revealing his receptiveness to Kareda’s implicit assumption that Louise does in fact “want to come back to Bob.” This shift is registrable, for example, through revisions made to a scene in which Bob offers his own marriage proposal in response to Louise’s plan to wed Rupert. In the TPU drafts, Louise’s answer is immediate and dismissive: “Of course not, don’t be ridiculous” (F10D 20). By the final script, however, the subtext is “messier, emotionally speaking”: “Oh, Bob, not now.... why? [...] Well, I suppose I could thi... No, I don’t have time to think it over” (21). While Louise’s early response establishes the notion of marrying Bob as “ridiculous,” the final version, with its “not now,” intimates an openness to—even a past longing for—marriage with Bob. So much for considering the institution itself “an absolutely worthless old-fashioned crock”! In this way—by incremental nudgings—the deliberate portrayal of a dysfunctional relationship, such as that found in the more cynical TPU and early Banff drafts, gives way to a more sympathetic and sentimental portrait of Bob and Louise. Marriage becomes less an object of scorn or ridicule than an object of longing, not just for Alex but for other characters as well. Such small revisions make a big difference to actors’ perception of subtext and subsequent delivery and, in turn, to audience response. Moreover, the development of the Louise-Bob relationship along sympathetic lines ultimately contributes to the way audiences are positioned to feel about the heteronormative and cisgender-normative (re)unions that occur in the play’s final moments. These changes serve not only to subdue the cynicism of *The Wedding Script* but also to generate the backdrop of naturalized heterosexual and cisgender couplings against which Alex delivers her final speech.
Before proceeding to a wider range of confluent pressures tied to the transition from Unit to post-Unit phases of development, it is worth tracking an additional instance of one-on-one negotiation that emerged through Kareda’s “immediate and focused” attention to the script at the Banff Playwrights Colony. The second Banff draft features a new plot twist, following Louise’s return to Toronto. In the revised scene Louise confides to Alex that she had been pregnant when she travelled to England post-wedding. Asked by Alex if the baby was Bob’s, Louise’s answer in this draft is “Of course it was Bob’s!” (F4A 95). Certainly, this addition may be understood as a response to Kareda’s interest in the Louise-Bob relationship; it makes a viable answer to his question “why does she want to come back to Bob?” Significantly, the new development captures the imagination of Kareda, who responds with an interrogatively phrased suggestion—“Why not Rupert’s?” (F4A 95)—which is taken up in Hannah’s next draft. Once again, then, the one-on-one exchange of feedback and revision that marked this phase of the process draws on the confluent preoccupation with psychological complexity (or emotional messiness) fostered in the TPU. Once again, too, the change serves to nudge the script toward a less provocative outcome. As I establish above, the consummation of the immigration marriage was part of the plot of The Wedding Script from the beginning of the TPU. Following Hannah’s implementation of Kareda’s suggestion, however, the significance of this plot point is altered, creating room for readings of the play which focus on the sobering (and recuperative) consequences of a transgression once conceived as a subversive “act of misrule.” Thus Crew can identify a culturally affirmative moral in The Wedding Script: “that however light-heartedly and casually one enters into an arrangement such as marriage, there is a price to be paid.”

Tracking the one-on-one negotiations of the post-Unit phase of development reveals relatively direct instances of Kareda’s dramaturgical influence. That Hannah was particularly
receptive to Kareda’s feedback at this stage is attributable, at least in part, to the foundational confluences of sensibility cultivated in the TPU. Beyond this, an awareness of the impending production also informed the transition between the Unit and post-Unit phases of development, introducing new confluent pressures for both playwright and dramaturg. As Hannah recalls, this transition actually began several weeks before the TPU ended.\(^9^9\) It was also accompanied by a noticeable change in the nature of Kareda’s feedback:

One day at the Unit, everything I brought in [Kareda] had big problems with. Urjo said he wanted a meeting with me. I was really thinking that when I got to Urjo’s office it would be this big meeting with the principal. Because he’d been so supportive and then.... When we had the meeting that’s when he said he wanted to produce it. All of his concerns were because it was going that direction. (Hannah, Personal Interview)

Hannah’s recollection echoes MacIvor’s observation of new pressures attendant on “taking the play from the Unit into production.” Like MacIvor, Hannah too was affected by the heightened stakes of this rare opportunity. As he puts it, “Suddenly, my entire life changed with that meeting” (ibid).

If Hannah’s life changed, so did his play. Asked whether “knowing it was slated for production really shaped the decisions that [he] made from that point forward,” Hannah’s response is immediate: “Oh my god yes” (ibid). Likewise, Kareda’s dramaturgy was affected by an awareness of the impending production. Above, I have traced some of the plot and character developments that emerged from Kareda’s “immediate and focused” attention to the script post-TPU. Certainly, these changes and the recuperative nudgings they enact may be understood as

\(^{99}\) As mentioned in an earlier footnote, the Unit ended in late March or early April of 1985. Hannah’s recollection that the invitation to stage \textit{The Wedding Script} at Tarragon came in January of that year is corroborated by a letter sent by Kareda to Fran Gebhard, Head of the Banff Playwrights’ Colony, dated 15 January 1985 and seeking Hannah’s admission to the Banff workshop to continue the development of the script.
shaped (consciously or unconsciously) by expectations and traditions tied to the “Tarragon play.” Strikingly, however, what Hannah recalls most strongly about Kareda’s feedback in the wake of the decision to produce *The Wedding Script* is not a stylistic or ideological imperative but a practical one: “Then, Urjo’s questions, they were practical questions” (ibid). As I discuss in chapter one, Morwyn Brebner also describes Kareda’s “concise way with practical dramaturgy,” acknowledging how the demands of production informed Kareda’s requests for changes to her script, *Music for Contortionist* (qtd. in Rudakoff “Seeding the Field” 16, emphasis added). In both cases, however, the playwright’s perception of dramaturgical feedback as purely “practical” obscures the fact that revisions tied to production can also contribute to shifts in the potential for meanings generated by a script. Like other negotiations traced thus far, many of the production decisions made by Kareda and Hannah exert considerable—and often unexamined—dramaturgical and ideological influence.

Casting, for example, is an ostensibly practical condition of production that often plays a determining role in how and what a play communicates. In the case of Alex, casting decisions may be added to the complex negotiations that inform both the writing of the character and her contribution to the production of meaning. As Hannah recalls, the question of who to cast in the role of Alex arose quite early in the process, likely before he and Kareda set out for Banff, at a party held as part of Tarragon’s inaugural Spring Arts Fair. Raising this practical question in

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100 I have found evidence of this uncommonly early contemplation of casting in the surviving records of other development processes undertaken by Kareda. Records of the development of Deborah Kimmett’s *Miracle Mother*, for example, which was first developed in the 1991-92 TPU and produced in May 1993, include a copy of the script dated April 1992 with notes on casting written by Kareda on the inside cover. Among the names listed for the character of Kathleen is Maria Ricissa, who would ultimately come to play the role 13 months later (F6). As I argue below, such choices had the potential to function dramaturgically, adding to the confluence of factors that might “nudge” a script, often imperceptibly, in the direction of a “Tarragon play.”

101 I have been unable to confirm the exact date of the 1985 Spring Arts Fair. Hannah’s tentative recollection is that it occurred before he and Kareda left for the Banff Playwrights’ Colony (Personal Interview); Andy McKim helps to corroborate this, recalling that a remount of short plays (“Office Games”), first performed as part of the Spring Arts Fair, prevented him from attending the Banff Playwrights’ Colony with Hannah and Kareda (Personal Interview).
conversation, Kareda’s suggestion for the role was Jackie Burroughs, who had recently played
the cold and self-centred matriarch Lomia in Tarragon’s production of Judith Thompson’s *White
Biting Dog*. As it turns out, Hannah’s response was to reject Kareda’s suggestion. Instead, he
looked around the party and pointed out Patricia Hamilton, the actor who would ultimately take
on the role of Alex. Recalling what informed this choice, Hannah says he was drawn to Hamilton
because “she’s funny... [and] she’s got a great big generous heart” (Personal Interview).

That Hannah had the opportunity to select the actor in this case reflects one of Kareda’s
strongly held dramaturgical convictions outlined in chapter one: that “[t]he first production of a
new play—the culmination of the development processes—has to be the writer’s production,
presenting the writer’s vision of the play” (“They Also Serve” 8, original emphasis). At the same
time, Hannah’s desire for Alex to be “funny,” with “a great big generous heart,” may be
understood to be shaped by Kareda’s praise, in the TPU, for developments tied to the emotional
complexity and humour of the character. Ultimately, the choice to cast Hamilton both emerges
from and extends the trajectories of development that began in the Unit. The warmth of her
portrayal, for example, contributes to the reception of Alex as “the compassionate, witty anchor
to which the other’s cling” (Conlogue “Tarragon’s”). More than one journalist describes Alex as
the “den mother” figure in the ensemble (Crew; Round 50), a phrase which signals Alex’s
supervisory role and even, through its connotative link to the Boy Scouts organization, her
increasing function as moral arbiter and authority, guarding the pack and guiding them (and the
audience) to conclusions about right and wrong. Moreover, the role of mother connotes a certain
voluntary self-sacrifice that might ease audience anxieties about Alex’s fate at the end of the
play.

102 “Den Mother” is the name applied in the Boy Scouts organization to female leaders of scout groups when women
were first allowed to register for the role in 1936. The gender-neutral term “den leader” is now preferred.
(http://www.scouting.org/ScoutSource/CubScouts/Leaders/About/History.aspx).
Hannah himself uses the phrase “den mother” in a promotional interview for *The Wedding Script* (Kaplan “Crafting characters”). Tellingly, he goes on to describe the shaping, creative confluence of actors’ contributions to his writing process: “I discover the characters as I create them. Then I watch the actors, learning and discovering more things about them as they work... the actors help with the creative process” (ibid). Confluences within the TPU produced Hannah’s early discoveries in creating the role of Alex, which then contributed to his crucial casting decision; in turn, the early selection of Hamilton (roughly a year before the play premiered) shaped the ongoing development of the character. The sentimentality of Alex’s final speech, for example, may be understood as a partial consequence of Hannah’s casting choice. As Hannah recalls, it was the final monologue in particular that persuaded Hamilton to take the role (Personal Interview), and its development toward a much more introspective expression of longing and regret, “conjur[ing] up... undercurrents of loneliness and alienation,” may reflect what Hannah “discovered” through Hamilton’s approach to performance. An acting course offered by Hamilton at Tarragon the following year reveals her indebtedness to naturalistic traditions, intimating the confluence of her training with the “Tarragon aesthetic” and with Kareda’s own convictions regarding dramatic characters created “from within.” Titled “Finding the Centre,” Hamilton’s course lists Uta Hagen’s *Respect for Acting* as the source of its exercises and is advertised to undertake “work on the self as the raw material of character choices” (“Course Offerings”).

The notion of the actor’s subjectivity or “self” as a contributor to performance raises yet another crucial implication for negotiations tied to casting the role of Alex. It is of considerable significance that during these negotiations the possibility of casting a transgender actor was not taken into consideration. That Hannah saw “his” Alex in Hamilton speaks, perhaps, to the range
of actors available to him for consideration at a party thrown by the Tarragon and thus populated by actors and others associated with the Tarragon family. Certainly, casting a transgender actor in the role of Alex would have had considerable impact on the ongoing writing of the character as well as its performance and reception, as I discuss below. That a decision made casually at a party should have such lasting effects illustrates the unconscious operation of confluence in these negotiations. It also affirms the dramaturgical implications of ostensibly “practical” decisions tied to production.

Tracking the negotiations that led to the final production design for *The Wedding Script*—a single, fixed “trompe l’oeil, super-realist backyard setting” (Conlogue “Tarragon’s”)—will further illuminate the confluences informing the “practical” dramaturgy of this play. Like casting, set design usually becomes a factor late in the process of developing and producing new plays; nonetheless, a playwright’s conception of dramatic setting can be a formative concern, often with considerable dramaturgical implications. Extant TPU drafts reveal that in the earliest stages of the Unit Hannah envisioned *The Wedding Script* unfolding on multiple sets. For the most part, Hannah locates the action in various rooms in and around Alex’s Riverdale home. Among these settings more suited to realism, however, there exists a noteworthy exception: a scene titled, in its earliest iteration, “THE BANNS,” in which Rupert and Louise announce to their respective partners their intention to marry. The stage directions for the earliest version of this scene read: “These two conversations—RUPERT and CHANTELLE’S and LOUISE and BOB’S—take place at different places but they are played simultaneously, and very fast” (F10A15). The lack of specificity in Hannah’s “different places” implies a fluid, unlocalized setting for these two conversations. Stage directions found at the conclusion of the overlapping dialogue indicate that lighting effects were part of Hannah’s early vision for achieving this fluid treatment.
of time and place. The direction “Lights out on CHANTELLE and BOB” is followed immediately—without a scene change—by dialogue in which Louise and Rupert trade accounts of their respective arguments. It is worth observing that these effects are characteristic of Hannah’s earlier play, Rubber Dolly.\textsuperscript{103} That Hannah experimented with similar staging ideas in this Unit-phase scene establishes that his early vision for The Wedding Script did not necessarily preclude anti-realist elements. Indeed, a version of this scene is retained in the final TPU draft; and it is here—at a stage when Kareda had determined to program the play in his upcoming season—that the unlocalized setting is flagged for dramaturgical attention.\textsuperscript{104}

In the final TPU draft of The Wedding Script, next to the opening stage directions for Louise and Rupert’s post-banns debriefing, there is a handwritten note in the margin which reads: “What about giving this scene a realistic context so that the 4 of them are actually together but talking so they won’t be overheard. (Or maybe cut this scene and put info elsewhere)” (F7B 21). The handwriting is neither Hannah’s nor Kareda’s; rather, it belongs to Andy McKim, a recent addition to the Tarragon family, who participated in the TPU workshops as part of a dramaturgy apprenticeship.\textsuperscript{105} That the comment came from McKim is confirmed by a second version of this scene tucked into the final TPU draft. This inserted revision, which features the same dialogue as its predecessor, now opens with the stage direction “Rupert, Louise, Chantelle,  

\textsuperscript{103} In the published script, Hannah’s “General Notes on the Set” read, “Lighting is crucial in ‘Rubber Dolly.’ The set should be as simple as possible.”

\textsuperscript{104} Of course, it is possible that it was flagged orally at an earlier stage. A tantalizing possibility is that this might have been the new material that Kareda critiqued in the Unit before the fateful meeting when he proposed to produce The Wedding Script, but Hannah can no longer recall what it was that prompted criticism that induced his “meeting with the principal” apprehensions.

\textsuperscript{105} The 26 week apprenticeship, funded by the Ontario Arts Council, consisted of: reading and discussing script submissions with Kareda; observing and, later, participating in Kareda’s meetings with playwrights; and coordinating the 1984-85 Playwrights Unit, in which Hannah was a participant. At the end of this funding period, Kareda and Mallory Gilbert “houndéd foundations for donations toward a salary and finally brought Andy back at Tarragon from September 1985 through February 1986, as associate dramaturge” (“Letter to Bill Lord”).

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and Bob are standing on the deck. The next evening. The scene starts off like a shot.” Hannah’s handwritten note, attached to the revision, reads: “Andy: Something like this?” (F7B insert).

The fact that the comment came not from Kareda but from McKim adds to my evolving analysis of dramaturgical confluence in this case study. McKim served as a dramaturgical assistant in the 1984-85 TPU and ultimately directed *The Wedding Script*. Kareda’s correspondence from the period stresses McKim’s influential role in both phases of the play’s development. In one letter he writes, “I know the writers in the Playwrights Unit depend on [McKim] very much. He has been working very well with Don Hannah, for instance, on *The Wedding Script*” (“Letter to Fran Gebhard”); in another he describes McKim’s later role as director of *The Wedding Script* as “the culmination of an eighteen-month development program in which Andy has had huge input” (“Letter to Bill Lord”). Given this confirmation of his influence over the play, it is of considerable significance that McKim’s involvement began as part of a dramaturgy apprenticeship—one which started “virtually at the same time as the Unit” (McKim, Personal Interview). While Hannah was learning “the process of writing a play” in the TPU, McKim was learning the process of developmental dramaturgy.106

Significantly, McKim’s was the first such apprenticeship that Kareda took on, despite having been “besieged... by requests” following his appointment as artistic director (Kareda “Letter to Bill Lord”). Recalling the meeting that landed him this exceptional opportunity, McKim describes the immediate affinity between them: “Urjo and I were best friends and some of that was gestating even in that first meeting. When you feel good with someone, you can feel good really quickly [...]. We’re different in some respects, but in many respects we’re similar creatures and I think he sussed that and he sussed that I would be a good partner” (Personal Interview). Kareda’s willingness to mentor McKim reflects the confluence of sensibilities at the

106 Kareda recounts McKim’s arrival at Tarragon “keen to pick up dramaturgical skills” (“Letter to Bill Lord”).
heart of this long-running and generative partnership. The period of training for McKim that overlapped with the development of *The Wedding Script* marked the foundation of this relationship, building on and fueling these shared sensibilities. Describing the earliest days of McKim’s apprenticeship, Kareda writes that “Andy was present at all my meetings with playwrights, first as an observer, and then gradually, with growing confidence, offering his views” (“Letter to Bill Lord”).

That McKim evolved his dramaturgical confidence gradually over the period in which he was involved in *The Wedding Script* unsettles any historical certainty about exactly whose views McKim’s handwritten comment records. While the suggestion that Hannah place his characters in a consistently “realistic context” may reflect McKim’s own thinking about the play, it may equally represent a record of Kareda’s feedback during the workshop. Or something in between. McKim’s contributions to the Unit, including this comment, may be understood to draw from and evolve the confluence of sensibilities that earned him his position at Tarragon. Indeed, while McKim stresses both differences and similarities in his relationship with Kareda, Hannah’s recollection affirms a merging of tastes and approaches between mentor and protégé: “There were times you couldn’t separate one from the other” (Personal Interview). These complex dynamics of training and taste blur the lines of dramaturgical influence in the development of *The Wedding Script* while paradoxically illustrating what the blurriness cannot conceal: that the Tarragon’s complex institutional frame—including its selection principles and training programs, among other conditions of development and production—silently produced confluences of

107 A partnership is indeed what this mentorship grew into. As McKim has put it, “He began as my mentor and gradually I grew into a co-equal relationship with him” (qtd in Breon 6). After his 26-week dramaturgy internship (paid for by Theatre Ontario), private funding was obtained for McKim to stay on as associate dramaturg for a limited stint from September 1985 to February 1986. Following this, an 18 month Associate Artistic Director training program, funded by the Ontario Arts Council, ultimately lead to McKim’s permanent place at Tarragon under the title of Associate Artistic Director. (Kareda “Letter to Bill Lord”) a position he held from 1986 until 2007.
sensibility not only between dramaturg and playwright, but among other influential collaborators as well.

Ultimately, the inserted revision in the final Unit draft confirms Hannah’s decision to set the previously unlocalized scene in the more “realistic context” suggested by McKim. At Banff, just a few weeks later, the consequences of this revision can be traced through many of the focused, one-on-one negotiations between Hannah and Kareda (McKim did not accompany them to Banff\(^{108}\)). Chief among these is the decision, made by the second Banff draft, to set the entire play in the single, realistic location of Alex’s backyard deck. As Hannah recalls, this choice was jointly determined, arising from a mutual awareness of the impending production: “Once we were going to put it on the next season, that’s when we decided—and I say we, I don’t think it was me [or] Urjo, it was we—setting [the entire play] outside was the way to go” (Personal Interview). From this stage forward, the set becomes the focus of considerable attention, with detailed descriptions of Alex’s backyard deck emerging in subsequent drafts. As with other practical decisions tied to the needs of production, these developments are imbricated in the larger aesthetic and ideological shifts that occur over the development of the play—shifts which are, in turn, shaped by key confluences of sensibility established in the TPU.

One such trajectory can be traced through a series of developments that enact a strikingly naturalistic link between environment and character. By the final script, key features of Alex’s backyard deck come to resonate strongly with characters in the play, including the “emotional messiness” of their pasts, reflecting Kareda’s view that “writers [should] think of the set as a character” (Between 22). One example of this trajectory begins with a new set detail introduced in the stage directions of the fifth post-Unit draft: “On the deck, a folk art wind toy: A propeller

\(^{108}\) A list of participants in the 1985 Banff workshop records Hannah and Kareda, but not McKim; As I discuss in an earlier footnote, McKim confirms that he missed the Banff workshop for The Wedding Script.
works a simple mechanism that makes two woodcutters saw away at a tiny log” (F6 1). Within two drafts, a revision made to one of Alex’s key speeches imbues this decorative feature with greater significance. During the monologue, which describes the day Alex first became conscious of her gender identity, stage directions indicate that she “POINTS TO [the] WINDMILL,” revealing that Susan “picked that up at an auction” the weekend of her life-changing realization (F8 and 7A 38). With this revision, the windmill becomes more than just an ornamental piece of outdoor decor; it is transformed into a symbol of both a key turning point in Alex’s past and of the loss associated with it. This development has considerable implications for meanings generated in performance, particularly since the play unfolds entirely on a single set. As part of the backdrop for Alex’s epilogue, for example, this symbol may be understood to inform the portrait of longing, loneliness, and alienation perceived by so many reviewers.

An arrangement of potted plants adorning Alex’s backyard deck similarly evolve to operate symbolically as well as decoratively. By the final draft, these plants signal a change in Bob during Louise’s absence: he has quit his job at the bank and now works for the Toronto Parks department; in his free time, he nourishes Alex’s plants, helping them to flourish in ways that counter his previous stifling of Louise. Moreover, the plants form the basis of a bond between Alex and Bob. They help win her over, and in so doing help win the audience as well, adding to the sympathetic portrait of his reunion with Louise in the final moments. The trajectory for these revisions has its roots, so to speak, in the second Banff draft. Although there is relatively little about the foliage in Hannah’s expanded description of the backyard setting, Kareda’s note at the top of the first page, written in large letters and underlined, reads: “Bob’s plants” (F4A 1). Evidently, the subject was flagged for a dramaturgical conversation—one that is unfortunately lost to posterity. The outcome of this lost conversation is evident, however, in
developments which emerge in subsequent drafts. The next draft, for example, introduces horticulture as the foundation of the growing bond between Alex and Bob. Alex says to Louise: “We sit around here every night and talk cross-pollenization [sic] like it was gossip. And if we ever go ahead with a greenhouse up there on the flat part of the roof, we’ll be unbearable” (F2 and F3 86). Tied explicitly to Bob’s transformation in the play, the plants thus become symbols of growth and personal flourishing.

Fascinatingly, however, an ultimately excised line illustrates how the plants also paradoxically function, in the deep dramaturgy of the play, as more conservative symbols of immutability. In the second Banff draft—the same one which features Kareda’s note emphasizing “Bob’s plants”—Kareda responds to a line delivered by Chantelle in the final scene—“Do you think people really change really? ... I feel like they grow in amazing directions like plants, but they have these roots that don't move.” In the margin, Kareda’s note reads: “sounds like a [sic] Alex thought” (F4A 83). In this rare case, Hannah elects not to take up Kareda’s suggestion; the line remains Chantelle’s until it is finally cut several drafts and several months later. What prompted its ultimate excision is unclear; certainly, the line has the potential to ring false in the mouth of an actor, however useful it may have been to the writer and dramaturg in exploring subtext and theme. What is significant about the line and the negotiations surrounding it is the insight it offers into the collaborators’ ongoing thinking about the play and its potential meanings. In a play which features characters challenging traditional marriage only to ultimately reunite in conventional couplings, and which ends with a transgender character lamenting the possibility of a love of her own, this ultimately excised line of dialogue seems, on one level at least, to position the plants as a figurative rationalization of this impossibility, a symbol of rooted, immutable tradition. Indeed, despite the fact that neither Chantelle nor Alex
delivered the line in performance, Conlogue’s review registers the plants as symbols of balance and stability in the play, grounding the potentially disruptive narratives of its characters. For him, the set establishes the world of the play as “a sunny, settled neighbourhood in which some very unsettled people try to take root, like the plants Bob lovingly arranges on the steps of the deck” (“Tarragon’s”).

Conlogue’s comments register the potential for set design to contain the provocative—or “unsettling”—possibilities in Hannah’s script. Crucially, this introduces the designer as yet another source of shaping confluence in the practical context of production. In the case of The Wedding Script, the designer of both costumes and set was Sue LePage, a prominent member of the Tarragon family.109 Acknowledging her influential contribution to the play, McKim describes LePage as “one of the most sophisticated dramaturgical designers” (Personal Interview); this view was shared by Kareda, who has said that “[f]or Sue, I think design is a kind of dramaturgy” (Rudakoff, Between 22).110 Responding to the decision jointly reached by Hannah and Kareda to set the entire play on Alex’s deck, LePage’s “trompe l’oeil, super-realist” design takes the early, Unit-phase request for “realistic context” to its extreme. Indeed, LePage’s backyard deck setting, featuring “marks on Alex’s brick wall where an old shed used to be,” was constructed in such detail that, according to Conlogue, the “opening night audience was tempted to proceed right past their appointed seats and straight up on Alex’s cedar deck” (“Tarragon’s”). Strikingly, other accounts corroborate this seemingly hyperbolic claim. As McKim recalls, “there was an audience member one night who went to the front of house and said that they really loved the play but

109 As Robin Breon has observed, LePage designed “at least one [production] for every season of Kareda’s tenure” (6).
110 As Kareda also states, “some of the most astute dramaturgy [he] encountered on new plays [came] from designers. They have to solve problems and meet the challenges of the script before the play gets into rehearsal” (Rudakoff Between 21). Notably, Kareda once invited LePage to join the 1989-90 Playwrights Unit as the TPU’s “associate artist.”
they were perplexed and they wondered how we convinced our neighbour to let us use their porch” (Personal Interview). Exaggerated or not, the effect described in this repeated anecdote is deserving of Conlogue’s descriptor “super-realist.”

Certainly, LePage’s design, with its “rich and convincing sense of its particular situation” (Conlogue “Tarragon’s”), reflects Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility as explored in chapter one, resonating in particular with his assertion that “the theatre’s strength comes from its history as the most human and intimate of the art forms, the one whose experience is, no matter how elevated, still on a human scale which is comparable to our own. (In any theatre, if you walked onto the stage, you would be the same size as the characters. You breathe the same air)” (Letter to Playwright X,111 original emphasis). Reading this, it is easy to posit Kareda’s affinity for the intimacy and scale of LePage’s set, as well as its effect of “tempting audiences to proceed right past their appointed seats and straight up onto Alex’s cedar deck.” Crucially, Hannah too “loved the set” (Personal Interview). Moreover, the playwright’s “Note on Costumes and Set” in the published version of The Wedding Script conveys the significance of LePage’s design to his final vision for the play: “Because ‘Wedding Script’ is a naturalistic comedy, it is important that the characters wear clothing, not ‘costumes,’” he writes, adding, “It is important that we feel we are in a city while, at the same time, there be something of a haven of green in this little yard” (i). The anticipation of a “super-realist” design for The Wedding Script is thus imbricated in Hannah’s evolving realist/naturalist conception of the script, including his ongoing development of the “set as a character.” In this way, the contributions of LePage operate as part of the dramaturgical confluence that produced The Wedding Script. Her design was informed by a range of factors, including the traditions of the Tarragon, the sensibility of its artistic director, and key script decisions negotiated between Hannah and Kareda. In turn, the design enacted its

111 As I note in chapter one, the recipient of this letter has requested anonymity.
own shaping influence on the play and its reception, inviting audiences warmly into a familiar and domestic space in keeping with Hannah’s emerging vision for the play and its world.

Nonetheless, it is important to observe that the final version of *The Wedding Script* retains the potential to disrupt the conventions of realism/naturalism. As I discuss in the preceding chapter, established critiques of dramatic realism—particularly those which emerged in the 1980s, when *The Wedding Script* was produced—argue for realism’s inherent support of hegemonic norms. More recently, in *New Canadian Realisms*, Roberta Barker and Kim Solga have challenged this critique, identifying key features that can work to foreground the constructedness of the onstage illusion. Among these effects, Barker and Solga cite direct address (8). Strikingly, this feature is among the significant changes to Alex’s epilogue between the Unit and post-Unit versions of the script. As I establish earlier in this chapter, the TPU drafts have Alex speak her shorter, less sentimental monologue “to herself,” while in later versions Alex’s lonely lament is addressed directly to the audience. Above, my analysis is focused on the revised content of this speech, drawing on reviewers’ responses to the final moments in support of a reading of the culturally affirmative effects of this denouement. Given the important observations of Barker and Solga, however, Alex’s direct address to the audience in these closing moments may also be read as an opportunity for provocation.

As a closing speech—with no need to return to the fictional world of the play—Alex’s final address to the audience suggests a potent liminality. In particular, it creates the opportunity to question the “real world” hegemony of a traditional wedding script that leaves Alex finally alone. This provocative potential inherent to moments of slippage between onstage and real worlds has been usefully theorized by Robert Weimann in the context of early modern epilogues, where the shift “from fictional representation to theatrical reality, from the assumed identity of
the role... to the reality of the body” lies at the heart of the epilogue’s potential to interrogate dominant, socially inscribed ideologies (Author’s Pen 221). In the case of Alex’s closing speech, the provocation of direct address held the potential not only to disrupt the onstage illusion, but also to draw on what Weimann terms the “performative surplus on the side of the actor” (Secretly Open 190), an effect which would have been particularly potent with a transgender actor in the role. Had such a casting choice been made, the “performative surplus” might have worked to remind audiences that Alex’s exclusion from the unions depicted onstage carried implications beyond the represented fiction. In other words, Alex’s address could have functioned to articulate social constraints not only for the character, but also for the actor portraying her, inviting audiences to question this disparity and the institutions that produce it.

Certainly, the latent potential for such a provocation was there. Even LePage’s “superrealist” set design included “put[ting] the audience over on stage left a bit, so that the audience wasn’t just looking at it in a proscenium arch kind of relationship [and] there was actually a kind of semi-forum feeling” (McKim Personal Interview), a configuration which might, as the description “semi-forum” indicates, function to promote social debate. Ultimately, however, this was not the dominant effect of the Tarragon production, as indicated by reviews of The Wedding Script which only obliquely reflect the social and political questions underlying the surface of these closing moments. As I argue above, this containment is attributable in part to the performance of Hamilton, a cisgender actor drawn to the role for the emotional poignancy (rather

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112 While I’m digressing into theories of audience-performer dynamics tied to liminal early modern stage conventions, it seems worth observing Alex’s origin as an “an outsider [whose purpose was] to comment on th[e] act of misrule.” This function recalls the theatrical privilege attendant on the conventional onstage figure of the satirical Presenter in early modern drama, a role characterized by direct address to the audience of shrewd, didactic commentary (Gibbons 66, 78, 151). It strikes me that if Alex’s snappy one-liners been developed in this vein—in other words, if her direct address to the audience occurred more consistently in the script and conveyed a more satirical perspective (perhaps in keeping with her original position of being “on side” with the marriage)—the provocative potential of the character (and of the play) might have been heightened considerably.
than the provocative potency) of Alex’s closing speech. Likewise, the seamless contiguity between real and onstage worlds evidently operated as the dominant effect of LePage’s set, apparently off-setting the potential of its “semi-forum” design. Added to this are many of the developments in the script itself—themselves informed by such factors as Hamilton’s performance and LePage’s set—which might be understood to have shaped audience expectations for a restorative rather than provocative ending.

As this analysis has shown, “practical” production decisions concerning casting and design fueled crucial trajectories in the development of The Wedding Script—often in the service of larger ideological shifts in the play. This ideological work of the practical extends beyond production considerations like casting or design; another consideration strongly marks Kareda’s dramaturgical questioning as the play evolves closer to production, affecting in turn the types of questions ultimately raised by The Wedding Script. This final practical concern is for the sensibilities of the anticipated Tarragon audience. As I discuss in chapter one, in my research into Kareda’s developmental dramaturgy I have found that two sides of the dramaturg-as-audience trope repeatedly emerge: Kareda is frequently figured as an encouraging, generous “first audience,” but just as often he is discussed as a stand-in for audiences-to-be, the extended family he knew so well and of whom he was, to quote Judith Thompson, “protective” (Personal Interview). These dual images—the playwright’s generous first audience and the theatre’s acting audience surrogate—complicate Kareda’s own oft-stressed imperative to “serve the playwright’s vision,” figuring him as, in fact, servant of both playwright and audience. Moreover, these two sides of the dramaturg-as-audience trope are not always perfectly reconcilable. What happened, for example, when the playwright’s vision included elements Kareda found incompatible with the tastes and expectations of Tarragon audiences? How did the “practical” consideration of
serving subscribers and regular Tarragon patrons—of maintaining their loyalties and (financial) support—inform his dramaturgical feedback as a production approached?

Such questions call for a further widening of the circle of confluence, acknowledging the anticipated audience—as it was understood by Kareda\textsuperscript{113}—as a final shaping factor in the development of \textit{The Wedding Script}. Thus far, this analysis has charted a range of factors that worked ultimately to produce a “satisfying and well-rounded” play (Conlogue “Tarragon’s”). Beyond these, changes in the tone and content of this comedy can also be traced to a conscious dramaturgical imperative toward audience satisfaction and “well-rounded” balance. McKim is worth quoting at length on the subject:

\begin{quote}
I think Urjo had a point of view—and I share it—that as much as we can we want to produce work that is open, vulnerable, generous, and somehow gives an audience something in recompense for whatever it is they’ve been through. The recompense could be emotional, it could be intellectual, it could be a question, but I think we would both shy away from work that gets too dark without enough to make up for where you’ve taken an audience. I really love challenging theatre, I love theatre that gives people a transformative experience, but I would certainly encourage writers to think of the power available to them if they’re able to write something that more people want to see and that still conveys a life experience or a thought about life, but in a way that makes audiences more open to receive it. (Personal Interview)
\end{quote}

To the range of options for audience “recompense” listed by McKim, I might add Judith Thompson’s observation of a characteristic feature of Kareda’s dramaturgy: the belief that “humour [...] delights and connects an audience” (“It’s My Birthday” 116).

\textsuperscript{113} For more on Kareda’s awareness of the expectations of his audience, including the traditions that informed his anticipation of their tastes as well as his revealing correspondence with individual patrons, see chapter one.
Crucially, however, not all comedy is created equal. Some jokes may fare better than others with particular audiences, and certain subjects, for certain audience members, may be no laughing matter. The imperative to “delight” Tarragon audiences, and to temper the challenge of “too dark” material with balancing levity, is indicative of Kareda’s taste for a particular type of comedy, one which is less satiric and more traditional. For Kareda, “[o]ne of the most depressing sounds you can hear in the theatre is heartless, detached laughter” (Zimmerman “Maintaining” 223). Given Kareda’s preference for humour that “connects,” it is worth observing that the cynicism of Hannah’s early drafts is frequently subject to dramaturgical scrutiny. One extended example concerns the incremental excision of the irreverent treatment of religion. TPU drafts of The Wedding Script feature several jokes in this vein, including one substantial scene in which Louise and Alex mirthfully reminisce about their attendance of a particularly disagreeable Christmas mass. Mocking the “terrible homily,” titled “God is at the Wheel of Life’s Highway,” they describe the experience as a “nightmare from the Dark Ages.” Alex makes jokes about the “cloud banks” of incense and Louise describes the Eucharist as “an occult rite with barbarism at its core.” In the end, the experience is described by Louise as transformative; she “went into that church an agnostic and crawled out two hours later a confirmed athiest [sic].” The memory is punctuated with Louise’s punch line: “and it felt absolutely wonderful” (F10C 6-9).

By the final draft, this scene is excised from the script. As Hannah recalls, “that stuff didn’t last once Alex started to talk about marriage as a sacred institution” (Personal Interview). Extant drafts confirm that the Christmas mass dialogue disappears in the wake of Alex’s “old fashioned” views, further illuminating the shaping effect of this crucial revision. Other joking references to religion are excised at later stages of development. In the Unit drafts, for example, Alex complains of her son’s wife, Claudia, describing her as a “religious ass” (F10D 75). In the
second Banff draft, Alex reveals that “[s]he’s on those book banning, no sex education, right to committees” before subjecting Claudia’s religious fundamentalism to her extended derision:

She refused to visit here, ever since the day I laughed at her. We were having a talk about Renaissance painting, of all things—that’s my idea of a safe subject to discuss with a raving fanatic—when suddenly she said that all the paintings of Adam were inaccurate. Do you know why? You wouldn’t guess in a million years. Because he didn’t have a belly button. He was born of God, not woman. Can you believe it? The idiot. [...] Susan and I did not raise our son to be a fundamentalist. (F4A 52)

This new speech is flagged by Kareda with the simple comment “cut” (F4A 52). In the next draft, Alex hates Claudia simply because she “She bans books” (F2 and F3 49). Nonetheless, a trace of religion as the basis of Alex’s low opinion of Claudia persists; the slightly revised line “Susan and I did not raise our son to be a raving fundamentalist” is transplanted to a later point in the scene (F2 and F3 50). Ultimately, however, this last vestige is excised. The line is flagged by Kareda in the penultimate draft and crossed out on the page (7B 48). By the next draft, only the secular complaint, “I hate Claudia. She bans books” remains.

The complete excision of all sacrilegious humour was evidently the product of Kareda’s preoccupations in developing the script toward production. Hannah is (and was then) an avowed atheist. Indeed, the Christmas mass scene sprang from his own experience, specifically a disappointing Christmas Eve visit to “Smokey Jimmy’s,” otherwise known as Toronto’s St. James Cathedral (Personal Interview). That it drew on autobiographical detail reveals Hannah’s stake in this particular scene; that he relishes the story to this day, referring to the Cathedral by its playful and somewhat irreverent nickname, also affirms the playwright’s orientation toward the subject of religion. Kareda, however, was more cautious. Records of his work with other

114 In a promotional article for The Wedding Script, Hannah is quoted as saying “I’m an atheist” (Devins).
playwrights reveal a tendency to question material that treats religion with irreverence. In a draft of Sherman’s *The Retreat*, for example, a line stating that Jewish mystic Sabbatai Z’vi, “fucks a Torah” prompts Kareda’s objection in the margin: “too glib” (F17 11). As it turns out, the comment was not unwarranted. Sherman’s decision to retain the line in the final script—in fact to elaborate on it substantially—raised the ire of at least one member of the Tarragon audience. A letter addressed to Kareda reads: “your description of the Messiah desecrating the Torah was totally in bad taste. I am not a religious fanatic but I found your words so sacrilegious, so vile, so totally disgusting that you should be condemned in the strongest terms” (Anonymous “Letter to Kareda re. *The Retreat*”). The writer’s attribution of the offending dialogue to Kareda recalls and further illustrates the relationship between the artistic director and his audience established in chapter one, one which was marked by Kareda’s keen awareness of and accountability to the expectations of these members of Tarragon family.

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115 Louise’s above-quoted description of the Eucharist, for example, calls to mind a moment in Thompson’s *White Biting Dog* (to be discussed in the next chapter) which Kareda once flagged in his comments: Pony’s mock-communion feast of three dead dachshunds. Likewise, in his work with Kimmett on *Miracle Mother*, lines such as “Hail Mary full of shit...shit.” (F6 27) prompt Kareda’s characteristic “Why?”

116 In the revised, final script the image of the Messiah “fuck[ing] the Torah” (which is to be included in the film-within-the-play) is the brainchild of “Hollywood”-type producer, Jeff, a product of his instinct for salacious sex. His elaborated description, which prompts the angry audience response, reads: “Think about this. Close-up on Z’vi. Says something like, ‘Oh, my love. The time has come. The time has come for us to be together, at last, at long last.’ Right? Now, long shot, Z’vi is standing by his bed. On the bed is the Torah scroll. N-just listen. He’s naked. Gets in the bed. Caresses the Torah, removes its covering, like he’s undressing it [...] he separates the scrolls, as though spreading its legs [...] Back to Z’vi, now straddling the Torah, fucking it, calling the name of God” (206).

117 As with the angry audience letter quoted in chapter one, I have made the choice to keep the identity of the letter-writer anonymous.

118 The example of Sherman’s *The Retreat* is fitting here in light of Knowles’ analysis, in *Reading the Material Theatre*, of the meanings generated by this play in its Tarragon production. In ways which parallel my own findings about the containment of subversive potential in *The Wedding Script*, Knowles finds that the personal subsumes the political in the examination of contemporary Canadian Judaism offered by *The Retreat*, reducing “issues of public morality and responsibility [...] to the psychological struggles of sympathetic, naturalistically-realized characters” (146, original emphasis). As Knowles points out, the script itself interrogates this containment of the public and political by the personal through the device of the screenplay-within-the-play. Significantly, dialogue between film producer David and screenwriter Rachel may be easily read as commentary on dramaturgical influence. Consider the following, delivered by David to Rachel while on a writer’s retreat that, as Knowles observes, bears a resemblance to the Banff Playwrights Colony (142): “I mean, you’ve written a beautiful screenplay about a man, the, the inner life, his struggle. This stuff about Israel, its, I mean [...] All I’m saying is, don’t force it to become about something” (qtd. in Knowles 145, emphasis in original script). As Knowles persuasively argues, this self-reflexivity in Sherman’s play constitutes a potential but ultimately unsuccessful disruption of the closure enacted by
Ultimately, Kareda’s responses to the potentially offensive treatment of religion in both plays reveals a shaping concern for decorum—a recognition that audience members may find certain aspects of a script, to quote the letter in response to *The Retreat*, “in bad taste.” A final extension of this concern as it relates to *The Wedding Script* is expressed through his persistent requests for the removal of offensive language. Once again, these negotiations begin in the wake of the decision to produce *The Wedding Script*. From the first post-Unit draft, Kareda’s focus on coarse language is registered in his straightforward query in the margin, “too many fucks?” (F1 1). As the premiere draws closer, expressions of this concern feature more prominently in his draft annotations. The final extant draft includes multiple revisions, realized on the page, addressing arguably gratuitous expletives: the “fucking” in “we fucking love each other” is crossed out (F9 4); a complaint about “goddam [sic] operas” is revised to “weird operas” (F9 4); “I had a fuck of a time getting here!” is replaced with “Am I ever glad to get here it’s been gross out!” (F9 11) and “fucksakes!” is switched out for “chissake” (F9 89). Finally, Chantelle’s rant against the government agent responsible for Rupert’s deportation is revised on the page—in this case, in Kareda’s handwriting—from “Fascist cowboy asshole. These creeps wipe continents off the face of the earth, but they won’t let you stay in Canada. Well, fuck them!” to “These creeps wipe continents off the face of the earth, but they won’t let you stay in Canada. Screw those cowboy fascists!” (F9 5). Hannah’s subsequent revision (inserted into the draft) restores a

the emphasis on the personal inner struggle that occurred in the final production. Knowles’ analysis cites the conditions of the production itself—the director’s emphasis on naturalistic character psychology in particular—as determining factors in this final containment, but leaves room, as I note above, for the potential that the script’s development process at Tarragon may also have contributed to the turn from a provocative to a cathartic and consequently recuperative engagement with the “politics of being Jewish in Canada in the 1990s” (142). Indeed, extant drafts of *The Retreat* support the speculation that an emphasis on character motivation and psychology precedes any negotiations between actor and director, beginning instead with Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback. In response to the “fucks a Torah” line, Kareda’s succinct objection “too glib” is followed by the suggestion: “David needs to see it as something passionate and unique” (F17 11). Kareda’s treatment of sensitive subjects—be they Jewish politics in *The Retreat* or the politics of marriage, religion, or gender identity in *The Wedding Script*—frequently follows this indirect route of containment, shifting the public to the personal.
measure of the expletive force of the original—ending “Cowboy fascists! Well, screw them!” (F9 insert 5, original emphasis)—but still omits both “asshole” and the particularly threatening “fuck.” Ultimately, while the final script retains its share of coarse language, these cuts serve to moderate the tone of the script, arguably in ways that subdue its provocative potential.

Certainly both the excision of irreverent references to religion and the softening of the language of the script serve to render the play more palatable for certain audience members. Crucially, however, these changes also contribute to an overall shift in the tone of the play and, by extension, in the expectations it sets up as a comedy. Like other developments examined in this case study, these changes have implications for the critique of marriage presented in The Wedding Script. In earlier drafts, both the cynical humour concerning religion and the liberal use of coarse language function to lend the dialogue, including Alex’s description of marriage as “a sacred institution,” a dissident edge; in the wake of their excision, such expressions register as earnest, fueling the trajectory of the play toward its reception as a “light-hearted” comedy (Crew), even a “farce” (Czarnecki “Going down the road” and Crew). Perceived in this light, remaining sites of potential critique in the script are understood by reviewers as benign comedic devices. The immigration marriage—once conceived as an “act of misrule”—is received merely as a catalyst for the comedic complications of the plot. Conlogue, for example, describes Chantelle’s objection to conventional marriage with Rupert—“Marriage kills love”—as “a quick (and unconvincing) excuse” “in order to set the play’s mechanism going” (“Tarragon’s”).

In this way, revisions tied to Kareda’s awareness of his audience and its “recompense” may be added to the confluence of forces that nudged The Wedding Script toward a more conventional, “satisfying and well-rounded” comedy. Significantly, too, the conventional structure of comedy relies on the recuperative function of marriage; closing unions resolve the
play’s conflicts, producing the anticipated happy ending. At one time, *The Wedding Script* possessed the potential to pervert\textsuperscript{119} this structure. Despite following the comedic convention of “get[ting] all his characters together on stage at once” for the closing scene, Hannah initially resists the anticipated effect that “the audience witness the birth of a renewed sense of social integration” (Frye 9). Instead, the early drafts of *The Wedding Script* feature considerable strife between the reunited couples in the closing moments, with the reconciliation between Louise and Bob presented as particularly tenuous. As I demonstrate above, however, revisions undertaken at Banff heighten the hopeful and sympathetic depiction of this relationship, resulting in a decidedly happier ending for this union. Likewise, the remaining provocation of Alex’s exclusion from this restorative ending is largely subsumed by key developments tied to comedic convention. Hannah’s anticipation of LePage’s urban pastoral setting—what Northrop Frye has termed comedy’s “green world” (10) and Hannah himself describes as a “haven of green”—further illuminates how the confluence of factors considered in this analysis serve to reframe *The Wedding Script* from a provocative critique to more traditional comedy. On the whole, as the play becomes less satirical and more conventional—and as Alex herself adopts a more “old fashioned view” of the institution—it becomes harder to offer (or to receive) the critique of marriage that was once a defining feature of *The Wedding Script*.

It is true that Hannah’s play, once “inherently provocative,” comes ultimately to “never quite provoke.” And yet how *The Wedding Script* came to evolve from a potentially subversive to a dominantly recuperative examination of marriage is more complicated than the simple claim: Kareda made it a “Tarragon play.” Cumulative changes to *The Wedding Script* arose out of a confluence of multiple shaping factors operating in this developmental context. The earliest

\textsuperscript{119} My use of the notion of dramaturgical perversion draws on Knowles’ conception of the term in *The Theatre of Form and the Production of Meaning*, discussed in greater detail in chapter four.
exercises and emphases of the TPU, the increasing input of a range of collaborators involved in production, the traditions and practices of the institution within with the development process occurred, and even the contemporary climate for new play development (including the sharply felt imperative to cater to the established expectations of audiences) all converge to shape key developments in this script. In each development, Hannah’s creative involvement is evident, but equally clear is the fluid, shaping influence of other members of the Tarragon family, including but not limited to Kareda. Moreover, these confluent forces often run fluidly together, reinforcing and reciprocally informing one another. Once two streams have merged, who can delineate the constituent parts?

And yet, if the shaping effect of dramaturgical confluence over the development of *The Wedding Script* is blurred and overlapping, the product of multiple and often mutual affinities, expectations, and intentions, that is not to say that the process within which these negotiations occurred was neutral, or that the dynamic between its primary collaborators was balanced or egalitarian. The confluence of sensibilities between Kareda and Hannah (or between Kareda and other influential collaborators) was not an accident, after all. Hannah, like all TPU participants, was invited into the Unit on the strength of potential identified by Kareda. Once there, the biases of the Unit also constituted a silent shaping force in the development of the script, encouraging an affinity of sensibilities which nudged the development along a certain line. Moreover, the unspoken pressures and imperatives of production further complicate the distribution of agency in the playwright-dramaturg relationship: to receive harsh criticism feels like a lecture from the principal; to have a play selected for production is *life-changing*. Finally, the range of additional forms of influence that converge in the context of production work collectively to privilege certain developmental outcomes over others. While this confluence relieves the burden of
unilateral influence on Kareda as an individual dramaturg, it also paradoxically indicates the widespread diffusion of his influence.

Of course, this case study represents just one particular coming together. The shaping effects of dramaturgical confluence are bound to be different in each merging. Nonetheless, tracking the development of Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script* offers new insight into the operations of workshop-based and institutional dramaturgy, presenting a challenge to charges of imposition or, to recall Ferguson’s phrase, *crushing* of playwrights in these development contexts. Instead, this analysis registers the gradual but nonetheless substantial process of dramaturgical nudging that is possible in both workshop and production contexts, demonstrating how a range of factors converge to enact changes that are not only aesthetic but also ideological. Perhaps most importantly, these incremental and cumulative forces are often invisible—both to those who allege forceful, unilateral imposition and to those who perceive only neutral encouragement. It is this invisibility which presents the greatest danger. In tracking key revisions to *The Wedding Script*, then, my aim has been to render more visible the shaping force of multiple inter-related, and converging interests.
CHAPTER FOUR

“A Dramaturgical Chimera”

“He was as integral to my development as a playwright as my hands are to my body.”

-Judith Thompson, “It’s My Birthday Forever Now” 11

Working with Judith Thompson was among the most sustained and fruitful dramaturgical relationships of Urjo Kareda’s career. Beginning at the start of his artistic directorship, Kareda’s work with Thompson stretched over the length of his tenure at Tarragon and produced five plays—White Biting Dog, I Am Yours, Lion in the Streets, Sled, and Perfect Pie—that mark a distinct phase in Thompson’s celebrated oeuvre. Thompson has described the fateful telephone call in the autumn of 1982 with which this partnership began: “Urjo...telephoned me and asked me if I was working on a new play. I said that I was, and he asked me to bring White Biting Dog in to him” (qtd in Ouzounian “Urjo Kareda”). At that stage, the script was already well underway. Indeed, in a promotional article for the production of White Biting Dog, Thompson indicates that the draft she first brought to Kareda was one she considered finished: “I had said, ‘This is it. I’m done. I’m not writing any more drafts.” (qtd in Reid 7). As it turned out, however, the meeting with Kareda sparked a new phase of development for the script. Kareda’s own account of the initial meeting and its consequences is worth quoting at length:

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120 During Kareda’s artistic directorship, Thompson famously strayed from her Tarragon “home” only once, accepting a commission from the Canadian Stage to write Habitat (2001) with Iris Turcott serving as dramaturg. Tellingly, this “issue play” anticipates a later phase in Thompson’s (post-Kareda) writing, a phase in which Turcott has acted as dramaturg on several occasions. It is also worth mentioning that although Thompson produced one additional play at Tarragon, Capture Me (2004), this work was developed with Kareda’s successor, Richard Rose, and is not part of the distinct body of work produced under Kareda’s dramaturgical influence.

121 Kareda dates the resulting face-to-face meeting to November 1982 (Letter to Linda Sword).

122 As indicated by Kareda’s recollection (quoted below) and affirmed by the archival record, the play was not yet titled White Biting Dog when Thompson first brought it to Kareda.
My collaboration with [Thompson] began during my first season at Tarragon, when she brought me a draft of the play which eventually became WHITE BITING DOG.... [T]his was an amazing theatrical sensibility at work, and I had no hesitation in making a total commitment both to the work and to its writer. We worked together long and hard—through many, many drafts, readings, revisions, and even titles—between the time of that first meeting and the exciting occasion of Tarragon’s premiere production of that work in January, 1984. (Letter to Linda Sword)

The surviving record of Thompson’s development of White Biting Dog affirms the “long and hard work” of creating the play, both before and after she introduced it to Kareda. Of the seventeen full or partial drafts that are extant, roughly half were produced before Thompson brought the script to Tarragon. An analysis of these drafts illuminates both the “amazing theatrical sensibility” that drew Kareda to Thompson’s work as well as the influence of Kareda’s own dramaturgical sensibility in shaping White Biting Dog as we know it today. Moreover, examining Thompson’s negotiation of Kareda’s feedback reveals key features of the collaborative dynamic that was established in this first of many play development processes.

123 Interested readers may want to know what some of these titles were. In a letter to Thompson dated 17 March 1983 Kareda comments on the subject, evidently responding to Thompson’s suggestions and also offering his own: “Titles? I think THE ECLIPSE is better than either LOST or DUSTBEAM. I found only a few phrases from the text itself (these times through) that you might consider as titles, and I don’t know about them: SOMETIMES AN ANSWER or APPROACHING THE LINE or UNGRANTED WISHES or ANY HOUR NOW.”

124 Because many of the extant drafts are undated, absolute certainty about this is impossible. In my reconstructed chronology of the surviving drafts, the earliest to be found among the Tarragon files is the ninth draft. Although it is the subsequent (tenth) draft that is the first to feature Kareda’s marginal annotations, he is likely to have also looked at the ninth draft, given its location among the Tarragon files. As with earlier case studies, what follows is my considered reconstruction of all extant drafts (including duplicates) represented by file number (e.g. F7 for file folder). Where more than one draft is housed in the same file, drafts are lettered (e.g. F3A) according to their position within the folder, from front to back. Unlike the drafts examined in the preceding case studies, extant drafts of White Biting Dog are drawn from two separate fonds. Drafts located in the Judith Thompson Collection are thus identified as, for example, JTCF4 for File 4 of the Thompson collection, while drafts drawn from the Tarragon’s White Biting Dog Performance File are identified as, for example, TF6 for Tarragon File 6. Here is my reconstructed chronology of extant drafts: JTCF4, JTCF1, JTCF3A, JTCF12A, JTCF3C, JTCF6, JTCF3B, JTCF13 and TF2 (duplicates), JTCF7 and TF8 (duplicates), JTCF18, JTCF9, TF5, JTCF10A, TF7, TF6/TF9*, JTCF10B.

* TF9 houses a set of handwritten notes corresponding to pages in the draft housed in TF6. Quotations below will thus cite both files, with the page number in TF6 listed
A revealing insight into this collaborative dynamic is offered by Kareda, who describes the unusual combination of flexibility and intractability in Thompson’s approach to writing and revision: “She is quite unique: protective of her vision, but most terrifyingly free with everything else—nothing is written in stone, from her point-of-view, but the heart of the scene” (Letter to Joan MacLeod). In the proceeding case study, Thompson’s “terrifyingly free” willingness to re-imagine and rewrite is born out in the many changes she makes to a script she had once considered finished; nonetheless, Thompson’s negotiation of Kareda’s feedback is also marked by a degree of authorial conviction unseen in the preceding chapters, often demonstrating her fiercely protective commitment to the “heart” or “Truth” of her writing. As she puts it in one of many expressions of this conviction: “If anybody tries to make me cut a line I never will.... I’m very protective of Truth.... [W]hen it comes to the work and what’s right or wrong, nothing can persuade me. Because I know it in my bones” (Rudakoff Interview 39).

This protective impulse when it comes to the heart of her vision is attributable, at least in part, to Thompson’s earliest experience with new play development. Thompson’s first play, The Crackwalker, was developed by Theatre Passe Muraille artistic director (and director of the play itself) Clarke Rogers, an experience which Thompson describes as “adversarial rather than dramaturgical” (“Tarragon 40th Anniversary”). As Ray Conlogue chronicles it, “the director tried to lead his novice playwright into the land of rewriting and creative compromises. The resulting battles have become legend” (“Stage set”). For Thompson, Rogers’ demeaning treatment of her as a “mere wordsmith” was like being “colonized” (“Why Should a Playwright” 54); she describes the balance of power in the relationship as a “girl nightmare” of patriarchal

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125 It should be observed for the historical record that there was a dramaturg associated with the project, Michael Mawson. Nonetheless, it is Rogers’ development of the script that is stressed in contemporary reviews and promotional articles, one of which even identifies Rogers explicitly as the “dramaturge/director” (Horenblas “Crazy as a Hoot”). Moreover, it is Rogers’ dramaturgical feedback that Thompson recalls most strongly (albeit disdainfully).
imposition (qtd in Knowles “Computers” 69). Looking back, however, Thompson reflects that she “didn’t mind the battle,” which served a preparatory function for future collaborations, strengthening her authorial conviction and protectiveness of “Truth” (Personal Interview).

Crucially, however, this early adversarial experience also paved the way for Thompson’s appreciation of—and receptiveness to—Kareda’s more deferential approach to developmental dramaturgy; after the battle with Rogers, Thompson recalls, “every session with Urjo was a joy” (ibid). In contrast to the more forcefully authoritarian and authorial Rogers, Thompson describes Kareda as “fairly paternal with me, which I invited, and yet always respectful” (“It’s My Birthday” 115), echoing recurring accounts in this dissertation of Kareda’s relatively “hands off” approach to serving the playwright’s vision. Nonetheless, Thompson’s choice of familial analogy raises the issue of power dynamics within the Tarragon family. While the “paternal” relationship Thompson describes is “invited” and linked to an important dynamic of mutual respect, it also recalls the latent significance underlying playwrights’ analogies for Kareda in earlier chapters: a teacher demanding uncompleted homework (Wyatt, Personal Interview) or a principal calling a student into his office (Hannah, Personal Interview). As demonstrated in the earlier case studies, such invocations of authority, however fond and playful, also register the considerable room for (often unacknowledged) influence in the playwright-dramaturg relationship—perhaps especially when it is non-adversarial.

Tellingly, however, Margaret Hollingsworth identifies Thompson as an exception in her 1991 account of gendered imbalances of power in new play development. Observing the potential for “the rigorous principles of playwriting as applied by men... to make many women’s

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126 Accounts of Kareda’s deferential approach to “serving” the playwright have been amply established in preceding chapters. Joan MacLeod in particular used the phrase “hands off” three times in describing Kareda’s dramaturgy over the course of our one hour interview.

127 To this I might also add Robin Butt’s identification of the “Guru-Disciple Dynamic” in the Tarragon Playwrights Unit, discussed in chapter three.
scripts bland and unpalatable,” Hollingsworth observes the high number of Canadian women playwrights told in the processes of development and production that “they had produced a monster” (16). Hollingsworth credits Thompson with “insisting that her voice be heard” by embracing the monstrous, “making it the centre, the only subject of her plays”: “She brings undercurrents of (often black) psychic, unsung, unseen forces to the surface, flaunts them shamelessly.... All our worst fears are in her plays, not understated, but overstated—shouted, repeated, hammered home, almost to the point of absurdity” (17). As the proceeding case study will demonstrate, these features at the “centre” of Thompson’s vision are often sites of negotiation in her first collaboration with Kareda. Elements of the unruly, the ugly, the inscrutable, and the absurd are frequently called into question in Kareda’s responses to White Biting Dog, and Thompson’s negotiation of this feedback is marked by both sides of the “unique” orientation to revision established here; she is by turns fiercely resistant and “terrifyingly free.” The result is a play that is quite different from the draft first delivered to Kareda in 1982. It is shaped, in important ways, by key features of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, including his well-established penchant for certain “techniques of selective naturalism” (Introduction to Leaving Home vii) and the predominant imperative toward believability, clarity, and comprehensibility demonstrated in previous chapters. At the same time, and crucially, White Biting Dog retains the disruptive, unruly strangeness which, as the proceeding analysis will demonstrate, lies at the “heart” of Thompson’s “amazing theatrical sensibility.” The resulting play is, to quote Conlogue’s review of the premiere, both “perplexing” and “exuberant,” combining “kitchen sink realism, a touch of absurdity,” and “more than bit of

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This is arguably the case, for example, with Chairs and Tables, which Kareda developed concurrently with White Biting Dog. In the case of that development process, Wyatt’s negotiation of Kareda’s feedback was certainly more deferential to his “rigorous principles of playwriting.” Tellingly, one (male) reviewer praises Chairs and Tables as a “return to form” for Tarragon, explicitly comparing it to White Biting Dog, which is described as a “dreadful”—one might infer monstrous!—aberration (Portman).
magic” (“Funny”). For Conlogue, this hybridity of elements gives the play its theatrical force; it “lift[s] off the page,” “like some creature that becomes airborne in spite of the laws of physics” (ibid)—and in spite of the laws of dramaturgical convention.

Many initial responses to *White Biting Dog* register confusion—and often frustration— in response to this strange, hybrid creature. Mark Czarnecki cites a range of styles and genres in attempting to define *White Biting Dog*, calling it by turns “a morality play,” a work of “pungent realism,” an “airy fantasy,” and “a disorienting example of theatre of the absurd” (“A Drama of Weird Skills”), while Richard Horenblas describes it as “the most perplexing kind of domestic drama beyond rhyme or reason” (“Crazy as a Hoot”). Jason Sherman, in his review for the student newspaper *Excalibur*, quotes Thompson’s own description of *White Biting Dog* as a “nightmare love story that’s a comedy and a tragedy about getting grace” in support of his judgment that the play “tries to do too much” (“Thompson’s”). Gina Mallet, with a particularly heavy dose of bile, caustically suggests that “next time around” Thompson should “decide which playwright she would really like to be before she starts writing” (original emphasis). Drawing on the range of initial responses to *White Biting Dog*, Craig Stewart Walker aptly observes that the play is “both like everything and unlike anything seen in the theatre before: a dramaturgical chimera” (370).

In the years since the premiere of *White Biting Dog*, the substantial body of scholarship on Thompson’s work has tended to celebrate the mutant hybridity of the play, often arguing for the radical potential of “dramaturgical (un)convention” (Knowles “Fractured Subject” i) in *White

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129 There are exceptions. In addition to Conlogue, Paul Carney observes the generic hybridity of *White Biting Dog*—“just as the play treads into bleak realism, it swings into a dramatic rendering of magic realism or fabulism”—as part of his glowing review. Likewise Carole Corbeil praises the “farical as well as the absurd” in the play, which she sees as germane to its escape from “the naturalistic prison” (“Plays in Which”).
Many scholars situate Thompson’s work in relation to established dramaturgical traditions, breaks with which are frequently identified as a source of their provocative potential. Ric Knowles, for example, explicitly cites both *White Biting Dog* and Thompson’s later Tarragon play, *Lion in the Streets*, as plays which “pervert” dramaturgical convention, disrupting the culturally affirmative function of naturalistic and neo-Aristotelian traditions by “foreground[ing] and denaturaliz[ing] their inherited structural principles together with their ideological weights,” thereby “opening up... the disruptive possibility of genuinely productive cultural intervention” (*Theatre of Form* 52). Similarly, Laura Levin argues that Thompson “radicalizes the naturalist aesthetic,” defying the conservatism often ascribed to naturalism and “exposing the experimental and politically enabling aspects of the genre” (123). Likewise, Jen Harvie persuasively analyzes the “disruptions and dislocations” of theatrical convention in Thompson’s plays, which simultaneously invite and subvert audience expectations of certainty, opening up space for counter-hegemonic effects in (and of) performance (“[Im]Possibility” 241; cf “Constructing Fictions”). While breaks with convention frustrated the expectations of some early reviewers, this unsettlement of audiences becomes the great strength of Thompson’s “dramaturgical (un)convention” for Knowles, Levin, Harvie, and many other scholars.  

A notable exception is Paul Walsh, whose early critique of the published script echos reviewers’ frustration with the “structural ambiguities” of *White Biting Dog*: he variously describes it as a “fairytale” marked by “absurdity” and as a “nineteenth-century melodrama,” grappling like those before him with the play’s defiance of genre categorization. Contrary to later scholars, who see radical potential in the play’s simultaneous invocation and disruption of inherited dramaturgical conventions, Walsh determines that the script is flawed due to a “conflict between a desire for formal innovation and an acquiescence to a perniciously powerful ideology of conservative authority” (145-146). Those who share Walsh’s view of the script’s conflicting imperatives may find affirmation in the unfolding developments of feedback and revision examined in the proceeding case study. For my part, however, I am inclined to view these developments less as the product of conflict than negotiation, just as I perceive a crucial dynamic of resistance in these negotiations as a counterbalance to acquiescence. Ultimately, I take the view of Knowles, Harvie, Levin, and others that *White Biting Dog* is strengthened by its “structural ambiguities”—and by the collaborative dynamic of influence and resistance that produced them.

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131 George Toles, writing as early as 1988, links Thompson’s “characteristic rhythm of dislocation and her startling, surrealistic collisions of conscious and unconscious data” with her “attempts to induce... a prolonged sensation of
What follows will trace the shaping effect of playwright-dramaturg negotiations in the development of *White Biting Dog*, demonstrating how the push-and-pull of two sensibilities works to produce the dynamics of convention and unconvention, familiar and strange, comprehensible and ambiguous, and naturalism and anti-naturalism in the play. Strikingly, the basic plot of *White Biting Dog* remains relatively unchanged from the earliest of Thompson’s independent drafts to the final, published version of the script: A man named Cape Race, enlisting the help of a woman named Pony, endeavours to save his father’s life—and his own in the process—by working to reunite his estranged parents, Glidden and Lomia, despite the fact that Lomia is now living with her new lover, Pascal. Although these details are consistent, however, negotiations concerning the world of the play, the psychology and language of its characters, and the thematic significance of its plot, all contribute to the defining features of *White Biting Dog* as it came to be seen, read, and studied following its Tarragon premiere.

The earliest area of negotiation in the development of *White Biting Dog* arises out of Kareda’s responses to the world of the play. My use of the term “world of the play” here draws on Elinor Fuchs’ influential and instructive essay on dramaturgical analysis, “EF’s Visit to a Small Planet,” in which she advises the reader to “squint” at “the world of the play” in an attempt to understand its unique “space-time dynamics, its architectonics,” warning against the tendency to “unproblematically collaps[e] this strange world into our own” (6). More recently, Knowles has engaged the concept of the “world of the play,” usefully emphasizing that its psychic unsupportedness” in her audiences; in this way “Thompson... aims her plays at the fault lines in our internal defense system, the places where the self has no ‘prepared responses.’” (14). Likewise, for Julie Adam “anti-naturalistic elements” are part of a strategy through which “Thompson implicates spectators in the action of her plays” preventing them “to varying degrees” from “remain[ing] uninvolved observers” (43).

As I discuss below, there is one crucial distinction between how the play was seen, in its premiere production, and how it was read upon first publication, owing to a crucial revision made by Thompson in the interim. Thompson has also been “terrifyingly free” in revising the play for remounts, including notable changes in advance of a 1994 revival under Kareda’s artistic directorship as well as more recent (and equally notable) alterations tied to a 2011 Soulpepper Theatre production. For the purposes of this study, my focus here will be restricted to revisions tied to the original developmental process leading to the Tarragon premiere and the first publication of the script.
definition extends not just to “the play’s overall poetic and imagistic vocabulary,” but also “its logic” (How Theatre Means 133-134, emphasis added). Like Fuchs, Knowles cautions against imposing the familiar logic of the “real world” on a script, observing that although “[n]aturalistic drama... sets out to investigate the cause-and-effect ‘laws of nature,’ including human nature,” and consequently “attempts to follow the logic of the ‘real world’ and to make visible its workings... much theatre operates by different rules entirely, often establishing its own conventions and following its own rules.” It is thus “essential that any script analysis determine what these rules are, how and when they are established, and the relationship between the represented world they regulate and that of the audience (ibid 134). As with Fuchs’ exercise, which was originally meant for dramaturgy students engaged in the analysis of published plays, Knowles’ observations apply broadly to “any script analysis” but are of crucial relevance to the dramaturg working in new play development, whose analysis carries the potential to shape a theatrical world that is still being formed.

As previous chapters have demonstrated, Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility—particularly in the earliest years of his tenure at Tarragon—was marked by a preference for naturalistic “techniques” tied to the familiarity and plausibility of the onstage world and of the actions that occur within it. Thompson’s recollection of this emphasis is limited to minor inconsistencies: “He could always see when...I had contradicted myself (which was frequent) or given all the children of one character the same name, or had them wearing coats and scarves in July” (“Birthday” 116).133 Certainly, there are instances of feedback like this in Kareda’s notes

133 Asked by Jason Sherman in 1986, “How much do you let people influence the play as it’s being written?” Thompson’s response indicates that her awareness of the shaping effect of dramaturgical feedback, including in what was then the very recent experience of developing White Biting Dog, was limited to this kind of input: “You mean dramaturgy? Entirely just on the level of detail. Editorial. More copy editing kind of stuff. It’s too dangerous” (“Judith Thompson” 9).
on *White Biting Dog*.\(^{134}\) In his earliest responses to the script, however, Kareda’s concerns regarding the world of the play and its plausibility extend far beyond minor editorial observations. Instead, the earliest draft featuring Kareda’s annotations is peppered with question marks in its margins, along with a striking preponderance of the single-word question, “Why?” Unlike the more detailed (and thus more overtly prescriptive) questions examined in chapter two, these simple queries may at first glance appear relatively innocuous. Closer inspection, however, reveals that they are overwhelmingly tied to key features of the world of the play in its earliest drafts, specifically elements that resist explanation according to the rules or logic of the “real” world.

The earliest Tarragon draft—which is preceded by at least eight full or partial drafts, the product of months of Thompson’s independent development—features numerous mysterious elements tied to a fascination with fairytales and magic traceable to her earliest work on the script.\(^{135}\) These details are sufficiently prominent in the first of the Tarragon drafts that an application of Fuchs’ exercise indicates a world of the play that is driven by magic. The draft opens, for example, with Cape calling on the help of a supernatural force to aid in his attempt to save his dying father. In the earliest of Thompson’s independent drafts, Cape employs a machine called a “wave trap,” designed to attract an all-powerful red wave. By the time the play reaches Kareda at Tarragon, the machine has been excised, but Cape’s incantatory chant remains: “wave right here, wave right here” (JTCF13 and TF2 1). This chant is accompanied by bongo

\(^{134}\)In one draft, for example, the lines “It’s keen out” and “tomorrow is the shortest day of the year!” prompt Kareda to ask, respectively, “What time of year is it?” and “So this is Dec 20th?” (TF6/TF9 17, 27); later, upon encountering a contradictory reference to a blooming outdoor garden, he asks: “Tiger lilies? In *December*?” (TF6/TF9 50, original emphasis).

\(^{135}\)Thompson’s preliminary notes on the play include mention of a child’s abduction by a fairy (JTCF1). The earliest full draft includes a voodoo doll/effigy of Pascal (JTCF3A 62) as well as many of the details discussed below, including the wave trap as well as the supernatural red wave itself (JTCF3A 13-15, 20-21, 85), multiple early spells (JTCF3A 37-38, 62), and Glidden’s belief that “if you die with an ungranted wish inside you, you won’t come back as an angel or a whale—but—as a foot cramp! A human foot cramp in the arch a foot!” (JTCF3A 36).
drumming and a “prayer dance” intended—though how is not explicitly explained and may not be clear to Cape himself—to save his father’s life (JTCF13 and TF2 1). Such magical thinking is far from out of place in the world of White Biting Dog as Kareda first encountered it: Lomia’s red mitten, lying on the floor since her departure, is described in the opening stage directions as “circled in chalk,” evidently as part of a magical ritual to bring her back (JTCF13 and TF2 1); Glidden alleviates the suffering associated with his mysterious illness by offering “gifts” to his pain in the form of broken household objects (JTCF13 and TF2 4); and he also fervently believes that if his wish to be reunited with Lomia is not fulfilled he will be reincarnated as a foot cramp—a fate he assigns to all people who die with ungranted wishes (JTCF7 and TF8 31). Likewise, Cape’s belief in the supernatural is evident not only in the prayer dancing and drumming of the opening moments but elsewhere in the early drafts as well. At multiple points in the script he employs spells intended to break up Lomia and Pascal (JTCF7 and TF8 4 32, 34, 51). Elsewhere, his desperate attempts to save his father include reciting a childhood incantation once used to ensure Glidden’s safety on business trips: “I don’t care if he dies in a plane crash, as long as he brings me a present” (JTCF7 and TF8 7-8). Despite the pervasiveness of belief in the supernatural in this “strange world” of the play, however, Kareda’s earliest extant comments attempt to read these and other details through the logic of the “real” world.

In the second Tarragon draft (which is the earliest to feature dramaturgical annotations), the bulk of Kareda’s responses are focused on strange or “absurdist” elements in the script,  

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Next to Glidden’s entrance wearing a rose bathing suit and toque singing “If I knew you were comin’ I’d have baked a cake,” Kareda writes, “One absurdist stroke too many?” (JTCF7 21). Elsewhere, Glidden’s entrance on all fours with a dog bone in his mouth prompts the most predominant question in this draft, “Why?” (JTCB7 41), as does a stage direction indicating that Glidden “starts making bird noises” (JTCB7 52). In light of Kareda’s fluid sense of genre, which accommodated connections between naturalism and the Theatre of the Absurd (particularly in the work of Pinter), it is worth observing that Kareda’s concern is not with eradicating all of the “absurdist” elements—only, in a characteristically Karedian pursuit of balance, that there not be “too many.” Notably, only the last of these flagged details is excised by the final version of the script, indicating Thompson’s conviction about these features of the world of the play.
including those linked to magic or superstition. Among the details flagged with question marks in the margins are: the chalk-circled mitten (JTCF7 4); Glidden’s claim that Pony bears the “sign of the witch” because of her “counter-clockwise crown” (JTCF7 66); and Cape’s reference—part of the fairytale element of the narrative—to the striking of the clock at a magical hour (JTCF7 66). The question marks indicate Kareda’s confusion on encountering these details, revealing his working assumption (at this stage of development at least) that the world of the play should operate according to the logic of the “real” world rather than according to its own internal (magical) logic. Extant comments also indicate that Kareda failed to recognize the predominance of magical thinking as a characteristic feature of the world of the play. Next to Glidden’s pain-killing destruction of household objects, he asks, “What’s he trying to do?” (JTCF7 4), despite the explanation of the sacrificial ritual in the dialogue. Similarly, next to Cape’s “I don’t care if he dies in a plane crash” incantation, Kareda writes, “Why is this here? Can we make the leap?” (JTCF7 8). Here as elsewhere, the logic of Cape’s utterance is magical rather than rational, tied to the unique rules of the world of the play rather than the familiar laws of our own. Kareda’s last question reveals his characteristic concern with whether this moment (and others flagged in this draft) will be accessible or comprehensible—whether audiences will be able to make the “leap” of logic required.

Significantly, Kareda’s early responses do not immediately prompt Thompson to make changes to the magical or supernatural elements of the world of the play. Rather, the flagged details remain for several drafts, only to be gradually overtaken by other developments in the script, in particular the religious themes of grace, sacrifice and redemption discussed below. By the latest extant draft, marked “rehearsal draft,” excised elements include: Glidden’s gifts for pain ritual; the rhyming components of Cape’s spells; Glidden’s fairytale fear of transforming
into a foot cramp; an allusion to Pony as a “fairy” sent to undo a curse placed on Cape at birth; and the circle of chalk around Lomia’s mitten (the mitten remains). Reminded of many of these details in our interview, Thompson’s responds, “Gee, I like that. I should put that back in” and “Why didn’t I keep that in? I like it.” (Personal Interview). Asked about Kareda’s questioning of these strange and magical elements, Thompson speculates, “I think that Urjo felt that he didn’t want me to...overwhelm the audience,” but is careful to assert that despite these excisions the play remains true to the heart of her vision, which she “wanted… to be magical realist” (ibid).

Certainly, the world of the play in the published script retains sufficient elements of magic and the irrational for these features to be distinguished in academic criticism. *White Biting Dog* has been described by scholars as both “magical realism” (Maufort 28-32) and “magic-naturalist fantasia” (Knowles “Reading Judith Thompson” iii). Julie Adam identifies the tension between magic and the “real” in her analysis of naturalism and anti-naturalism in Thompson’s work, observing that “[m]any of Thompson’s characters inhabit the space that both separates and fuses illusion and reality. It is the exploration of this magical zone that is at the centre of Judith Thompson’s theatricalism” (45, emphasis added). Likewise, elements of the irrational and unexplained are often identified as essential to the power of *White Biting Dog*. Observing the misreadings of reviewers who found the play “inaccessible” due to its “lack of grounding in reality” (Plant and Astington qtd in Walker 369), Walker embraces those features of the play’s world that “jolt[] audience” expectations and “overwhelm any attempts at rational justification” (370). For Walker, the creation of an “alternative reality” is the key to what he sees as *White Biting Dog*’s “powerful... mythopoetic function”: “What is essential is that the playwright be able to construct an imaginative isotopy with some modicum of conviction which, in turn, may compel the imaginations of the audience” (8). Anticipating Walker in her review of the Tarragon
premiere, Carole Corbeil likewise observes: “Any play… which pushes against the limits of theatrical naturalism has to accomplish one very difficult thing: it has to create its own world.... Thompson, in writing White Biting Dog, does this” (“Plays in Which”).

This “pushing against the limits of naturalism” in the script strikingly replicates the dynamics of playwright-dramaturg negotiations in the development of White Biting Dog. Against Kareda’s naturalistic impulse to ground the play in the logic of the “real world,” Thompson constructs her “imaginative isotopy” with a conviction reflected both in her initial retention of features flagged by Kareda and in her successful creation, in the final script, of an “alternative reality” still marked by magic and the irrational. Ultimately, Thompson’s strong sense of the world of the play is essential to her engagement with and challenge to conventional naturalism in White Biting Dog. Her preservation of this world and its unique internal logic produces the contradictory dynamics of convention and its disruption, reality and illusion, that work to simultaneously invite and unsettle audience expectations in performance.

Indeed, audience unsettlement may be understood as the crux of playwright-dramaturg negotiations tied not just to the world of the play but also to all aspects of the development of White Biting Dog. One key point of divergence between Thompson and Kareda is the degree to which audience discomfort is accommodated in their respective sensibilities. For Thompson, the experience of attending theatre is imagined to serve a crucial social function. Arguing that “[w]e’re living in a pathological state of denial, as a society” (Watchel 45), Thompson finds that “it is urgent that people see good theatre with... moments I call Truth” (Rudakoff Interview 41). In these moments, Thompson argues, the theatre makes it possible provisionally to “go through what other people have to go through” (Wachtel 45). This “painful thing of looking in a mirror” (Zimmerman “A Conversation” 21) is intended to establish an “empathic cord” (ibid 19)
extending to the darkest facets of humanity: “In a sense, we all have experienced everything [e.g. “murderous rage”]. And that’s what theatre should help us confront” (qtd in Wagner “Why Thompson”).

Against the implicit necessity of a degree of suffering in Thompson’s view of the audience experience as a “painful thing of looking in a mirror,” Kareda’s dramaturgy was informed by a mindfulness of his audience’s comfort. As Thompson herself has put it: “Urjo was his audience, in many ways, and he was very protective of his audience” (Personal Interview, original emphasis). As I establish in chapter one, Kareda’s observation—made on more than one occasion—that Tarragon audiences “take their theatre [very] personally” (Rudakoff Between 10 and Ouzounian “At the helm”)—found expression in a desire to balance dark or shocking elements in the scripts he developed. This imperative is most evident in his efforts to address material likely to offend his audiences, as in the case of his feedback on sacrilegious content in both Don Hannah’s The Wedding Script and Jason Sherman’s The Retreat, examined in chapter three. Unsurprisingly, alongside comments on the magical or “absurdist” features in Thompson’s early Tarragon drafts, Kareda raises a number of questions tied to features of the script he deems “hard to take.” These include many details that remain in the final script: Pony’s description, drawn from her days as ambulance attendant, of an “old Chinese guy... bleedin’ from every hole in his body,” prompts Kareda’s observation, “seems gratuitously callous: why?” (JTCF7 9); likewise, Pony’s admission of antisemitism prompts the comment “Very hard to take” (JTCB7 43); elsewhere, next to her story of consuming the Race family’s three dead dachshunds, Kareda’s “Too hard to take” is underlined (JTCB7 65); and Cape’s childhood memory of Lomia’s habit of saving vials of nosebleeds and “mak[ing] us drink” them earns the response
“VERY PERPLEXING” (JTCB7 50). While these flagged details are all retained in the final script (with virtually no revisions), other comments in this vein are more influential.

A version of Cape’s seduction of Pascal late in the development process prompts considerable attention in Kareda’s marginal annotations. Next to stage directions which call for an unzipped fly and “rubbing,” Kareda’s comment reads: “I think the fly is too much—it’s scarier if it’s kissing rather than fondling—emotion rather than sex” (TF6/TF9 54, original emphasis). On the next page, where wrestling between the two men turns sexual, he offers further comment: “I think—again—that masturbation is too obvious—it’s creepier if we think the half-nelson will lead to violence—more shocking when it leads to a kiss” (TF6/TF9 55). Beyond these, Kareda offers two additional comments in support of his case for revising the scene. First, he appeals to ongoing developments related to Cape’s longing for (and worthiness of) redemption, discussed below, writing: “Difficulty with Cape here: we’ve moved a long way from his fear [i.e. of his debilitating and potentially dangerous detachment from the world] + he just seems (again) like a manipulative shit” (TF6/TF9 55). Elsewhere, Kareda identifies what he sees as an obstacle to audience comprehension in Pony’s silent reaction to witnessing this scene. Next to Thompson’s stage direction “she is breaking apart,” Kareda asks: “Why? 1. Because she sees that Cape is a bastard? 2. Because she thinks he’s homosexual? 3. A bigger reason—it’s awkward, then—if she overhears a sexually compromising scene” (TF6/TF9 56).

Kareda’s case, in the latter question, rests on his already established knowledge of the answer: that it is the third, “bigger reason.” In a much earlier letter to Thompson he responds to

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137 While Thompson retains all of these elements in the final script, only the nosebleeds continue to trouble Kareda (at least in his extant comments) late into the development process. In his last annotated draft he makes two comments on the subject: “‘nosebleeds’ + jam jars: borderline turnoff” (TF6/TF9 15); and later “some cuts are possible,” including the “nosebleeds” (TF6/TF9 50). Other allusions to bodily fluids preoccupy Kareda in this late-stage draft. When Lomia speculates that Pascal has lost interest because she is menstruating, Kareda writes, “I’m not sure how adding her period here is helpful—again I think it seems to add to the playwright’s obsessiveness, not the character’s” (TF6/TF9 57). This last comment, it is worth observing, prompts an immediate cut to the offending line.
Pony’s admission that “I stayed and I watched and I saw what you did which means I did it too... so the old Pony, she’s going, she’s hardly breathing at all” (TF8 67), affirming his reading that “[b]ecause of the machinations with Pascal (which only existed to ‘liberate’ Lomia for Glidden), Pony feels despair and commits suicide” (Letter to Judith Thompson 17 March 1983). Thus, Kareda’s aim in this final comment is not to determine the reason for Pony’s “breaking apart” but rather to address two concerns tied to his characteristic anticipation of audience response. First, the comment supports his argument for a less overt depiction of Cape’s sexual manipulation of Pascal, which Kareda presents as paradoxically the “more shocking” option but which may also be read as an attempt to mitigate audience discomfort (a concern intimated in his claim that the unzipped fly is “too much”). Second, and perhaps more persuasively, it anticipates an interpretive ambiguity in Pony’s reaction, arguing that it will be “awkward” to ensure audiences recognize the “bigger” reason for her “breaking apart.” The problem, Kareda signals, is that the “sexually compromising scene” may produce unwanted readings of the impetus for Pony’s breakdown (i.e. that she is simply upset to learn that Cape is “a bastard” or that he is homosexual). In this instance, Kareda’s comments produce an immediate revision; Thompson makes the requested change—(kissing rather than fondling)—directly on the page. Elsewhere, however, the difference in their respective thresholds for audience discomfort is born out in Thompson’s decision to retain unsettling or ambiguous content in the script.

Tellingly, many of the initial audience responses to White Biting Dog affirm Kareda’s concerns. Thompson recalls the ““middle-class shuffle” she felt compelled to offer subscribers offended by White Biting Dog, notably stressing her desire “not for [audience members] to be alienated and turned away forever but more to be turned deeply red. It’s the sensation when you’re in a room with a group of people, and you’re thinking something secret or private, and
someone exposes it, saying ‘I know what you’re thinking: you’re thinking this’ (“Offending” 50). Tellingly, too, Thompson becomes particularly preoccupied with audience members whose offense springs not from the unsettling or “painful thing of looking in a mirror,” but from a frustrated desire for comprehension: “There were a lot of people who just didn't understand what was going on. They were offended because they felt there was something they should be getting. And I kept saying, ‘No, it's a very simple story.' But people thought that they didn't understand it, I guess, because the world that I created for the play seemed a bit strange.” (qtd in Wagner “White Biting Dog”). As I discuss above, however, subsequent scholarship has recognized this strange world and its unsettlement of audience comfort (and comprehension) as a defining feature of this and other Thompson plays.

Playwright-dramaturg negotiations examined thus far have demonstrated the push and pull of competing imperatives that fuel the development of White Biting Dog. While Kareda’s dramaturgy is informed by a concern not to “overwhelm” or confuse an audience, Thompson is often willing to retain the shocking, the strange, and the unexplained in the service of confronting ugly but necessary and potentially transformative “Truths.” Crucially, however, these divergent imperatives are not as tidily separate as they first appear. As I discuss in chapter one, Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility was complex, dynamic, and shifting, often characterized by ostensibly competing preoccupations and desires. Kareda’s oft-cited praise, in the Introduction to David French’s Leaving Home for the “poetic resonance” (viii) and “universal experience” (ix) of naturalistic drama reveals a related—though distinct—pursuit of the revelation of “Truth” in the theatre. Kareda had high praise for the work of writers who plumbed the depths below “ordinary experience,” exposing the “stark underbelly” of quotidian life, even in ways that could be “as dangerous as an open razor” (qtd in “Archetypal Enthusiast” 296,
emphasis added). Indeed, for Kareda, “Great naturalism is [...] an explosion. It makes you aware of everything in the world” because “every once in a while the inexplicable occurs” (qtd in Rudakoff Between 13). The difference lies in Kareda’s imperative to mitigate the strain (or “danger”) produced by the inexplicable or explosive, as well as in the intended effect of these exposures for Thompson and Kareda. While Thompson aims for audiences to be transformed in ways that have radical social and political potential, for Kareda the experience of self-recognition in the theatre is more inward facing; he notably stresses the personal and emotional dimensions of the “profound[] affect” of those plays deemed “the most satisfying, the most finished” (Introduction to Leaving Home ix, viii).

Certainly, these points of divergence inform important negotiations in the development of White Biting Dog. Equally crucial to the trajectory of the script are key points of convergence between Thompson and Kareda. Perhaps the most prominent of these is a shared fascination with the “stark underbelly” hidden beneath the ordinary surface of everyday existence. This common interest is tied to a preoccupation, for both Thompson and Kareda, with psychology, particularly in relation to dramatic characters. As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, Kareda favoured character-driven scripts and script-development processes. One of the most dominant—and influential—tenets of his dramaturgical sensibility is the conviction that dramatic characters should be “inhabited from within” (Letter to Playwright X 28 July 1987), a belief that found expression in his frequent deployment of the “monologue exercise,” which I discuss in greatest detail in chapter three. Famously, Thompson began her writing career with a monologue,

138 As Penny Farfan has observed, “Thompson’s familiarity with psychoanalytic theory is well known” (46). Given that Farfan, among others, observes that Thompson audited a course on Freud and read his complete works, it is worth observing the existence of notes on Freud among her earliest White Biting Dog files (JTCB1 np). Tellingly, too, both Kareda and Thompson considered the professions of psychiatrist (Rudakoff Between 26) or psychologist (Bemrose), respectively. As I discuss in chapter one, this impulse found expression, to some extent, in Kareda’s approach to dramaturgy. For Thompson, too, there are parallels between psychoanalysis and her chosen profession: “That’s why I’m a playwright—to explore the huge chasm between the social persona and the inner life, to find out who people really are” (Steed 358).
written as part of her actor training at the National Theatre School (Hunt 1). From this initial monologue, conceived through her masked embodiment of a developing character, Thompson created The Crackwalker, establishing both her career as a playwright and her ongoing approach to the process of playwriting: “When I’m writing a piece,” she explains decades later, “I completely inhabit the characters” (qtd in Wagner “Why Thompson”). Elsewhere, she describes how her “characters...come from something in me.... It’s part of you and—an actor does this—you stretch it or compress it or you add something else to it.... I try to take the characters from a little chunk of myself—so they are partly me” (qtd in Reid). These descriptions, which convey Thompson’s indebtedness to actor training grounded in naturalistic, post-Stanislavskian traditions, reveal key affinities with Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility, from his endorsement of the exploration of character psychology “from within,” to his praise for “personal reminiscence” or “autobiographical detail” as the wellspring of naturalism’s “poetic resonance” (Introduction to Leaving Home viii).

Once again, however, tracking negotiations between Thompson and Kareda reveals significant points of divergence in their understandings of psychology, including its expression through dramatic characterization. In particular, while Kareda’s interest in psychology is related to a more conventionally naturalistic emphasis on explaining human behaviour according to the demonstration of cause and effect, Thompson’s interest lies in mining the unruly and unpredictable “Truth” in the depths of the psyche, tapping into the collective unconscious via unusual, uncanny and often unexplained moments of psychic resonance. Consequently, while Kareda’s understanding of dramatic character demands the stable, fixed and traceable psychology associated with naturalistic traditions, Thompson’s conception of character stretches the limits of this convention, admitting a more fluid, unpredictable, eruptive and disruptive
psychology. Many scholars have observed the dynamic coexistence of naturalism and anti-naturalism in Thompson’s dramatic characters. Knowles, for example, finds that, although “far from exhibiting traditional actorly throughlines” in her characters, “all of Judith Thompson’s writing is rich in subtext,” “the bread and butter of naturalistic actor training in North America” (“Reading Judith Thompson” vi, v). Likewise, Harvie, writing about Thompson’s later play *Lion in the Streets*, highlights the creation of characters that are “apparently real...[with] realistic psychological motivations and objectives” but which also can “be read not as unified and based in a single objective, but rather as fragmented and based in often conflicting and changing objectives,” thus posing a challenge to the hegemony of “unified identity” presented by conventionally naturalistic characters (“Constructing Fictions” 49, 52). In extant responses to Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback regarding the characters of *White Biting Dog*, the beginnings of this productive tension are evident in Thompson’s negotiation of their shared, but very differently manifested, fascination with character psychology.

Responding to drafts of *White Biting Dog*, Kareda’s comments and questions often seek clearer and more readily traceable determinism in the motivation of characters’ actions and, especially, their utterances. In many cases, he encourages Thompson to establish a character’s psychological state in greater detail, ostensibly with the aim of easing audience comprehension. In an early letter, for example, Kareda encourages Thompson to develop Pony’s oblique description of experiencing “two Ponies” with the comment: “division of Pony needs a longer, richer, more harrowing, *clearer* speech” (“Letter to Judith Thompson.” Dated 17 March 1983, emphasis added). In the final version, this suggestion has been fully realized; Pony’s articulation of the experience is more explicit in identifying the internal battle that she is undergoing as well as the source of the problem—with psychoanalytical and perhaps moral implications—in her
sexual experience with Cape: “I’m scared ‘cause the old me is getting killed off by the new me, that hatched after we—“ (78). This revision establishes a legible connection or throughline from Pony’s early recognition of her internal battle to her ultimate post-suicide speech, preparing audiences to accept the argument that Pony’s death is “not at all a bad thing” but rather the only way to fight the invasion of “the worst evil” that “happened when [she] fell in love” (106-107). Thus, Thompson’s clearer articulation, in response to Kareda’s feedback, of the workings of Pony’s psyche at this moment serves to subtly prepare audiences for the evolution of her character toward her potentially troubling final moments.

In other cases, dramaturgical negotiations concerning traceable character psychology result in a turn towards dialogue that is too overtly psychoanalytical. In his early annotated draft, for example, Kareda comments on an exchange between Cape and Pony with characteristic emphasis on transparent, traceable, and more readily comprehensible dialogue. In the flagged exchange Pony asks, “Why so grim? Long as she stays, he lives. Right?” In answer, Cape informs her that he’s spent the past three years staring at walls, which is a frequent manifestation in the early drafts of the agonizing detachment from the world with which Cape is afflicted. Next to this dialogue, Kareda writes, “How does this answer the conversation she started?” (JTCB7 26), and this question prompts an immediate revision, handwritten by Thompson on the back of the preceding page. Here, the response is much more explicitly psychoanalytical: “The thing that makes me want to save Dad also wants Mom” (JTCB7 26). Ultimately, this transparently subtextual line is removed in a major revision of the scene. Significantly, however, it marks the first overt articulation of Cape’s Oedipal longings, which Thompson subsequently develops in more subtle ways, so that critics of the play have noted Cape’s “unacknowledged desires” (Toles 15) without the aid of this overt declaration. Revealingly, one such subtle moment, in a later
draft, prompts a request for clarification that Thompson chooses to ignore: Lomia’s speech—which remains in the final script—in which she responds to Cape’s assertion that “it is [her] duty” to save [Glidden’s] life,” with, “Ha! Awww when you were little you used to sit in the hallway, playing with your orange truck, and every time I passed on my way to do something you’d say ‘Hello Mummy!’ as if you hadn’t seen me in months, ‘Hello, Mummy!!’ Hah” (54, original emphasis). In response to an early version of this exchange, Kareda asks, “What is she getting at with this reminiscence?” (TF6/TF9 37). Once again, Kareda is evidently concerned with establishing a logical connection between Lomia’s speech and the comment that prompts it. However, while the response may be indirect, it is nonetheless subtextually coherent as a strategy Lomia uses to unsettle her son, reminding him of his childhood self even as she mockingly imitates it. Moreover, the reminiscence notably invites audience members to play armchair psychologist, to infer the connection between the longing Lomia describes and the Oedipal dimension of Cape’s mission that has often been the subject of psychoanalytic criticism of the play. In this way, a naturalistic cause-and-effect traceability is differently manifested through Lomia’s speech; the difference is that Thompson leaves it to the audience to make the interpretive “leap” required.

In many cases, however, Thompson’s treatment of the psyche at the level of the dialogue is even less traceable. Rather, a characteristic feature of the language of this play—and of Thompson’s work in general, as George Toles has observed (1)—is the eruption of the unconscious to the surface through language, often in poetic expression and imagery that does not admit interpretation according to the logic of character motivation, but rather exposes the

139 See, for example: Toles (cited above); Nunn, who describes the play as “a kind of truncated Hamlet” (26), in which Cape and Lomia are “two ravening egos locked in a repetition of the Oedipal fantasy” (29); Knowles, who notes “the perversely clear rendering of Cape’s (adult) oedipal crisis” (Theatre of Form 51); and Walker’s discussion of “the Oedipal pattern of Cape’s complicated love-hate relationship with his mother” (372).
hidden, inexplicable, flotsam of the psyche. Given Kareda’s praise for “dialogue...close to ordinary speech” as one of the key features of a “naturalistic presentation of life” (qtd in “Archetypal Enthusiast” 296), it is unsurprising that a major site of negotiation arises around these particularly disorderly and incoherent psychic eruptions. In his first annotated draft, for example, Kareda makes several notes in response to utterances of this kind, many of which prompt revisions by Thompson. For example, next to Cape’s odd compliment to Pony, “flowers are nothing but nervous stomachs… too awake to be lovely—you—are—louf-bodied—la—laugh-bodied!”, Kareda writes two comments in the early draft: “meaning?” and “too odd—like concrete poetry” (JTCB7 28). By the next draft, this has been changed to the simpler “Flowers are nothing but nervous stomachs”; one draft later it is cut altogether. Similarly, Kareda’s response to Glidden’s trance-like death chant that begins “POP POP POP POP ROCK ME TO GRAVENHURST” is to ask, “Where does this POP etc. come from?” (TF6/TF9 7). The answer is the unruly psyche: the unexamined, unconscious part of Glidden, where memories of his childhood and awareness of his own death are intermingled and erupt, unfiltered, to the surface through his outburst. Elsewhere in this play and in future works developed with Kareda, Thompson allows such unfiltered expressions of the psyche to remain unexplained, communicating through a potency which results from what she often describes as her tapping of the collective unconscious.140 Here, however, Kareda’s comment seems to have resulted in the impulse to explain the source of Glidden’s psychic outburst. In the final draft, it is followed by Cape’s clarifying statement, “Gravenhurst is where the family’s all buried” (9).

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140 For Thompson’s discussion of tapping the collective unconscious in her work, see her 1990 interviews with Cynthia Zimmerman (“A Conversation” 15) and, especially, Judith Rudakoff (Interview 28, 35).
In other instances, however, Thompson opts not to clarify psychic eruptions that Kareda finds insufficiently clear. Consider, for example, his comments regarding Lomia’s response in the following dialogue:

Pony: I want to know what it is you have when you walk into a room you—make me feel as though I’m flying in my sleep, you know? Do you—know what that is?

Lomia: It’s because I—*love* being inside of my six layers of skin; it’s de-licious in here—everytime [sic] I breathe I breathe out *seeds*. ...Inside I feel...like...

like... sewage. (JTCF7 and TF8 46, original emphasis)

The exchange is flagged by Kareda in both annotated drafts: First with the statement “too oblique” next to Lomia’s response (JTCB7 46) and finally—when no revision has occurred over six subsequent drafts—with the query “Pony’s question to Lomia?” (TF6/TF9 46), expressing reservations about either Pony’s inarticulate phrasing or the entire conversation. Ultimately, however, no revisions are made and this potent dialogue is among the most oft-cited in scholarly analyses of *White Biting Dog*.

Certainly, Kareda’s comment regarding the word “sewage”—“too oblique”—is characteristic of a general tendency, in his annotations, to question unruly outbursts of the psyche in the form of incomprehensible language. However, for Thompson, who discovers her characters by inhabiting them—by “getting into the blood” (qtd in Knowles “Fractured Subject”)—the eruption of unruly and inscrutable language from the disordered depths of her psyche (which she views as a point of access to the collective unconscious) are integral to the

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141 See, for example, Toles (14) and Nunn (28). It is worth observing that although Thompson leaves the dialogue unchanged, she does revise the scene in which this conversation takes place. Originally, the exchange between Lomia and Pony is to be spoken simultaneously with Glidden’s delivery of a joke. The overlapping dialogue prompts Kareda’s note in the margin: “This will be lost” (JTCB7 46). This observation leads to the device of having Glidden pause in the middle of his joke to enter the kitchen, ostensibly to try to recall how it ends. Thus the negotiation between Kareda and Thompson surrounding this particular scene *does* result in greater clarity (at least in terms of audibility). This, in turn, importantly serves to highlight Lomia’s utterance, which is left in its unclear — and consequently potent—eruptive form.
exposure of what she calls “moments of Truth.” These eruptions of resonant-if-inscrutable psychic images are thus essential to Thompson’s engagement of audiences, as is the discovery and expression of what she calls “characterization” through unusual language and speech patterns. In two separate interviews in 1989 and 1990, Thompson articulates her conception of “characterization” by distinguishing it from Aristotelian character (“what you do, your actions”). “Characterization,” Thompson asserts, emerges from the unique voice of a character, accessed through the playwright’s initial exploration of the character’s unusual “kind of speech rhythm” or “flamboyant way of speaking” (Tomc “Revisions” 10). In both interviews, Thompson goes on to emphasize the importance of this form of characterization not only as an inciting point of access for character development but also, crucially, for reception; this “dressing” is “what the audience really responds to,” Thompson explains, and consequently it “help[s] people in” (Tomc “Revisions” 10; Rudakoff “Interview” 31).

Given the important function of this aspect of Thompson’s writing process, it is significant that in both of these interviews Thompson identifies Cape as the prime example of a failure to fully execute this form of “characterization.” In one of her interviews Thompson states, “I kept working around speech patterns for Cape, coming up with different ones all the time and nothing really worked” (Tomc “Revisions” 10). In my examination of the surviving record, Thompson’s negotiation of Kareda’s feedback emerges as a possible contributor to this difficulty. Thompson’s struggle with Cape’s voice is evident in the extant drafts, and her tendency to respond to Kareda’s comments related to clarity and comprehensibility is unusually pronounced when it comes to Cape’s speech. For example, next to a version of the opening monologue in which a distraught Cape reveals his backstory in halting, disjointed utterances, Kareda writes, “I still think that such fragmented, inarticulate speech is hard to take at the very
opening of the play. It’s an irritant and leaves us without the power of a strong verbal declaration to launch us” (TF6/TF9 1, emphasis added). Elsewhere in the draft, he returns to the subject, observing: “I think we lose the effect/impact of his stammering speech if he uses it too often” (TF6/TF9 15). As indicated by Kareda’s first comment, Cape’s “stammering speech” was evidently the subject of ongoing negotiation between playwright and dramaturg. Crucially, too, the comment reflects the difference between Thompson and Kareda in their understandings of how to engage an audience. Kareda’s concern with avoiding an “irritant” reflects his sensibility as established here and in other chapters. Moreover the imperative to “launch” the audience is in keeping with conventional Western dramaturgical wisdom, figuring the audience experience as a “journey.” Against Thompson’s philosophy of drawing audiences “in” (both to an alternate world and to the psyches of its inhabitants) through the “dressing” of unusual speech patterns, Kareda’s comments once again emphasize audience engagement through the accessible and comprehensible realm of the familiar. In this instance, Thompson revises the fragmented speech, producing the efficient and accessible exposition of Cape’s opening monologue as it exists in the published script—perhaps at the expense of “characterization,” as Thompson defines it.

Tellingly, Thompson’s most “terrifyingly free” revisions to Cape’s language are mirrored in her resistance to changing the dialogue of other characters. To offer a fairly straightforward comparative example, in his last annotated draft Kareda makes two similar comments concerning analogous instances of ambiguous dialogue, prompting notably different responses from Thompson. First, Cape’s evocative—and audience engaging—description of the torment of his detached existence, “It got so that people made me feel like—a raccoon scream, ever heard that?” prompts Kareda’s comment, “He feels like a sound?” (TF6/TF9 1, original emphasis). Elsewhere, regarding Lomia’s inarticulate explanation for her abandonment of her family, “I left
out of a lack of (gestures),” Kareda asks, “gesture for feeling?” (TF6/TF9 39, original emphasis), ostensibly filling in the blank for Lomia—“I left out of a lack of feeling”—in exactly the way Thompson invites the audience (or at least the actor) to deal with the potent ambiguity of the unfinished sentence. In this case, Thompson’s confidence in Lomia’s voice is unshakable, and the ambiguous line remains in the final script. Cape’s line, however, is cut, despite its similar communicative and interpretive potency.

Given that *White Biting Dog* marks the first of the five plays Thompson developed in collaboration with Kareda, it is worth considering Knowles’ observation, much later in Thompson’s career, regarding the powerful operations of “intense empathy” generated by Thompson’s unusual “naturalistically conceived character[s]”: “in spite of a presentation of character that is psychologically acute, *nothing is explained away*” (“Fractured Subject” ii, emphasis added). In the case of *White Biting Dog*, the influence of Kareda’s inclination towards rationality, comprehensibility and linearity is clearly recognizable; however, in this first of many dramaturgical collaborations, the beginnings of Thompson’s balancing—and, later in her career, distinguishing—insistence on the exploration and representation of the irrational, incomprehensible and *unexplained* dimensions of the psyche in the speech and behaviour of her characters is also evident.

This negotiation between definitive comprehensibility through explanatory detail and productive, unexplained ambiguity extends beyond questions of characterization and psychological motivation. It is also evident in the development of significant shifts in the plot of *White Biting Dog*. In fact, the two most noteworthy developments in the play—the invention of Cape’s story of the talking white dog and a related turn toward the possibility of redemption through sacrifice in the play’s outcome—occur through the “long and hard” work of Thompson’s
collaboration with Kareda. Understanding these developments in the script begins with tracking revisions related to the initial connection between Cape and Pony. In the earliest Tarragon draft, as in the latter drafts of Thompson’s pre-Tarragon phase, Cape meets Pony by fishing for her with a wallet attached to a fishing line—a device designed to attract the assistance of whomever might happen along. In the first draft featuring Kareda’s annotations, however, Thompson has revised the encounter, perhaps (given his resistance to too much “absurdity”) in response to a conversation with Kareda. In the new version, Pony enters talking to her dead dog and then happens upon Cape in the midst of his crisis. At this stage, the backstory of Cape’s fateful encounter with a talking white dog has yet to be conceived; he is still seeking the aid of a supernatural red wave. The two characters remain, in this draft, connected by chance, with Pony’s decision to offer assistance tied to Thompson’s early conception of Cape’s character as a charismatic, manipulative solopsist. Characteristically, Kareda’s response to this newly revised scene seeks a more explicit or comprehensible connection between Cape’s dilemma and Pony’s arrival. His comment reads, “How to launch this from standing still?” (JTCF7 8).

As with his other deployment of the verb to launch, Kareda’s question anticipates the “journey” undertaken by Cape and Pony in their efforts to restore Glidden’s marriage and his health, seeking a clearer preparation for (and clearer explanation of) both the meeting of Cape and Pony and their subsequent joining of forces. Over the next two drafts, a major shift occurs in response to the parameters for development established by this inquiry. Immediately, Pony’s connection to her dead dog is strengthened; in a trance, she recites a childhood speech on the

142 This is only informed conjecture on my part; after decades, Thompson is unable to recall the impetus for this revision. Nonetheless, as I observe in a footnote above, the existence of one earlier draft in the Tarragon archives supports the hypothesis that Kareda had seen—and perhaps commented on—an earlier version of the script. 143 In her very earliest notes on the play Thompson writes, “What interests me is a human being who is able to manipulate others [sic] passions for his own end but is able to remain detached himself” (JTCF1). Thompson also speaks about this in subsequent years: “I had been thinking, before writing White Biting Dog, about manipulative people, sociopathic people and why they are the way they are. I know a few and by coincidence they all happen to be male. Men have a different sense of what power is than women do” (qtd in Zimmerman “A Conversation” 38).
subject of her dog, titled, significantly, “White Biting Dog” (JTCF18 33). In the next draft it is also the dead dog that instructs Pony to ingest the frozen Race family dachshunds in an attempt to save her soul (JTC F9 65). After this, further developments establish Cape’s connection to a dog that may or may not be Pony’s. For the first time, Cape’s opening monologue describes the talking—notably white—dog that provides him with his mission: “SAVE YOUR FATHER AND SAVE YOURSELF” (TF5 1). Recalling what brought about these changes, Thompson comments explicitly on the fact that “it pulled Cape and Pony together through the symbol of the white dog,” while offering a more “theatrically potent” motivation for Cape’s desire to save Glidden” (Zimmerman “A Conversation” 16). In later years, however, Thompson refers to the story with a degree of regret, stating that she “needed something to pull it all together” but now “wince[s] when that part comes,” finding it “too linear” and stating, “I have to stop explaining” (ibid). Ultimately, Kareda’s characteristic insistence on an explanatory backstory to launch the journey for Cape and Pony may have contributed to this development as much as its “theatrical potency”; despite Thompson’s recollection that “Urjo loved the idea [because] he always encouraged theatrical thinking,” she notably adds, “as long as it wouldn't throw the audience off” (“Re: our interview”). Far from throwing the audience off, the invention of the talking dog plot device offers audience members a clear sense of Cape’s motivation—albeit within the strange logic of the world of the play—especially in the revised, coherent version of the opening monologue, Kareda’s “strong verbal declaration to launch us.”

As Thompson points out, the “the symbol of the white dog” also strengthens the connection between Pony and Cape. More than just a consolidation of their relationship, this change contributes to a crucial shift in Pony’s function in the play. Once just a bystander that

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144 The script itself at this stage is titled “Lost.” Given Kareda’s recollection of having worked with Thompson through “many drafts...and even titles,” it may be of interest to record his characteristically puzzled response to the strange turn of phrase on first encountering it in the dialogue: “White BITING dog??” (TF6 and TF9 33).
Cape literally “reels in,” uses as he pleases and ultimately destroys, Pony becomes, after these important changes in the plot, an agent or “angel of the dog” (TF6 71), with the potential to act as a participant in his salvation. This crucial shift is part of a larger trajectory in the development of *White Biting Dog* toward a far more hopeful, redemptive outcome. In the pre-Tarragon phase, the transformation undergone by Lomia and Cape in the play’s final moments is presented as a punishment of the two for their selfish, cruel treatment of the dead. Glidden expresses betrayal rather than forgiveness before his death, and Pony’s speech to her father explains her suicide exclusively as a means to fight an invading evil, with no indication of her death as a redeeming sacrifice or “transfusion” offered to save Cape, as in the published script (107). Lomia, on being transformed, describes the experience in various early drafts as “a fever dream” (JTCF13 and TF2 78) or “a nightmare” (JTCF7 and TF8 78). Proclaiming, “they’ve ganged up on us” (JTCF3B 79), Cape and Lomia end the play in these drafts with no hope for redemption. In the first extant Tarragon draft, however, the beginnings of a new theme emerge in the opening stage directions: “[Glidden] sees what Lomia has done, in the end, and he truly forgives her… [Lomia] is changed at the end” (JTC F13 and TF2 1). Before dying, Glidden states, “Don’t worry darl, I won’t leave you blank, as you are now, I’ll leave you with something” (JTC F13 and TF2 71). An early indication of Pony’s forgiveness and desire to save Cape appears one draft later (in the first draft to bear Kareda’s marginal annotations), with the line, “I’ll leave you—something to remember me by—you’ll see” (JTCF7 and TF8 70). That this line mirrors the one developed for Glidden in the preceding draft seems to indicate an emerging parallel between the two characters and their redemptive functions; however, this single detail is the only sign of the parallel at this stage. In her final monologue, Pony still speaks only of defeating an invading evil (JTCF7 and TF8 74). The next draft moves closer with the line, “Don’t worry Cape, I’ll get you
out. I’m gonna give her [i.e. “the old Pony,” released in death] to you and then you’re gonna be okay. I promise” (JTCF18 70). Significantly, this draft is also the first to include an explicitly hopeful ending. Stage directions in the final scene read, “They have wonder,” and Lomia’s answer to Cape’s question, “Why did they do it?” is now “They—loved—us” (JTC F18 75). For the first time, Cape’s question “Do you think it’ll make any difference?” is answered, in the closing line of the play, with Lomia’s, “I hope so. I hope so…” (JTC F18 75).

As I discuss below, negotiations surrounding this hopeful outcome for Cape and Lomia are of considerable significance to the development of White Biting Dog. Most important, however, are the transformations in Glidden and, especially, Pony that precipitate this change. Increasingly, over the course of Thompson’s collaboration with Kareda, these characters are developed into figures of redemption. Once conceived as acts of revenge or self-preservation, the deaths of Glidden and Pony come to represent acts of deliberate self-sacrifice, conscious efforts to forgive and redeem. These changes introduce a crucial component of White Biting Dog and of Thompson’s subsequent work: the idea of the achievement of grace—for Thompson’s characters and, potentially, for her audiences. For Thompson, “Grace is something you achieve.... Grace is something you have to work and work at. It happens through penitence, through sight. Through seeing who you are and changing things” (qtd in Zimmerman “A Conversation” 41). Both Pony and Glidden are cited by Thompson as examples of this achievement: “Pony achieves Grace because she... had the strength to conquer ... radical evil.... [Glidden] also achieves Grace, also at the expense of his own happiness” (ibid). In Thompson’s view, theatre can also “help [audiences] do th[is] type of thinking” (ibid 41-42). Through the “painful thing of looking in the mirror,” theatre extends to audiences the potential to achieve grace, both “[t]hrough seeing who you are and changing things” and through a conscious effort of the will: “You have to work and
work and pray” (ibid 41). The development of these ideas in Thompson’s conception of *White Biting Dog* has considerable implications not only for this play but for future works as well. In particular, the change in Pony’s function, especially in the wake of her death, anticipates later Thompson characters. Although not included in Claudia Barnett’s study of “Judith Thompson’s Ghosts,” Pony is the precursor to a line of revenants in Thompson’s plays, ghosts who “try to improve the lives of the living—not only the living characters within the plays but also the live audiences who observe them” (92). In later plays developed at Tarragon (most notably *Lion in the Streets*) the invitation to audience members to improve or “take your life” is extended explicitly to the audience (Thompson, *Lion in the Streets* 75), but its beginnings are traceable to *White Biting Dog*—and to key developments in its themes of grace and redemption.

Kareda’s encouragement of this thematic trajectory is evident in his comments at two crucial stages in the development process. Initially, in a letter to Thompson following his first annotated draft, he writes with a “bigger question [which] is, I guess, a disguised version of the old philistine whine, ‘What is this play about?’” In an effort to explore this question, Kareda writes, “Let me tell you what sort of things I feel are happening in the play,” careful to add, “I eagerly wait to be corrected.” What follows is a summary of the plot at that stage (two or three drafts before the advent of the talking white dog), which becomes particularly salient when he reaches Pony’s suicide. Here, Kareda is worth quoting at length:

Then two things happen (and it’s here that I think you need to do some more work). Pony returns from the dead to give us a revised vision of death. Death had been the great enemy from the beginning of the play, the one thing that must be kept from Glidden. Now, abruptly, through Pony’s speech, we have another possible view of death. Also, in the final moments of the play, there is a feeling that Cape and Lomia find themselves
transformed and bonded through this experience: it’s like the Tempest’s sea-change, into “something rich and strange.” But that’s what I don’t understand. What is the nature of this transformation? What does it leave them with? Do they both feel the same thing? Why have they been transformed? What did Cape originally think he wanted? Was it what he wanted? Does he at some point realize that he can get something else? What pushes him from act to act? How does Lomia achieve this transformation? What is Pony’s role in all of this? (Letter to Judith Thompson 17 March 1983, original emphasis)

These questions offer valuable insight into Kareda’s thinking at this stage in the development of the script; they also enact considerable influence over Thompson’s subsequent thinking. While the “change” in Lomia (and Glidden’s attendant forgiveness) had been present in the script since the first of the drafts Kareda is likely to have seen, the theme of sacrifice and redemption is still nascent at the time of his writing. Changes made in the wake of this letter reveal the influence of his anticipation of further developments in both the transformations of Cape and Lomia and in “Pony’s role in all of this.” The “sea-change” in subsequent drafts is indeed more “rich and strange”—as well as more hopeful and cathartic. Finally, too, the hopeful view of death Kareda sees in Pony’s early salvation of herself soon extends to her sacrificial redemption of Cape, when she “leaves him with” the best part of herself.

That Kareda embraced and encouraged this redemptive theme is also evident in his subsequent comments on the script. Affixed to his last extant annotations—which include the caution that Cape “seems (again) like a manipulative shit”—is a summative call for “some moment of ‘grace’ or introspection or need from Cape so that he deserves to be saved by Pony” (note attached to TPF 9, original emphasis). Kareda’s quotation of “grace” here invites the possibility that Thompson’s ideas on the subject were part of ongoing playwright-dramaturg
discussions, fueling the trajectory of the script away from the world of superstition and “nightmare” outcomes to one of religiously inflected sacrifice and redemption. That this trajectory would appeal to Thompson is understandable. The “religious sensibility” of her writing is well documented (Thompson qtd in Zimmerman “A Conversation” 14). Thompson herself describes the writing process as “forc[ing] myself in a kind of Jesuit way to go through it, to experience what the victims experienced” (ibid 15). By extension, the experience for the audience—which Thompson describes as an “awakening” (Rudakoff Interview 41)—is imagined to serve a Biblia pauperum function, “like the purpose the church used to serve: for an hour a week we would confront our spirits” (Wachtel 43-44). Tellingly, scholars have observed this religious sensibility surfacing more explicitly in her plays from White Biting Dog onward. Marc Maufort, for example, observes that “White Biting Dog shows the playwright’s increasing reliance on religious motifs,” among them the white dog (an anagram, Maufort notes, for God) developed in response to Kareda’s feedback (31). Likewise Knowles observes that “Thompson’s Roman Catholic background... has come to the surface in her writing... ever since Pony... consumed and regurgitated, as a kind of unholy trinity, a communion feast of dog/God—three dead dachshunds in the basement freezer of the Race home” (“Reading Judith Thompson” v).

Collaborating with Kareda, whose “divine empathy [and] deep spirituality” Thompson identifies as “a major part of my body of work for the theatre, and of my life” (qtd in Ouzounian “Urjo Kareda”), may thus be seen as a substantial influence on the themes of grace, sacrifice, and redemption in the script. As I observe above, this development also effects other shifts in the evolution of White Biting Dog, including changes in the world of the play for which Pony might

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145 Beyond the scholars cited here, Toles and Walker also offer notable analyses of the religious sensibility at work in White Biting Dog, which Toles reads in terms of “soul-making” (5) or “hearkening” (6) and which Walker praises via explicit allusion to the Bible: “‘there but for the grace of God go I.’ To secure pious but trite agreement with the sentiment, acknowledgement by rote, is one thing; but it is quite another to cause an audience to feel the truth of the observation profoundly” (367).
serve as a metonym: she goes from a “fairy” or “witch” to a Christ-like figure of sacrifice and redemption, or an “angel.”

For the record, Kareda flagged the phrase “angel of the dog” in his marginal annotations, finding it “too specifically religious” (TF6 and TF9 33). Ultimately, despite what Thompson describes as his “divine empathy [and] deep spirituality,” Kareda’s support for the trajectory of the script toward its themes of grace and redemption may have emerged more from other imperatives underlying his dramaturgical sensibility. The exploration of Christian archetypes (which taps the shared fascination with psychology that marks this collaborative relationship) aids in the resolution of key divergences in the visions of Thompson and Kareda. While retaining its strangeness, the world of the play in its final form operates according to the more conventional “rules” and “logic” of Christian traditions. Likewise, the “rich and strange” transformations enacted in the closing moments are rendered comprehensible in terms of a familiar narrative of sacrifice and redemption. Notably, too, the forgiveness that marks Pony in the wake of these revisions does much to soften the effect of her “hard to take” utterances. Moreover, this trajectory finds expression in an explicitly hopeful ending for Lomia and Cape—one which does not, as Kareda comments in the development of another script, “send[] the audience out.... in... a downer-mood” (Letter to Brian Quirt and Julia Sasso 1 Mar 1999), and which offers audiences a clear explanation for the remarkable sea-change: “They—loved—us.”

The sense of closure offered by this ending is certainly in keeping with Kareda’s early dramaturgical sensibility. As Robin Whittaker has suggested, drawing on Kareda’s formative years as a theatre critic, Kareda’s affinity for naturalistic drama as “the most satisfying, the most finished” may be grounded in the fact that “naturalism is the genre most able to convey completion.” Perhaps, Whittaker speculates, “it is the illusion of completition that Kareda most
admires in a play” (161). As I discuss below, this preference for “completion” may not have been a consistent feature in the latter years of Kareda’s dramaturgical practice. Nonetheless, that the explicitly hopeful ending of *White Biting Dog* was encouraged by Kareda is evident in his surviving feedback, which repeatedly seeks clarification of the redemption, from his above-quoted letter to his latest extant annotations, which include the question “How does [Pony] think she’s making it better for him?” (TF6 and TF9 72, original emphasis) as well as the observation, “I think we need to understand how she thought her suicide would also save Cape—more.” (TF6 and TF9 77, “more” is circled on the page). Notably, Thompson disregards these requests for further clarification, choosing to retain a potent ambiguity around Pony’s belief—one which, as I discuss below, has important implications for the play’s invitation to audiences to believe.

Beyond this resistance to clarification, a significant revision to the script between its production and publication further demonstrates Thompson’s protectiveness of uncertainty or ambiguity at the heart of her vision. The original Tarragon production of *White Biting Dog* featured the hopeful ending described above, complete with the lines, “Why did they do it?”/“They—loved—us” and “Do you think it’ll make any difference?”/“I hope so.” In the published script, however, most of this exchange is excised. In the closing line, Cape asks, “Do you think it will make... any... difference?” but no answer is forthcoming. The final stage directions indicate that “hope shows in [Lomia’s] eyes,” while “CAPE just does not know” (108). Having asked Thompson about changes to the final lines of dialogue, Toles reports that she found them too sharply pointed. The original dialogue made explicit reference to the place where the moral consciousness of her characters had arrived by the play's end (in other words, bringing to light what they should learn from their experience). Thompson
became convinced that the space of mystery, which all authentic experience inhabits, was falsified by the decision to impose clarity (14).

The revised final lines are those found in the published edition of the script, but the archive reveals that Thompson considered the change as early as the rehearsal period. The final extant draft, marked “rehearsal draft,” features Thompson’s handwritten note on the title page “Cut out because they loved us—gives—?” indicating reluctance in her decision, while working with Kareda, “to impose clarity.”

It is of particular interest that Thompson first considered this revision during the rehearsal period. Strikingly, a similar late-stage impulse occurred in Wyatt’s development of *Chairs and Tables*. As I discuss in chapter one, Wyatt made several revisions to her play during rehearsals, including key changes which produce a more ambiguous closing scene. To offer a brief reminder: In the version of the script that Wyatt took into rehearsals, the final moments of *Chairs and Tables* represent the culmination of the play’s trajectory toward an innocuous domestic comedy, depicting a return to unambiguous harmony for the romantic couple. Susan and Leo, already reconciled as the final scene opens, rearrange the onstage furniture just as it was at beginning, and their final lines are playfully concerned with the establishment of a password to prevent the reentry of Susan’s disruptive friend, Alix. During rehearsals, however, Wyatt drafted a new final scene in which Susan grants Leo only a provisional return to their domestic life. The final lines regarding the secret password have been changed from the harmonious “We’ll change it every day” to Susan’s “I’ll change it every day,” followed by Leo’s “Will you tell it to me?” and Susan’s response, “On some days” (Wyatt 80). This shift toward a less recuperative comedic resolution thus restores an element of Wyatt’s earliest (and mostly excised) preoccupation with the negotiation of autonomy for women.

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146 Thompson confirmed this to me via email (“Re: another question?”).
That both playwrights pulled back on developments encouraged by Kareda’s questions, and that they experienced the impulse to do so in the rehearsal phase, when their one-on-one collaborations with Kareda had ended, demonstrates the shaping force of Kareda’s process for developing new work. Significantly, the playwrights’ involvement in rehearsals was itself an essential component of the developmental process fostered by Kareda at the Tarragon, an expression of his mandate that “[t]he first production of a new play—the culmination of the development processes—has to be the writer’s production, presenting the writer’s vision of the play” (“They Also Serve” 8, original emphasis). Crucially, this phase offered both playwrights an important chance to step away from the trajectories that guided their collaborations with Kareda. In so doing, and with greater autonomy from his one-on-one influence, it is revealing of the dominant preoccupations that informed Kareda’s dramaturgy that both playwrights experienced a desire to restore ambiguity to their endings. Of course, while Wyatt made her changes during the rehearsal process, Thompson’s shift from a more comprehensive ending to a more productively ambiguous one was not realized until after the Tarragon premiere. This may, at least in part, have to do with the choice of Bill Glassco as the director of White Biting Dog, whose tastes more closely aligned with Kareda’s. As Thompson herself speculates, Glassco “was into kitchen sink [realism]. Maybe that’s why Urjo thought he’d be good []—that he’d ground it in reality” (Personal interview).

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147 As I discuss in chapter one, this late-stage revision (reversion!) to the final scene is accompanied by additional changes elsewhere in the script, which also restore some of the subsumed elements of Wyatt’s earliest vision for Chairs and Tables.

148 Notably, the design for this production did not adhere to the realism traditionally associated with “kitchen sink” drama. Rather, as Robert Nunn and others have observed, Sue LePage’s multi-level set design “functioned as a constant visual metaphor for the multiple layers of reality in the play” (27). Thompson’s reference to Glassco’s “ground[ing] in reality” may thus refer to matters of performance but also of dramaturgy. Indeed, for Thompson the two are related. Later in her relationship with Tarragon, she would direct her own work for this reason (“Why” 53).
Whatever the reason that Thompson delayed her revision of the closing moments, the impulse itself is salient, particularly given the importance of “radical[] uncertain[ty]” in the critical tradition of Thompson scholarship (Harvie “(Im)Possibility” 250). As Nigel Hunt writes, “Thompson does not betray the reality of her characters by imposing change on their lives.... The change the playwright wishes to effect is in her audience; not in her characters” (1-2). Harvie, among others, has observed the importance of uncertainty in activating the potential for change in Thompson’s audiences:

Thompson’s resolutions are intense and committed to hope for positive change, indicating certainty, but simultaneously acutely ambiguous, suggesting uncertainty. They entice audiences to intense empathetic engagement, but through disruptions and dislocations of structure, character, mood, and ‘logic,’ they destabilize and shift that engagement. In the Thompsonian mise-en-scène anything is (im)possible.

“(Im)Possibility” 240)

Thompson’s revised ending does much to ensure this tension, more fully capturing the dichotomy of desire and its interdiction underlying the operations of fantasy in Harvie’s reading of Thompson’s work. Nonetheless, as Harvie observes, while the play “acknowledges the ‘evil,’ the extreme, and the prohibition of desire,” it also “confounds them, delineating a hopeful logic with which the audience is almost provoked to identify” (ibid). For Harvie and others, this provocation is enacted not only through a “hopeful logic” but also through a confounding one.

The improbable, unconventional, and unexplained in Thompson’s dramatic worlds serve to

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149 In my own correspondence with Thompson in 2011, I inquired about the delay. After twenty-seven years, however, she could only speculate, “Might have been pressure from the actors? They were accustomed to the lines?” (“Re: another question?”)

150 Significantly, Harvie’s analysis of these tensions in White Biting Dog relies on the published version of the final scene: If “good is seen predominantly as the ability to save (oneself and others) and the ability to feel (empathy and care),” she writes, these “desires are... profoundly inhibited, not least because the ability to feel achieved by Cape... and Lomia is... dubious” (ibid 246).
disrupt audience expectations and destabilize their positions as passive observers. “Flying in the face of dramaturgical wisdom,” as Knowles has put it, “many of [Thompson’s plays] issue in improbable epiphanies that seem to rely upon the active evocation of the engaged imaginations and activated will power of their audiences” (“Reading Judith Thompson” iii).

More often than not, in Thompson’s ongoing negotiation of Kareda’s feedback, this (un)conventional dramaturgy of (im)possibility emerges as the protected “heart” of her vision for *White Biting Dog*. Against Kareda’s emphasis on clarity, comprehensibility, and deterministic traceability, Thompson invites audiences to accept the improbable, to follow the lead of her characters and to engage their imaginative, irrational, and (as the play draws to its redemptive conclusion) hopeful willingness to believe. Importantly, the clearly depicted transformation of the original production diminishes this effect. This tidy resolution grants audiences a passive experience of the positive changes occurring on stage; it does not require audiences to actively choose to believe in them. Consequently the transformative potential of the final moments is contained within the onstage world. In the published script, however, the more ambiguous final moments extend the transformative potential outward. Encountering the “improbable epiphanies” of Pony’s final monologue and the implied (but unexplained) transformation to which her sacrifice is linked, audiences are required to activate their “will” in believing the unlikely but powerful possibility of a positive outcome. Significantly, this is a choice which the disruptive, radical (im)possibility of the unfolding action prepares audiences to make. As Harvie observes, “elements of *White Biting Dog*’s mise-en-scène [that] are extreme or unusual,” are “nevertheless deliberate, as though willing a belief in their validity. The play thus builds on an internal logic which admits unlikely possibilities” (“(Im)Possibility” 247, emphasis added).
From the earliest moments of *White Biting Dog*, the question of belief is deliberately raised in Cape’s opening address to the audience. “Did it even happen?”, he asks in his opening line, before moving swiftly to his dubious affirmation “Sure it happened. It happened, I’m not crazy, I know!” (1). On hearing the improbable story that follows—that Cape was rescued from suicide by a talking white dog and that he’ll be redeemed by an impossible “mission” to keep his dying father alive—audiences may be incredulous, inclined to respond in the negative to Cape’s opening query. However, as the coincidences pile up—from Pony’s timely introduction, to Lomia’s arrival on cue in the instant her role in Cape’s mission is determined—the improbable and unexplained becomes the norm in the world of *White Biting Dog*. Slowly but surely, audiences are invited first to accept, and later potentially to become invested in, the “leaps” of logic (or belief) that the play requires. That Kareda overlooks this preparatory function of the mysterious or uncertain is evident both in his earliest comments on the world of the play and in his responses to later developments in the plot. Upon the introduction of the talking dog, for example, Kareda’s questions seek clarification: “Why does he believe the dog?” (TF6/TF9 2); “What (in Cape’s mind) happened to the dog after the encounter on the bridge?” (TF6/TF9 6, original emphasis); and, regarding Cape’s immediate assumption, on hearing Pony’s approach, that “she’s HERE!”, “Does he think it’s the dog? (i.e. did the white dog speak in Pony’s voice?)” (TF6/TF9 8). Crucially, however, Thompson leaves these (and many other) questions unanswered in the script, as she does Kareda’s above-quoted question, “How does [Pony] think she’s making it better for him?” and its accompanying request, “I think we need to understand how she thought her suicide would also save Cape—more.” That Cape’s belief in the talking dog is questionable is the point. Uncertainty about the existence of the talking dog creates the essential opportunity for audiences to accept (if only provisionally) the possibility of the
impossible. Likewise, although Pony states with total confidence her intention to “make it better” for Cape through her sacrifice, she crucially does not offer an explanation for this belief or any sense of how the transformation will come about. While Kareda flags this omission as an obstacle to comprehension, Thompson puts more faith in her audiences. She retains the mystery, leaving it to audiences to actively choose to share Pony’s belief—to hope, along with her, that Cape may be saved. In light of Kareda’s allusion to the “sea-change” in *The Tempest*, it seems worth recalling Shakespeare’s prerequisite for metamorphosis in that other late and great play, *The Winter’s Tale*: “It is required/ you do awake your faith” (5.3.114-115).

In the process of developing *White Biting Dog*, faith is also required of both Thompson and Kareda. As this case study has demonstrated, Thompson’s protective impulse constitutes an essential component of this collaborative dynamic; nonetheless, her evolving conception of *White Biting Dog* is shaped substantially by the process of responding to Kareda’s feedback. The space for dramaturgical influence in these negotiations is signaled by Thompson’s related descriptions of her process of writing and of Kareda’s role in it. For Thompson, writing itself is “an act of faith. I enter a dark and dangerous forest of chaos, and I go where my instincts lead me, without a compass. I go get lost, essentially” (“Epilepsy and the Snake” 82). Elsewhere, Thompson describes Kareda’s role in relation to this experience: “Urjo is a wonderful dramaturge.... He allows me incredible autonomy, but I know if I lose my compass—and we all do as writers once in a while—he’ll be there” (qtd in Friedlander). Once again, this description stresses Thompson’s crucial autonomy while simultaneously signaling Kareda’s remarkable position of influence in the relationship; when Thompson found herself lost in the “dark and dangerous forest of chaos,” it was Kareda she relied on to be there.

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151 This unexplained dimension of Pony’s redemptive power further demonstrates her anticipation of the ghosts analyzed by Barnett, who observes that the later revenants “destablize reality, raising a slew of unanswered and unanswerable questions” (96).
Likewise, Kareda’s faith in Thompson’s “amazing theatrical sensibility” informed his passionate “commitment to the work and its writer” through the development of *White Biting Dog* and beyond. Letters to Thompson in later years convey that while Kareda might be “intimidated” by the “scale, the size, the epic breadth” of, for example, Thompson’s *Sled*, he was also “thrilled and honoured and mesmerized,” expressing “TOTAL confidence in [her] amazing gifts” even as he attended to “factual questions,” clarifying the relationships and psychological motivations of some of Thompson’s characters (Letter to Judith Thompson 9 January 1996). Significantly, Kareda’s feedback in later collaborations is marked by decreasing emphasis on concerns that preoccupied him in the development of *White Biting Dog*. The eruptive and inscrutable utterances of Thompson’s characters, for example, give him less pause. In fact, they become the subject of high praise: her “language is so poetic. It’s incantatory. Rhapsodic” (Between 14). Likewise, Kareda’s threshold for “the playwright’s obsessiveness” with bodily functions is raised considerably by 1989, when he writes that “Her characters are not spared revelation of the intimate details of their bodies. Piss, shit, sweat, saliva, vomit, tears, mucous, semen, amniotic fluid—these are as central and inescapable a part of our beings as our heart, our mind, our soul” (Introduction to *The Other Side of the Dark* 10). 152 This first collaboration awakened his faith in the inner workings of Thompson’s vision. Kareda once said that “Dramaturgy affords a glimmering pleasure and reward usually comes as part of a long relationship with a writer” (qtd in Rudakoff Between 29). One of those rewards is reciprocal influence—a shared vocabulary and merging sensibility, a concrescence of sorts, but also a growing together that is really a growing alongside one another, allowing a sustained experience of creative communion to effect a change.

152 As Walker has observed, the “inescapable paradox of life”—the “inextricably intertwined” sublime and the profane—observed by Kareda here is distinctly Freudian (375), which is perhaps further evidence of a common ground between Thompson and Kareda negotiated through their shared fascination with psychoanalysis.
In many ways, Kareda was transformed by his work with Thompson. In fact, evidence of her influence on his dramaturgical sensibility is almost immediate. In a letter written just months after the premiere of *White Biting Dog*, Kareda describes another playwright who is “in effect, inventing a style as she goes along.” Far from expressing concern, Kareda notably adds, “which is fine: *Judith did so too*” (Letter to Bill Glassco, emphasis added). Tellingly, Thompson is the playwright most cited in Kareda interviews and writing on the subject of new play development. Often, she is mentioned in the context of some concept or turn of phrase he adopted from her. To Deborah Cottreau, for example, Kareda cites the dramaturgical pitfall of engaging in editorial work too early, asserting that “you have to write for a long time, almost *wildly*, as Judith Thompson says, before you start to tidy it up” (8, emphasis added). In Kareda’s final interview with Rudakoff, Thompson’s name crops up at five separate points in discussion—far more than any other playwright, including David French, to say nothing of the solitary mention of Kareda’s beloved Chekov. These observations include his praise for Thompson’s fearless willingness to plumb the darkness, which he terms her “great power” (*Between 14*), as well as his use of a variation of Thompson’s description of her process—”stand[ing] in the blood”—to support his endorsement of writing characters from within (ibid 27).

Finally, as I discuss in chapter one, surviving evidence of Kareda’s dramaturgical sensibility demonstrates an increasing appreciation for “openness” and experimentation: “What I look for is a writer with a very distinctive, individual voice [....] that leaves a lot of air, that asks more questions than it answers, that is interested in various kinds of form” (Cottreau 7). The experience of working with Thompson—in

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153 Thompson’s variation (at least as it exists on record) is the above-quoted “getting into the blood,” although Kareda has attributed the phrase “stands in the blood” to Thompson elsewhere as well (Introduction to *The Other Side of the Dark* 11). Presumably, she used both. Certainly, the marked difference between this visceral, Thompsonian expression and Kareda’s oft-used and more staid description of writing “from within” captures the divergences in their conceptions of dramatic character evident in this earliest collaboration. Kareda’s “from within” imagines a more controlled, (self) analytical engagement with the interiority of character, while Thompson evokes something deeper, messier, almost ritualistic. It is thus all the more telling that Kareda would draw on Thompson’s description by the time of his final interview.
the development of *White Biting Dog* and over the course of their seventeen year collaboration—may be understood as an important contribution to Kareda’s evolving dramaturgical sensibility, from the remarkable emphasis on clarity and comprehensibility evinced in all three of these early case studies to the assertion in 1996 that he is “much more friendly towards plays with gaping, interesting holes, rather than nice, neat constructions” and that leave “enough for the audience to do, to question, and to respond to” (ibid 8).

Kareda’s influence on Thompson is equally indisputable. As Thompson has put it, “Urjo was a large part of the creation of *White Biting Dog* and all the plays that followed” (qtd. in Ouzounian “Urjo Kareda”). These plays, too, are chimeras: they resist unity and classification; they contain the sublime and the profane; they inspire fear, but also awe; they have the power to unsettle, and also the potential to transform. As this chapter has shown, *White Biting Dog* is changed in marked ways in the wake of Kareda’s involvement in its development. More than this, key features emerging from this collaboration distinguish subsequent scripts Thompson developed with Kareda, from the quasi-religious and implicitly hopeful idea of the achievement of grace (for the characters and also, potentially, for the audience) to the “enigmatic” combination of “the mundane and surreal, the banal and profound, the conscious and conscious” (Harvie “(Im)Possibility” 240). As the surviving evidence reveals, these dichotomous features reflect a dynamic tension between two powerful sensibilities in this collaborative process. Tracking the negotiations that produced *White Biting Dog*, one thing is certain: They spawned a weird (and wonderful) creature.
CONCLUSION

“The Involved Other”:
Dramaturgy, Subjectivity, and Creating a Process

“It has taken me a very long time to even think, sometimes, that I am an artist.”

-Urjo Kareda, quoted in his 2001 interview with Judith Rudakoff 29

This project has served as my introduction to archival research. At the outset, my aim was to find a new angle from which to explore the concept of dramaturgical influence. Aware of the range of approaches to new play development in contemporary dramaturgy, I was interested in how different dramaturgical approaches and contexts might function to shape new work from an early stage. In short, I began with the question: What difference does a dramaturg make?

I had read many anecdotal accounts of play development processes and encountered a range of opinions about the influence of the dramaturg. Still, I had the feeling that there was more to learn if only I could get beyond these subjective viewpoints, coloured as they are by the participants’ stakes in the experience, and observe a whole process for myself. This posed a problem: What playwright and dramaturg would allow me to sit and watch this vulnerable process unfold? Even if they did, my presence was bound to produce in the participants a distorting awareness of being observed. The fly-on-the-wall promise of archival research appealed to me on this front. At the earliest stage of this project I expected, quite naively, that the archive would afford me an objective perspective on the process of developmental dramaturgy. Of course, I was wrong. Examining an unfolding dramaturgical process in this way does not lend itself to any positivist access to or certainty about the past. This is not only because the record is partial. It is also attributable to the dynamic nature of the collaborative process itself. There is so much in flux at every point in the development of the script. Tracking those points where
Kareda’s comments and questions shape key developmental trajectories also necessitates tracking the paths not taken, the comments and questions that were never asked.

Which brings me to another reversal of my expectations for archival research. Embarking on this work, I anticipated that it would be painstaking—dare I say tedious?—but not without its attendant thrills. Knowing that these documents had never before been given such close attention was a source of excitement from the outset, and I expected the pleasure of archival research to come from moments of confirmation (“Aha! Exactly as I suspected!”) and, especially, moments of revelation (“Why, that’s not what I expected at all!”). In this way, I imagined a kind of dialogue with the materials of the past—an exchange occurring across time between the assumptions that framed my thinking and the extant details, both acquiescent and rebellious. What has surprised me most, however, is another form of engagement with these archival records—one that feels strangely immediate and participatory. Like Barbara Hodgdon, who has identified in her work with archived promptscripts that “annotations impose a state of being-in-time” (374), I have found that each draft reflects a creative process-in-progress that draws me into the development of the script. Observing Kareda’s notes in the margins of drafts, I have experienced the urge to intervene. I have longed to voice my own opinions in ways that would reshape the history of these development processes and their products.

Attempting to reconstruct a collaborative process, then, I go through a version of that process myself. My analysis draws in part on my own dramaturgical engagement with the plays I see evolving (in the past and in an archival present), and thus reflects my experience of and even involvement in the processes I chart. As I analyze the changes that occur over the course of a script’s development, I not only draw inferences about the imperatives behind these shifts; I form my own opinions about a play’s evolution. I agree with notes or amendments; I lament cuts to
scenes I find to be central. In this way, I am the dramaturg as ghost, tracking alternate trajectories for development, imaging plays that never were.

The case studies presented here are shaped by my subjective investment in the progression of these scripts. My reading of *Chairs and Tables*, for example, is informed by my own tastes, preoccupations and preferences—or, in the case of Leo and all that he stands for, my aversions. While Kareda’s dramaturgical feedback demonstrably shapes the trajectory of development toward a more sympathetic Leo, my dramaturgy may have led down a different—but equally subjective—path. My ability to recognize Kareda’s creative interventions—what he sees in a play, what he values and encourages, as well as what he overlooks or even opposes—springs from the fact that I read each draft through my own subjective lens; I see different things. At the same time, I too have my blind spots and biases, aesthetic and ideological. Another researcher, tracking the same processes and analyzing the same evidence, would undoubtedly uncover potential in these evolving scripts that both Kareda and I have overlooked.

Certainly, recognizing the limits of my own objectivity has reinforced my sense that the dramaturgical function is always and inescapably subjective. I agree with Maaike Bleeker, as quoted in my introduction, that “although the dramaturg may represent the ‘other’ within a working process, he or she is an involved other” (163, emphasis added). That this description holds true for dramaturgs working in new play development has been amply demonstrated in the preceding chapters. Tracking Kareda’s development of each of the scripts examined here affirms Ann Wilson’s assertion that “the passion which informed [Kareda’s] working relations with playwrights inevitably became a personal and professional investment” (3). Having become invested myself (the “involved other” in the archives) I have come to appreciate this passion, and to better understand the importance of acknowledging its shaping force.
All three of the plays examined in the preceding chapters are shaped, albeit in different ways, by that other sensibility introduced by Kareda’s involvement in the collaborative process. Questions informed by Kareda’s personal assumptions and tastes established key trajectories in the transformation of Rachel Wyatt’s *Chairs and Tables*. Don Hannah’s *The Wedding Script*, in its final form, is the product of a confluence of sensibilities fostered not only by Kareda’s feedback, but also by the conditions of production over which he presided. Finally, in a merging of a different sort, the dynamically inter-related sensibilities of playwright and dramaturg work to produce a version of Judith Thompson’s *White Biting Dog* that did not exist before Kareda became the “involved other” in its creation. Far from neutral, Kareda’s role in the development of these and other scripts is indisputably influential, even creative.

As I establish in my introduction, acknowledging developmental dramaturgy as a subjective and even creative act has lagged behind the recognition of these qualities in the work of production dramaturgs. And yet, as these case studies have shown, the need to acknowledge and think through dramaturgical influence is particularly pressing in the case of new play development. Addressing this will involve overcoming the spectre of authorship by understanding developmental dramaturgy as a distinct creative act. As Kareda puts it in his handwritten notes on the “Role of the Dramaturg,” the dramaturg “can’t ‘create’ the play” but instead works to “bring it out” (emphasis added). As my analysis has shown, this “bringing out” is more creative than is commonly recognized. It represents a determining force in, as DD Kugler describes it, a “search[] for ‘the’ play among many possible plays” (qtd in Rudakoff *Between 97*).

This unique function of the role of the developmental dramaturg is the source of its creativity. The play is not the dramaturg’s art; *the process is*. The fear of prescriptiveness and the
conceits of objectivity, neutrality, or invisibility misleadingly suggest that the trajectory-shaping force of dramaturgical intervention is bad dramaturgy. Rather, it is all dramaturgy. Abandoning these impossible ideals, dramaturgs and their collaborators must acknowledge the creative contribution of this “involved other” in the development process, whose input can be inhibiting or illuminating but never neutral.
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